

# bana intro

**Speaker:** [00:00:00] Welcome to the Peaceful Parenting Podcast. I'm your host, Sarah Rosenzweig, mom of three young people, Peaceful Parenting Coach, and your cheerleader and guide on all things parenting. Each week, we'll cover the tools, strategies, and support you need to end the yelling and power struggles, and encourage your kids to listen and cooperate so that you can enjoy your family time.

**Speaker:** I'm happy to say we have a great relationship with our three kids. The teen years have been easy and joyful. Not because we're special unicorns, but because my kids were raised with peaceful parenting. I've also helped so many parents just like you stop struggling and enjoy their kids again. I'm excited to be here with you today and bring you the insight and information you need to make your parenting journey a little more peaceful.

**Speaker:** Let's dive into this week's conversation.

**Yeti Stereo Microphone & HD Pro Webcam C920:** Hey, all welcome back to another episode of the peaceful parenting podcast. Today's episode is with two guests experts, and we are talking about. Disordered eating and body image today. And just a heads up. We are talking about eating disorders a little bit. [00:01:00] If you are someone you love someone in your family is struggling with disordered eating or an eating disorder.

**Yeti Stereo Microphone & HD Pro Webcam C920:** You can check out netic dot. Dot CA. That is N E D I c.ca. And it's the national eating disorder information center. That is the resource that our guests today have recommended. We are talking about how to raise kids who don't experience disordered eating or eating disorders, what to do if you suspect that your child. Is doing some disordered eating and we also got into healthy body image. Body neutrality, food neutrality,

**Yeti Stereo Microphone & HD Pro Webcam C920:** And social media. And our, our own work. So many of these things are so connected, but I've been getting a lot of questions lately about what to do. If your child is saying negative things about their body or that they have to exercise more or saying, I can't eat that. And I realized this is a subject that I don't know that much about.

**Yeti Stereo Microphone & HD Pro Webcam C920:** And so I [00:02:00] really wanted to reach out to some experts.

**Yeti Stereo Microphone & HD Pro Webcam C920:** Today I have with me today, I have with me Luciana I hope I'm saying her name. Right. Also known as Lucy. Who is the director of Bana Bana is that bulimia anorexia nervosa association in Windsor, Ontario. And also I have with me Alexis SOLs, Ramos, who is the eating disorder prevention specialist. For Bana. And she's also a social worker. I think that you are going to learn a lot in this conversation. It was a conversation that every, every parent needs to hear because we are just so bombarded with The diet culture and quote wellness culture today.

**Yeti Stereo Microphone & HD Pro Webcam C920:** And I know this is something that has come up with almost every parent that I've spoken with. Again, if you have concerns about yourself or someone that you love, we will put a link to this in the show notes, but be sure to check out. [netic.ca](http://netic.ca), which is the national eating disorder information center. Okay.

**Yeti Stereo Microphone & HD Pro Webcam C920:** I also want to encourage you to share this episode [00:03:00] with any parents, you know, who might need to hear it. And don't forget to leave us a rating on apple podcasts and on Spotify and leave us a review on apple podcasts. It's super easy to do. You can just do it right from your phone and every, every five-star rating and review helps us to reach more families. And more parents.

**Yeti Stereo Microphone & HD Pro Webcam C920:** And that's the way that we often find new podcasts is searching on our phone. And of course, you know,

**Yeti Stereo Microphone & HD Pro Webcam C920:** The way that new podcasts often get found is if they've got a lot of ratings and reviews, so it would really help us out a lot. If you could do that. And, you know, also word of mouth does help. So any of those things. We would really appreciate it.

**Yeti Stereo Microphone & HD Pro Webcam C920:** Let's meet Lucy and Alexis.

**Sarah:** Hey everyone, welcome back to another episode of the Peaceful Parenting Podcast. Today I have with me Lucy and Alexis, who are going to introduce themselves shortly, and they are from BANA, which is the [00:04:00] Bulimia Anorexia Nervosa Association. Welcome, Lucy and Alexis. Thank you. If we go to start with you, Lucy, if you just want to tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do, and then we'll ask you, Alexis.

**Lucy:** All right, certainly. So my name is Luciana Ross Ussie, as everybody calls me Lucy from BANAHA. I've been with the organization for 21 years. I've been in this role for 13 years, and eight years I spent in health promotion. And I went into schools and talked about self esteem, resilience, coping, body image, and social media, media literacy.

**Lucy:** So that's kind of who I am. Great. And thanks, Alexis. Hi, yeah, so my name is Alexis Sals Ramos. I'm a registered social worker. Clinically I've done a few different things, but most of my work has been in working with adolescents and young adults with clinical diagnosed eating disorders in an outpatient setting.

**Alexis:** Now what I do is work in eating disorder prevention. So I work as part of a province wide prevention strategy just looking to create safer spaces in our communities. [00:05:00] and get ahead of the sort of clinical eating disorders that we're familiar with.

**Sarah:** Perfect. And that's just really what we're trying to do in this podcast.

**Sarah:** I realized that I get a lot of questions from parents in my community or coaching clients who are like, what do I do when my, you know, 11 year old says that he wants to have a six pack or my nine year old suddenly doesn't want to have a six pack. says that she's fat and, you know, things that I realized that I'm a little bit ill equipped.

**Sarah:** So I wanted to get some experts in to sort of talk about you know, what parents can do to avoid or help their children not develop disordered eating. So maybe we'll just start with that. If you could explain one of you and you decide who's going to take which question, but if you could explain what is.

**Sarah:** Disordered eating and then maybe we could move into what causes it. And I realize this probably are huge questions, but just like, let's get the basics.

**Alexis:** I can take that part, that end of things. So disordered eating capture is really broad, but really it's [00:06:00] just any sort of. Relationship to food and eating that is.

**Alexis:** Distressed that is sort of outside of our normative like feeding our bodies in relation to our hunger and fullness cues So it takes a lot of forms. It's you know, cutting out food groups Limiting the amount of food or type of food that we eat in a day certainly taking any substances, diet pills, anything of that

nature, laxatives that are going to impact how food is digested or absorbed by our bodies or processed by our bodies and disordered eating is also going to expand into other relations, right?

**Alexis:** Other behaviors rather. So think about obsessive or rigid exercise and other behaviors where we're trying to control, manipulate or change the size and shape of our bodies. It can also be,

**Sarah:** sorry to interrupt. It can also be like, I'd like a really high focus on like healthy eating, right?

**Sarah:** Like healthy eating. Like [00:07:00] and I think that's called ortho orthorexia. Is that the right word? Yeah.

**Alexis:** Yeah. So orthorexia, it's not one of the formal diagnostic criteria, but like informally, it is something that we're seeing as extremely common. And the, you know, the thing we see right now is that wellness culture has become the new sort of diet version of diet culture.

**Alexis:** And so by being health focused, people think it's benign. It's not at all benign, right? Because that hyper focus on being, you know, only eating so called healthy foods is really restrictive. Right. It can create physical issues, but it's also psychologically really risky as well.

**Sarah:** I see that too in in parenting.

**Sarah:** You know, we don't realize when we worry so much about like giving our kids a nutritious, you know, nutritious meals, how much we're influenced by that, you know, diet, diet culture and wellness culture of not wanting to, you know, feeling bad about letting our kids have ice cream and, and stuff like that.

**Sarah:** So yeah, thanks for, thanks for saying that. What what [00:08:00] does cause disordered eating?

**Lucy:** I think for myself when I think of disordered eating, I think so much of the diet culture, the wellness culture, sort of you know, we look at the diets that have been around obviously for many, many years and generally speaking, 95 to 98 percent of diets fail.

**Lucy:** And so when we look at that, it's just sort of putting us on this wheel that we could never sort of succeed. And so we're continuously chasing the next diet, but really diets are formulated to fail. And so essentially we blame

ourselves. for the failed diet. We don't blame the diet for the failure. We and so essentially we are, you know, our self esteem lowers.

**Lucy:** We try to chase the next best diet. And as Alexis was sort of saying that wellness culture is that new diet. So we're getting a lot of positive accolades. And I think that it's sort of sold to us in a different way. So it's sold to us in more of a positive way. So I think just in the last probably five to 10 years, we've seen a shift in that where we [00:09:00] see, you know, fitspiration.

**Lucy:** Things around like if you're really fit, if you're eating really healthy, if you're eating really clean it's almost applauded but what it really does cause is disordered eating, and then that's transferred into our children. And so we talk about, you know, food neutrality and sort of looking at balance with food and having a healthy relationship with food essentially, right?

**Lucy:** Because we knew food food is social. Food is happy. And, and a lot of family and good memories are surrounded by food. So we want to sort of create that in our space rather than strict food, you know, relationship that it has like strict food rules sort of associated with or we eliminate sort of certain food groups in our home, or we make comments around eating too much of this or too much of that, that seems to be surrounded in, in sort of homes.

**Lucy:** And. And there's a lot of misinformation out there. I think that that's really important. A lot of self proclaimed experts, I say in the [00:10:00] nutrition field that are not, they don't have the credentials to back up what they're saying. So I think of like social media, TikTokers, where they post several, you know, TikToks a day sort of talking about what I eat in a day, or if you want to look like this, you eat this, but we really don't have the background information.

**Lucy:** It's really like the highlight reel that we're getting. Mm

**Sarah:** hmm. I, I think I remember over the years reading or hearing that that what you're just talking about, like that, that wellness culture and diet culture is one cause of disordered eating, but that there's also like an emotional cause of disordered eating.

**Sarah:** Can you talk a mental and emotional cause? Can you talk a little bit about that?

**Alexis:** Yeah, I can jump into that piece. So we look at the risk factors or causes. Like I said, I, I tend to frame it as risk factors more than causes because the

reality is when we're talking about disordered eating, and remember, disordered eating is a precursor to eating disorders, right?

**Alexis:** So we're talking about risk, risks and cause for disordered eating. We're talking about risks and causes for eating disorders. And the reality is it's always going to be a little bit of a perfect [00:11:00] storm. What makes one person at risk or one person more resilient it's individual, but yeah, if we move beyond exposure to diet, culture, wellness, culture, peer pressure, all of that, psychologically, you know there's a few things.

**Alexis:** So we're going to see I mean, any, like, pre existing mental health concern, depression, anxiety is going to just sort of emerge. You know, increase your vulnerability low self esteem, absolutely. Whether or not, whether it's related to physical appearance or not can translate to that. Certain personality traits are also going to increase risk.

**Alexis:** So a perfectionistic personality is going to increase risk for disordered eating and then eating disorders. Specifically perfectionism is how to Relationship to anorexia nervosa specifically, other personalities are going to relate to other forms of disordered eating, and And there's, you know, stepping back from [00:12:00] the individual, there's also there's biological factors that are going to create vulnerability genetics, right?

**Alexis:** So having a parent or family member with a history of an eating disorder is going to increase your risk of again, disordered eating and then eating disorders as well. And, you know, again, it's all these things coming together, right? Trauma increases risk. We see really high rates of trauma amongst our individuals with diagnosed eating disorders.

**Alexis:** So again, our folks with disordered eating, right? I suspect we would also see. So the higher rates of trauma or adverse childhood experiences and things like that as well. So again, perfect storm, right? And somebody could have all those factors and not have disordered eating. And we just look at resiliency factors as well.

**Sarah:** Right. That makes a lot of sense. Can you talk, so, so I think there's this myth out there that we only need to worry about girls and disordered eating. Can you talk a little bit about that?

**Lucy:** Yeah, sure. Go ahead, Alexis. I was just going to say, I mean, I think really essentially when we think about boys they're not included as much [00:13:00] because I think there's a hyper focus on body image with females.



**Lucy:** However, if we look at role models for boys, a lot of times we think of a superhero. Right. And that's sort of that, that muscular alpha male has been presented even differently over generations. Right. And we see that that's, that's there. We hear about boys as you were sort of saying, like boys wanting a six pack or sort of that representation that we see in the media as well, whether it's in movies or you know, Any type of I was going to say magazines.

**Lucy:** I don't know how much people look at magazines anymore. I'm dating myself. But just essentially any media, right? We, we see a lot of these type of boys. And so boys are talking more about wanting to achieve that ideal body and talking about that over exercising. At a younger and younger age, which then starts to include things like taking substances or perhaps, you know, juicing, they talk about, you know, different things that they can take to sort of enhance that body.

**Lucy:** I think there is that pressure for voice continuously, and I think there [00:14:00] is not a lot of support for them because I think they're, they're supposed to sort of accept that. The fact that they should look like this and the reality is that people don't naturally look like that. And so there is this you know, expectation to look like that and to sort of idealize this ideal body type that continuously changes over time.

**Lucy:** So I definitely think boys are very much included in the conversation and should be included in the conversation.

**Sarah:** I noticed a few years ago on TV, like I was watching the show. This is us. Do you don't, you know that show? And even like all the dads on the show, even though like, of course there's the one that's the Hollywood actor, but all the other dads who are just supposed to be like average guys, they are all like, they have like gym.

**Sarah:** Like, you know, five hours a day at the gym bodies just supposed to be like the average, you know, American guy. And it really hit me. I was like, wow, this like pressure to have the perfect body is now extended to, to like men on TV, not just women. Right.

**Alexis:** Well, and that's. I think, you know, [00:15:00] no one's immune from getting an eating disorder.

**Alexis:** And the reality is that, like, I think when people think about eating disorders, hey, they think about anorexia and they think about thin white women. Right. And that's just one population group who's vulnerable. Yes. We

know that our young females are at increased risk for a bunch of developmental factors and societal factors.

**Alexis:** But to Lucy's point, our men and our boys are typically Extremely at risk, but also really highly at risk are trans, non binary and gender diverse folks. They're actually five times the risk of developing an eating disorder. I mean, for all of the reasons that I think come to mind right away. You know, when you're experiencing dysphoria, I just more of you with your body and trying to tackle that in addition to.

**Alexis:** Being exposed, you know, so we're all exposed to appearance ideals, right? Appearance ideals are what society tells us the perfect woman, the perfect man looks like. And those ideals are ever changing. They are, look different across cultures. They look different within cultures. [00:16:00] We're all exposed to them.

**Alexis:** That's also gonna make another really big cause for disordered eating. But then our trans, non binary, gender diverse folks, right, are grappling with being these, like, very, like, cis normative, heteronormative images of, like, what the perfect person looks like when struggling with this, They're talking about the difference in their own body, already feeling at odds with their own body in relation to their gender and identity.

**Sarah:** Thanks for bringing that up. Talk about extra challenges. Absolutely.

**Speaker 5:** Absolutely. Yeah.

**Sarah:** So, you know, we talk about the perfect body. I think there are, there's also that myth out there that you only have to worry about your child if they're really thin. But I've recently read that they're, you know, eating disorders show up in people of all different body types.

**Sarah:** Can you talk about that a little bit? Yeah.

**Alexis:** Yeah, so. There isn't one body of like what some of the eating disorder looks like a period, right? A lot of people with an [00:17:00] eating disorder are going to present in a body. That's going to appear sort of in that sort of quote unquote normal range. We could unpack what normal bodies are for hours, but we'll just use that for now.

**Alexis:** And all people with eating disorders are going to exist in what are like larger or high weight bodies as well. Regardless of the eating disorder, right? So



first of all, there's a lot of different kinds of eating disorders. Anorexia, bulimia, binge eating disorder are the kind of three highlight ones.

**Alexis:** There's others beyond that. Those are going to impact the body differently, but all bodies are different, right? Somebody, you know, Yeah, kind of lost my train of thought there, but you can't, I think the most important takeaway is you cannot ever look at a human and know if they have an eating disorder.

**Alexis:** You know, people get a lot of like, oh, you look healthy, you don't have an eating disorder. Or, oh, you're in a high weight body, you can't possibly have anorexia. It's simply not true.

**Sarah:** Yeah, I appreciate you dispelling that myth. Did you want to add anything to that Lucy?

**Lucy:** Yeah, I mean, I think our media has sort of fed us this idea that it's [00:18:00] anorexia nervosa.

**Lucy:** It's underweight. It's the thinness that you're sort of searching for. But as we know, people are in all bodies and also the diagnostic manual looks at binge eating disorder, which sometimes people are in a larger body. And then we look at bulimia nervosa, which it can have that appearance like, like Alexa said.

**Lucy:** So I think it's really hard to sort of identify it. what that body looks like. And I think that's part of the learning for people is that some of those things and signs that you're looking for may not be related to appearance or weight. It may be other things that you should be sort of searching out for.

**Sarah:** Okay. That's a great segue into what sort of red flags or signs should parents keep an eye out for. Yeah, I guess I was going to say if they suspect their child has disordered eating, but I imagine there are lots of parents who didn't suspect at all that their child had disordered eating. So what should we be looking for?

**Alexis:** It's, that's the really, I think, highlight thing. So, I mean, right off the bat, if you [00:19:00] do notice weight changes in your child, Right? I think period in either direction, right? Sudden, rapid or significant weight loss, but also with rapid weight gain. And I don't say that to say like kids shouldn't be gaining weight.

**Alexis:** That's a tricky one. Actually, I should be very careful. Kids do gain weight quite quickly. They're developing at all different paces. I just don't want to miss the conversation around binge eating disorder, which is going to impact weight a little bit differently. I don't want to sort of suddenly it.

**Alexis:** Say that the kids shouldn't be gaining weight. No, I

**Sarah:** remember when my kids were little, they would like chunk out and then they'd grow up, right? Like, so I guess maybe you could say, if they've stopped growing or something, and then you, you notice any rapid, rapid weight gain.

**Alexis:** So I think if we're noticing, you know, sudden changes in weight because one of the things to note with children is their bodies for as like incredibly resilient as a child's body is, they're also really.

**Alexis:** Vulnerable and kids for a bunch of reasons can become extremely sick with a low weight very quickly. You can see like a six week from like onset [00:20:00] of disordered eating to like hospitalization. That's not the norm. But like It can, they can lose weight really quickly and there's a point where the body just runs away with itself, but that is not most cases.

**Alexis:** So if you do notice sudden changes, if you notice also just sudden, like lethargy, headaches if they're cold all the time, right? We're kind of getting at those medical early signs, like if there's fainting episodes, you know, if we're seeing like significant weight loss, you're going to start to see those medical symptoms.

**Alexis:** Obviously those could be symptoms of anything else. If your kid's fainting and having migraines and is cold all the time. Take them to the doctor, no matter what beyond that, right. When you're looking, seeing a kid who is sort of has like a sudden change in how they're eating, right. Are they eating significantly less?

**Alexis:** Are they talking about eating less? Are they suddenly cutting up whole food groups? Like, Oh, I don't eat dessert anymore. I don't eat bread anymore. I don't eat greens anymore. You know, changes from what, you know, their normative eating habits are changes outside of like their preferred foods. You know, excessive excessive and obsessive [00:21:00] exercising.

**Alexis:** Rigidity around food, when I can eat, how much I can eat. And also like pulling away. Eating disorders are really secretive. I always say like eating disorders live in the shadows. They really encourage the individual to become

very secretive. They hide a lot of behaviors. Again, that goes for eating disorders.

**Alexis:** Anorexia, Bulimia, Binge Eating Disorder, the Camille of Shame experience for folks who have eating disorders of all kinds. So if you're noticing them really withdrawing, being very secretive, wearing clothes that are outside of their norm, right? So wearing very baggy clothes if it's not their normal style of dressing, wearing baggy clothes in the summer, hiding their body, concealing their body, becoming shy suddenly if it's not their normal sort of relationship to their body.

**Alexis:** And again, those could be signs of other things, but this is when we want to get our kind of antenna up and really be, you know, detective.

**Sarah:** Yeah,

**Alexis:** exactly.

**Sarah:** So what do you, if you do, if there's a parent listening right now who does see some of those things, what, what, what should they do?[00:22:00]

**Alexis:** I think the first, I mean, this is, I think, parenting in general. I have a five year old, so we're having different levels of conversation than if I had like an 11 year old.

**Sarah:** And I do want to go back after we talk about this and talk about sort of preemptively what can we do as parents to help our child never get to this point.

**Sarah:** But if you already are, because I have had people ask me about this, like my kid is suddenly, you know, not, not eating dinner, like the rest of us or whatever. And because I didn't know what to do, I would always say, talk to your family doctor. But, but is there something else that parents could or should do?

**Alexis:** I think the first step is always just to have a, I mean, the more you can have open communication, obviously in general, the better, but I think just approaching your child and sort of saying, Hey, I'm noticing this. Like, how are you feeling? What's going on? I think we want to be mindful of like, Being really judgment free, making it very open.

**Alexis:** I always say like, come from a place of like, open, sincere curiosity. [00:23:00] Explore, you know, what's going on? How are you feeling? How are

things going? I noticed this. And I'm curious, you know, so you're not eating bread. I'm curious why that is. Right. Just, I always say just start from the most like open place because for as much as it could be a sign that your kid is stepping into disordered eating and into an eating disorder space, there could be something else going on, right?

**Alexis:** Depression can cause changes in eating. Other health concerns can cause changes in eating. Neurodivergence can cause changes in eating, right? So like, Open. Right. But I think coming from a nonjudgmental place of I'm concerned about you, let's talk about what's going on. I mean, I think you can set boundaries around, like if a child says like, I'm not eating this or I'm not eating with the family.

**Alexis:** I mean, you can always come back to like, you know, eating at the family is really important to us. And it's important that we know that you're getting enough nourishment for your body. It's part of our job as your parents is to make sure that you're getting what your body needs. And part of that's eating dinners with family and connecting and socializing and all these things.

**Alexis:** But just, you know, the biggest thing, like don't let it go. If something catches your attention. Don't like [00:24:00] the sit and wait. I just wouldn't do it kids can get sick so fast eating disorders are so dangerous They're life threatening illnesses. I wouldn't go for the wait and see approach. I would talk to your kid and then yeah Take them to a family doctor, right?

**Alexis:** You're never gonna go wrong by seeking medical again because of how dangerous it is Considering how vulnerable child's body is and I'm not talking about like little kids. I'm talking about, you know birth through end of adolescence into early adulthood. Our bodies are vulnerable. Go to the doctor, right?

**Alexis:** Don't take no for an answer. Have them seen, have them assessed and be very persistent if you have concerns. Right. Sometimes doctors will write off like, Oh, it's normative behavior. Oh, there are, there are a runner. Of course their heart rate is low. It's like, no, like

**Sarah:** a

**Alexis:** developing child shouldn't be bradycardic.

**Alexis:** Like it's just not appropriate. Right.

**Sarah:** Or, or you just made me think of like girls who lose their periods too. Right. Yeah. Absolutely.

**Alexis:** Don't let that slide. Right. I mean, like. Even if, like, [00:25:00] there could be something else causing it, but yeah, a girl who has normal menstruation or, you know, whatever normal is at adolescence, they should, their period shouldn't stop.

**Alexis:** Yeah. Even

**Sarah:** if they're an athlete. I've, I've read that's like a big thing too. It used to be seen as normal for an athletic girl to lose their period. And there definitely is something wrong if they are, as far as I, as far as I've been reading lately.

**Alexis:** Yeah. I, I worry about our, you know, my clinical practice, I work with a lot of youth, male and female who are.

**Alexis:** High level competitive athletes across a variety of sports, and I think when they're competing at a really high level there can really easily be a lot of excuses made for why they're experiencing something outside of the norm developmentally, and I would be very cautious. I caution parents against writing things off as like, oh, they're an athlete because our athletes are very at risk for developing eating disorders.

**Sarah:** Right. There's a lot of pressure to have a certain body type to perform better, right?

**Alexis:** Yeah.

**Sarah:** Yeah. So, okay. So backing up a bit. What are [00:26:00] some things that we can do as, as parents? You mentioned you have a five year old, Alexis. What are some things that we can do as parents to help our child have that healthy relationship with food and with their, maybe these are two separate questions, but food and, and body, body image and body acceptance.

**Alexis:** I can talk about what I do is like with my little, like Lucy has a couple of kids who are a little bit older and personally, professionally, both. Have different things to offer to this race. Well, let's

**Sarah:** start with little and then we'll move to bed.

**Alexis:** We'll just increase developmentally, right? Body image.

**Alexis:** So a couple things we can do before we even have a conversation with our Children is. Body neutrality, right? Coming from a place of body neutrality, not even body positivity, but just like bodies are bodies, the way they look, the size of the shape they take is not the most important thing. Looking at how our bodies serve us, celebrating how our bodies serve us.

**Alexis:** But when [00:27:00] we're around our children, not talking about our own bodies in negative ways and not talking about other people's bodies in negative ways, we may think that talking about. The body of the neighbor is a, like, benign, fine thing to see, but, like, we're just modeling to our children how we relate to other people, how we feel about bodies.

**Alexis:** So, first of all, how are you talking about your own body? How about other people's bodies is really important. And then how are you talking about your child's body, right? The simple thing is that, like, there's just almost never a good reason to talk about somebody's appearance and body. There just isn't.

**Alexis:** It's really ingrained in us socially, right? Like we're so, we're taught to comment on bodies like, Oh, do you see so and so they've lost weight? Or do you see so and so they look fantastic? Or like, you know, whatever it is. We just don't need to do it, right? So if we just start by not commenting on bodies and their size and shape and weight.

**Alexis:** And then with kids, right, really celebrating the body. Right. How their body helps them, how they've served them. Oh my goodness. Your legs are so strong. Did [00:28:00] you run all the way across that room? Wow. That's so awesome. Right. And, and celebrating the parts of their bodies that might feel vulnerable down the road, right?

**Alexis:** Like my son loves nothing more than to like, show me his belly and he wants to see my belly and he wants to, I don't know, he's just like a very like affectionate little human. And we were like, Oh my gosh, look how, Look at your belly, look how beautiful it is. Oh my goodness, it looks so full. You must have had such a delicious meal.

**Alexis:** It looks like such a happy belly, right? Just like creating language around our bodies that's celebratory, that's positive, that's celebrating how it serves us. I think it's a great place to start off and just staying away from anything critical. There's just not a need for it, especially not with developing brains and bodies.

**Alexis:** Yeah.



**Sarah:** Instagram reel of a little tiny girl, it was maybe three, whose mother couldn't figure out why she kept stuffing she kept stuffing like, stuff in her waistband to give herself a bigger belly. And her mother was like, what are you doing? And she said, I want to look beautiful. Just like you, mommy.

**Sarah:** It really shows [00:29:00] that we don't have, you know, we're taught to have these negative associations with certain body shapes. Right. Okay. So, so, so having a sort of just a blanket policy, if we don't make comments. about people's bodies and then celebrating their bodies for, for celebrating all, all shapes and sizes of your child's body and what your child's body can do.

**Sarah:** Right. I remember actually when my daughter was little and she's always been like not one of those tiny little wisps of a girl. And she came home from school one day when she was in first grade, I think, and said, all the other girls in my class are so skinny. And she's, she was like noticing the difference.

**Sarah:** And, and I, you know, I said to her like, Can your body jump high, you know, can you run fast and we just really focused on that and and I could tell that It really kind of changed her the way she was looking at the differences in body. So I you know, I'm glad I did the right thing What about you Lucy in terms of like older older kids, how can we help them have that, you know [00:30:00] Well, we were talking about positive body image and maybe we can go back to talking about healthy relationship to food after.

**Lucy:** Absolutely. So my kids are 10 and 14, almost 15. My daughter's going to be 15 on Sunday. And I have a boy and a girl, so that's interesting as well. Just having the two different genders and and sort of raising them in the same way. So for myself, I always feel that role modeling is everything in our household.

**Lucy:** So part of what we do is many things around eating together. There's no electronics at the table, right? So those are some things. Talking just about like having open conversation. I think communication is everything. I think once you sort of bridge that communication I always had a rule with my kids as well that anywhere we went I would say to them if you see something that you're unsure of you want to ask me then when we get to the car Feel free to ask me anything and they would and they would say oh I have to ask you something and I would sort of cue What they're going to ask me about.[00:31:00]

**Lucy:** And so having that open dialogue being nonjudgmental around that, and I really echo the idea that you know, bodies are all beautiful and really celebrating that people come in all shapes and sizes. Another thing that I do is

I'll say, you know, you have your grandma's, you know, I don't think it's necessary.

**Lucy:** I think sometimes it's necessary. I, you know, having zero tolerance sort of for for making fun of people or parents based comments. I don't think it's necessary. I think sometimes it's necessary. It's nice to celebrate like you have eyes like this person or your hair color so beautiful because it's, you know it's, it's lightened up in the summer and how beautiful look at you have these natural highlights, but really taking away from, you know, our, our bodies [00:32:00] as an appearance space, but really looking at, like you were kind of saying around, you know, your, your body strong.

**Lucy:** You can run, you can jump, like how wonderful is that look at all the things that our bodies can do for us and how many wonderful things that they do. And then I think sort of moving into the food again, it's the same thing. I think commenting about food in certain ways. So we use a very food neutral sort of approach at home.

**Lucy:** And I'll say, you know, how can we balance out your lunch, right? So, you know, even at 10 years old, my son's been sort of Being very present and making his lunch with me. And so what can we do to sort of balance it out? So not only are you teaching some sort of, you know, Canada's food guide, we look at those kind of things.

**Lucy:** We also look at, you know, what is missing here. I always tell my kids like eat the fresh fruits and vegetables first so that they're not spoiled by the time you want to eat them in the afternoon, right? So giving a little bit of direction But giving them some freedom to choose the foods that they like And I always say like if you have foods available to kids, they will eat them and you know Sometimes it's washing the fruit.

**Lucy:** It's cutting the fruit. It's you know, [00:33:00] putting all of those things out, but all foods fit So that we don't say like we don't talk about foods as being bad or good. There's no moral sort of indication that if you eat this, you're bad. We hear that in the diet culture, right? Tomorrow, I'm going to start being good.

**Lucy:** Today, I was really bad. It's almost like we need a punishment for indulging in something or using food as reward is another thing, right? We don't use food as reward. It just creates this. That moral sort of complication to food being, you know, I'm being good today, right? And so using food in a very social environment cooking together, I think that's important as well.

**Lucy:** Getting your kids in the kitchen and sort of being part of the process. And then role modeling, right? So mom eats all kinds of things and mom enjoys eating different things. And if we don't like something, that's okay, too. So having that acceptance, like our, you know, both my kids are not exactly the same but trying to say, this is our dinner and this is what we have and we're all going to enjoy it.

**Lucy:** And if you don't like something, then you can eat something else, right? So those kinds of things, but I think the ears are always [00:34:00] listening. I always say that the little ears. So from a very young age, just be very cautious about what we're saying around food. Weight, bodies, appearance, and what value we're sort of placing on those things.

**Lucy:** I, I encourage parents all the time for that language, right? To find the language around food, around bodies, so that they can better sort of parent their children so that we, we're not encouraging those things. And if they do come with those conversations, then let's deconstruct them a little bit, right?

**Lucy:** And so I'll say to my kids, what did you see on social media? Let's talk about it. Right? And so let's have those open conversations. And it's really worked well for my children. They're very open. And we talk about a lot of different things. And I feel like we're sort of all learning from each other because they're, they're, they're brilliant when it comes to, you know, sort of social media and understanding things that I probably don't.

**Lucy:** And also parents get on social media and understand social media so that you know what sort of you're up against, right? So that you're not sort of ignoring it, hoping it's going to disappear because it won't.

**Sarah:** Yeah. I mean, I, I [00:35:00] love that you brought up social media because you know, we talked about that in the beginning of our time together.

**Sarah:** We talked about that being an influence on kids and, and disordered eating. Do you have any specific recommendations? I mean, you just said, get on social media and talk to your kids about it, but, I don't know. Do you have anything else that you want parents to know from what you've seen? What, what the influence that social media has had on kids and disordered eating?

**Lucy:** Yeah, many different things. I think one of them is ensuring that you have an open dialogue limit social media. I think that kids are getting on social media very young and they're exposed to many, many different messaging that

they can't really process. So I always encourage my kids as well. Like if you see something that you're unsure of, let's talk about it.

**Lucy:** Like show me Let's let's sort of dissect it together. Unfollow things. I think we're we're bound to follow things sometimes. And then we need to back up and say, and I'm sort of referring to like, my daughter is going to be 15, right? So that sort of age demographic with, with [00:36:00] youth with adolescents, especially if something is, you know, cause algorithms are interesting, right?

**Lucy:** So whatever you're looking up, if you look at it once, it will scale. Continue to feed those things. I know there's been a lot of studies in terms of Instagram and looking at like how photos right? And then I also challenge people don't always comment. We tend to comment on people's photos or achievements in an appearance way.

**Lucy:** So somebody graduates from from university or high school. We're like, Oh, your daughter so pretty. Beautiful photo, beautiful young girl instead of intelligence, smart way to go, right? Like you, you did it, right? So it's not sort of based on the achievement. So kind of challenging people to go away from that appearance based comments.

**Lucy:** And then not looking for those comments. and likes as validation. So I talked to young people often and they'll say, you know, I spend a lot of times using editing and filtering tools on my phone. So smartphones have everything available to, to, you know, in your hands. And so they'll, they'll [00:37:00] alter these photos, they'll post them and they'll expect a certain.

**Lucy:** amount of likes or, or comments. And if they don't get them, they take it down. So it's a really sense of validation and self esteem. And so I always talk about like, where do we get our self esteem from? Right. And we do an activity where we do a self esteem wheel and we look at like different places that we can get our self esteem from.

**Lucy:** And a lot of it is based on relationship, things we're good at school, peers, family. fun activities, you know, hobbies rather than I get half of my validation from appearance, right? So if I, if I, if I look good, then I feel good. If I don't feel good, then I have my self esteem sort of plummets. And so really encouraging that confidence comes from different areas and talk about those things.

**Lucy:** Those are really important things. And then, you know, limit the time. We see that kids are spending a lot of time on social media. I think adolescents spend at least five hours, some of them on social media, which is a tremendous amount. So I don't think people realize how much time is actually spent [00:38:00] on social media, which can create a really negative Perception of self because of the comparison trap.

**Lucy:** We're all in. Yeah. And I say like kids have it, the comparison trap. Parents have a comparison trap. We're never feeling good enough because that highlight reel is unrealistic to compare ourselves to.

**Sarah:** I love how you mentioned filters. Cause I think that would be a useful exercise too with kids is to look at like, I know there are websites that show like the, the, the photos before they were touched up and the after and just like looking at how things are.

**Sarah:** I know it's probably Not, it's not photoshopped these days, but we still call it how things are photoshopped because I bet a lot of kids don't even know that's not really what that woman's body looks like in real life. Like what you're seeing on, on Instagram, like it's not actually what she looks like.

**Sarah:** So that might be a helpful thing to do too, with kids.

**Lucy:** Yeah, we had a campaign. Actually, I'll just say quickly, Alexis, but we had a be your selfie campaign and we challenged people to take a photo with a Polaroid camera that you can't alter [00:39:00] the photo at all. And they were very skeptical. Young people did felt like, and once they saw that photo, it was, amazing to see the reaction that they actually really liked it and they wanted to keep it like they really felt like, Oh, I don't look so bad or this photo looks better than I thought.

**Lucy:** And so getting them away from the filters a little bit, right? And so demonstrating that you look great just the way you are.

**Sarah:** Alexis, did you have something you wanted to add to that?

**Alexis:** Yeah, I think, yeah, I think talking about it. I think it's funny if you talk, if you talk to a teenager and you're like, well, people are filtering, putting filters on the roller eyes.

**Alexis:** Like I know, I know, I know. But I think until they're forced to really sit with like the comparison of like filtered and unfiltered images, it's like, you

know, it's like things we know, we know a lot of things we don't really want to sit with the discomfort of the reality of it. But like, TikTok is incredible.

**Alexis:** So. People say, Oh, well, they have to, there's a tag to show if you've had like a filter over your video, that's not actually true. You can have like sort of different beauty filters on your videos or there's no indication of it. And [00:40:00] so most videos on TikTok or many issues, most, a lot of it is on TikTok, especially that the influencers, they are actually filtered or smoothed out in a really significant way when you see the comparison.

**Alexis:** And there is no tag. There is no indication that a filter is being used because a lot of them are also doing post editing. They're not just editing on the app. And so they're getting around a lot of that. And so you see people doing their skincare routines and look how beautiful and clear and bouncy my skin is.

**Alexis:** And then you see the unfiltered images and then, you know, skin is skin. First of all, who cares what it looks like. But it's not even close to the reality. And I think the thing for our kids to understand is that, you know, stop, step back and think about, is this person trying to sell you something? Is this person or is someone going to profit off of your perception of this video?

**Alexis:** Right? Even if it seems altruistic, even if it seems like you'll feel so good about yourself and Is [00:41:00] someone trying to sell you something? And I mean, I could go on a rant about this with like fitness and wellness plans and all of that. But

**Speaker 5:** like,

**Alexis:** you know, I'm going to just throw it like new, like we go back to like dieting and food relationships, like Weight Watchers, but even for me, worse is new.

**Alexis:** And these diet programs and fitness programs that claim like, we're about your self esteem. We're about you just feeling good, you know, being your best self. Hey, they're just about as toxic, frankly, as any of like the sort of like, Worst offenders in times of diet planning they are trying to sell you something, right?

**Alexis:** They're trying to imply, like, we want you to do this to feel good, to feel energetic, to feel present in your life. The implication is you're not good enough the way you are right now. There's something wrong with you, right? And the



only way to feel better is to change. I think that's a conversation to have in an ongoing way with kids, right?

**Alexis:** Is this, is someone going to make money off of making you feel a certain way? But then going to Lucy's point, I think being on social [00:42:00] media as parents, knowing what these kids are up against and taking part in it with them, right? Like, I'm not saying post your kids online and, you know, I'm just saying like, Don't say, Oh, I don't get it.

**Alexis:** It's confusing. Like be present on social media, not post, but just scroll. Tick tock. I don't know. Because then you will be tuned in, right? Especially when you hit your, like your middle school age kids and then your high school age kids and older. Cause our, you know, post secondary age kids are not.

**Alexis:** You know, immune to this.

**Sarah:** Yeah,

**Alexis:** right. Like, you know, up to college or university or even just, you know, moving out and being independent. Some major developmental tasks happening there. And those kids are really vulnerable as well for different reasons. You don't stop parenting at 18.

**Sarah:** Yeah. Yeah. And I, and I think also we have to be careful, like if we want our kids to talk to us about things they see on social media, we have to be careful about not being too negative about their, about their interests and the things that they're following or that they like, cause they'll just, they'll [00:43:00] don't want to hide it if they think that we think it's stupid or they're embarrassed or whatever.

**Sarah:** So just really remembering that Probably the things you liked when you were 14 are, would seem equally silly to you now than, than, than, you know, what your, what your kids are watching at, at 14. And I also just, when you were, when you were talking to about you know, that how we see ourselves, I just wanted to highlight something that I think we, we talked about a little bit, but not as much as maybe as.

**Sarah:** We should think about is how we think about ourselves too. I think that and how I think what both of you did mention, like talking about your own body or, or what you eat. But I think if you, if you are worried about your kid in their body image and disordered eating, like, you know, do your own work first.

**Sarah:** Right. Do you see, cause you said you see that a lot that it kind of can run in families too.

**Alexis:** Yeah. Kids will notice. Right? And I'm not saying that like you're not entitled as an adult to have your own struggles with your body, which of course we all, like, that's the, that's [00:44:00] normal. We all are, right? And it's going to ebb and flow because I think as adults, the thing to remember is that we talk about children's and adolescent body changes.

**Alexis:** Our bodies change through our whole life. Right there. Our bodies are not stagnant. We don't stop growing. And then our bodies stop changing like not at all. So our body image is going to change throughout our lives. Our kids will notice they'll notice how we talk about our bodies and ourselves.

**Alexis:** They'll notice how we eat or don't eat. So I said, as an adult, As an adult, as an autonomous person, right, you are entitled to make choices about what you eat, right? I mean, like, I think we do take a non dieting approach in our work, but at the end of the day, a consenting adult is entitled to do what they want to.

**Alexis:** You have autonomy over your body. And I'd be very cautious of what you model and talk about in front of children, because I think, period, children shouldn't be dieting, right? A developing body shouldn't be dieting. A developing body should not be trying to lose weight. But then yeah, like how do you relate to your body?

**Alexis:** How do you, what clothes do you put on? It's summertime, [00:45:00] right? Your kids are going to notice if you won't put on a bathing suit and get in the pool with them. Or you won't go to the beach with them, or if you spend the whole day hiding. And I'm not saying that that's an easy thing to challenge. It's a big task especially in the culture that we live in.

**Alexis:** But being willing to like, put on the shorts, put on the bathing suit, get out into the water and be with your kids, that's what they're gonna notice. Right? And that's gonna show them that, and it might be really uncomfortable, right? But they're gonna remember that positive memory and that interaction.

**Alexis:** And they're gonna, you know, hear what you say if you say, Oh, I don't want, I can't put a bathing suit on or I can't come in the water, right? Oh, I don't like how this is fitting my body right

**Lucy:** now.

**Alexis:** Maybe how you feel, but what we communicate is really important,

**Lucy:** right? I love that. I would even add to that, I think for myself, I think it's also really important to to normalize that we don't have to feel good about ourselves every day.

**Lucy:** And I think we're, we're sort of, that's another culture sort of learned behavior that we should feel [00:46:00] great every day and we're, we're on every day, right? So, I communicate that with my kids sometimes as well, right? We don't feel good every day about ourselves and that's okay. If you have a bad hair day, if you're, you know, Not feeling too comfortable in something or, you know, and I always say body image is something that is in progress.

**Lucy:** I've worked here for 21 years and I, and I think our bodies are continuously changing and we have to think about that as well. But not feeling like we have to be on every day. I think that's a lot of pressure for kids as well, if that's how you're presenting yourself. right? And so sometimes it's important to be honest about that, but having that right conversation and using sort of those right words.

**Lucy:** And I think as Alexis was mentioning, I really like the idea that kids want to build memories with their family and loved ones and people around them. So if it's going into the pool and having fun and releasing some of those uncomfortable feelings, it's going to make such a positive impact not only on yourself, But also on your Children, right?

**Lucy:** I hear often so many adults sort of saying, I hate pictures. [00:47:00] I hate being in pictures. I've been hearing this recently, like I hate pictures of myself. But that's sometimes all we have when, when things end, right? Like we look back at those pictures or we look back at memories. And we don't want to be missing from all those memories as well, right?

**Lucy:** Where were we on that vacation? We're not in one photograph, right? So we want to let go of that idea that we always have to look like we're on. We always have to feel good. Yeah. But creating sort of a safe space to feel like it feels good just to be myself, right? My 10 year old son always says, I love it mom when you don't have makeup and you're in bed.

**Lucy:** Like he just loves to cuddle with me and like, and he goes, I just think you look so cute, you know, and it's just, it's just adorable, right? Like, you're just so cute, you know, and I know I love your nose or like little things that he points out about, you know, and those are the things that stick with me.

**Lucy:** Right. Those are the memories that you're building and the relationship sort of strengthening the relationship with your children.

**Sarah:** I love that. What a cutie your son is. Yeah, he's adorable. He's

**Lucy:** something else.

**Sarah:** So, [00:48:00] so I will put this to you a couple of questions that were sort of the ones that I've gotten that made me feel like I need to do a podcast about this.

**Sarah:** So I had So this comes up all the time. What do you do? And tell me if you don't, if you don't think you can answer this, but I hope you can. If your child, whether they are in a bigger body or not in a bigger body says I'm fat. I mean, first of all, I know we were really trying to not use fat as an insult.

**Sarah:** So maybe we would address that first, but what do you, how do you handle those kinds of comments from kids from a body neutral stance when you want to have a kid who has healthy eating?

**Alexis:** Yeah, it's like, I think the first thing to acknowledge and validate is it's gonna be a delicate conversation. And I think, look, I talk about this stuff for a living.

**Alexis:** And if my kid just mentions like, Oh, do I have my fat? I'm still gonna be like, all right, take a big breath.

**Speaker 5:** I don't

**Alexis:** want to, you know, drop the ball here. But it's going to depend on the kid and the [00:49:00] nature of the conversation, how they're bringing it up. I will start right off the bat. You said, you know, the word fat, right?

**Alexis:** It's, it feels really loaded. That's not a bad word. Right. And actually at the fat liberation movement, there's a lot of work being done to reclaim it as a very neutral descriptor. Now, not every person in a larger body is going to feel comfortable with that. That's a personal choice. Right. But depending on what, you know, where the kid is developmentally, you know, for like my son, he's five.

**Alexis:** What does that mean? Like, they'll talk about what, like, what, like, so, you know, you're saying your body is fat, like, I'm curious what that means to

you. And they're like, oh, I feel fat. It's like, okay, well, fat's something that's on our body, that's something that's in the food we eat, our bodies, our bodies require fat to function.

**Alexis:** We cannot live a fat free existence. Not a thing. What are we feeling? Right? I'd be really curious. It's like, are you feeling insecure? It's like a comment about your body. Are you feeling uncomfortable? Are we comparing our bodies to someone around us? Like, what's that like? You know, I feel fat. What does it actually [00:50:00] mean?

**Alexis:** And just, again, open, honest curiosity. I think we want to jump to like, Oh, no, no, no, like we, you know what I would say, what you don't do? Oh, you're not fat. You're beautiful. Because it's a really loaded, it's a, you want to be like, no, no, no, you're fine. You're fine. You're fine. But what we do right away is we villainize fat and we villainize bodies in of all shapes and sizes.

**Alexis:** So as much as you want to like, Oh no, no, it's fine. It's fine. Right? Take a step back. Take a breath. Let's have a conversation about it, right? And explore, right? Where are they getting the information from? Now, I think depending on the age of your child, You know, maybe you have a kid who isn't a bigger body, right?

**Alexis:** Maybe you have a kid, maybe a parent genetically in your family, you're just all going to be in larger bodies. And that is how your bodies are going to be happiest and healthiest. And we live in an incredibly fat phobic weight bias culture where people at higher bodies face legitimate discrimination, who are impacted and their mental health and physical [00:51:00] health.

**Alexis:** But you know, weight bias is a public health And so when you're talking with an older child, especially your teenagers and young adults, it's okay to validate that. Like, I hear that it's actually hard to live in a bigger body and the world is not always kind. And I'm really sorry that that's the experience that you're having, right?

**Alexis:** Because people don't understand that your weight is not equal to your health or your value or your worth. But it's okay to validate that it's hard, right? I think to not validate it is actually doing a disservice to that child or that adolescent. And then work with them, right? Okay, so we live in a really unfair world, and people aren't always kind.

**Alexis:** Let's work on how we can support you at home and have home be a safe space, and what do you need you know, to have that space to yourself, right?

Creating a home that is free of weight bias and diet culture is one of the best things you can do. Right? Having a space for your child that they're safe to be themselves and their body.

**Alexis:** You know, we're not getting rid of diet culture, unfortunately, as hard as a lot of us are trying. But we can create safe, like, [00:52:00] Protective little pocket. So and let them know they can keep talking to you as they struggle with it. Right. But how do we live in this world? That's not always kind and not punish our bodies, right?

**Alexis:** Your body is not doing anything wrong by being the size it is. But if you are. Restricting if you're starving yourself, if you're harming your body through too much exercise, right, you're now punishing your body for just trying to exist in the way it wants to be right. And it doesn't deserve that because you don't deserve that.

**Alexis:** So it's a long conversation. It's gonna be a multi part conversation depending on where your kids at. That's a good start. It's a, yeah, it's a, it's a starting point.

**Sarah:** What if, what if, because I, the one person asked me this, whose, whose child actually was not in a bigger body, I think a nine year old girl who, and then she was worried that this was the early red flag of disordered eating when her child was in a like pretty average sized body but was saying I'm fat, I'm fat.

**Sarah:** What, how would you address that? And by the way, your [00:53:00] example of how to talk to a child in a bigger body moved me almost to tears. It was really lovely and empathetic.

**Alexis:** I have lots of experience talking with these kiddos and, you know, stepping back and just seeing them for, and this is adults too, right?

**Alexis:** Every adult in our lives deserves that same degree of empathy and love and support. And also again, validation. We don't have to pretend the world's not a cruel place. It is right. So for our kids who are in bodies, who maybe are not experiencing. Aren't being stigmatized themselves for their bodies. So they're, they themselves aren't gonna maybe be experience discrimination for their bodies like our kiddos in higher weight or a higher weight.

**Alexis:** They're still impacted by weight bias, right? Because again, even a kid in a kidness, in a small body right, can feel very like, well shoot my body. It's



like, okay, I am thin or I'm small. And it's been very clear to me that the world values me for my small body. God, I don't want that to ever change.

**Alexis:** Right. And that can actually create risk for some of our [00:54:00] smaller bodied kiddos too, because if they're, as they develop and they grow and their bodies change as they're meant to do, the world's told them like, no, no, no, you're valuable because your body is small. Like, don't change it. But again, with that kid who sort of again, typical kind of what we call straight sized in the fashion world, is I would again, come back to that place of like some curious, what.

**Alexis:** It's making you feel that way, right, you know, exploring, you know, what have they been told? What have they seen online? What are their friends talking about? And When they say fat, like again, like I feel fat, right? That's not a feeling, but there's a lot of feelings caught up in that sentence. So it's just like, I would take a step back from that.

**Alexis:** Because then you can start to work on dispelling myths. But you know, that kid, that nine year old may have a peer at school who they see as being quite similar in body and that friend saying like, Oh, I'm, I'm fat or. My parent, my grandparent told me I am fat, [00:55:00] right? That happens all the time no matter the size of the child, that adults are very critical of children's bodies.

**Alexis:** I always think back to my own early childhood experience, and I'm someone who grew up in a fairly small body genetically, and I realized probably until the age of like 16, the only people who commented on my body were adults. My peers did not comment on my body. Adults did. And my framework for the value of my body was based on the comments of adults who felt very comfortable talking about my body.

**Alexis:** I was like, that's a problem. That's an issue. Yeah. I don't think that's unusual either. I think the adults are the ones commenting on kids bodies. And then they paired that to their friends. So, you know, maybe they talked to their child and it turns out that their friend was talking about it or they're seeing people on social media.

**Alexis:** Right. So, I would just always be willing to like, let's take a step back. Right. I feel like that's a big statement. What's like the tip of the iceberg, right?

**Sarah:** Right, right. Love that. Was there anything that I didn't ask you, either of you, about parenting parenting specifically [00:56:00] and disordered eating and body image that, that you want parents to know?

**Lucy:** I think a little bit of what I was thinking, Sarah, is just around, you know, sort of, as Alexis mentioned, how many adults comment on your children's bodies and how do you handle that as an adult? And perhaps that's a good conversation as well. Because I hear a lot of that, like, I'm thinking my daughter has always been in a smaller body and sometimes people would comment about that in so many different avenues, like she should be a gymnast or I hope she always stays like this.

**Lucy:** I mean, we hear these type of comments continuously. So how or, you know, around food, even people that come into your house that are very diet centric, right? And then they're like, Oh, you're going to eat that? Well, don't eat too much of that. Or you're going to get fat, you know, these type of comments continuously sort of coming at us.

**Lucy:** And so we can create this neutral environment in our own household. But when we step out, whether it's in public, whether it's in school, whether it's. And people coming to our home, how do we [00:57:00] navigate some of those comments, right? And so that's challenging sometimes for parents and it's also challenging for children because they don't know what to say sometimes and they don't have the right words.

**Lucy:** And so how do we advocate for our children in front of our children? And when is that appropriate when it's not? And how do we sort of debrief when we go home, I call it because I know my kids and I have had to debrief because they'll say, Oh, this person's not eating cake. They don't eat this. They you know, they, they'll say they have to exercise in order to eat a piece of cake.

**Lucy:** What is that all about? Right? Because we don't do that. And so how do you have those conversations? And I think it's about really understanding and communicating to your kids that people do, do, do, different things. The diet culture is very powerful. We're always, you know, people are always comparing themselves.

**Lucy:** There's always something to be sold, which is a lot of this ideal sort of thinking. And how do we kind of get away from that without feeling like we're, we're almost influenced in a way from, from those comments [00:58:00] or we're feeling hurt by some of the words that people use, right? If, if people say like, you should be Doing A and B.

**Lucy:** And if your kid doesn't do that and I hear that with people that have children in larger bodies, right? Like, what does the doctor say about their body? Right? And so coming from that place of empathy, right? And, and sort

of some, sometimes it's pulling somebody aside. Like an adult to an adult and having that conversation that we don't really like that in our household, right?

**Lucy:** Like we don't want to hear those words and sometimes that advocacy piece is really powerful Because your kids are really getting the message that you're you're creating a space that you're making them feel good about themselves And it's not just in our home, but it's outside of it as well I'd call it body based harassment And I think it's really important even at school if that happens to speak to the teacher because sometimes You that's encouraged.

**Lucy:** You know, I used to go into schools and there would be like the biggest loser competition in the classroom. Oh no. And it's just discouraging or Miss Smith won the biggest loser and they're like, Miss Smith, you didn't eat any chocolate [00:59:00] this week. And I'm like, oh my God, I have my work cut out for me. I think I need to come back.

**Lucy:** You know? And so you, you, you look at those adult influencers, we call them. And they certainly have an impact, whether they're coaches, teachers, and, and family members extended. And we need to think about how do we create that, that sort of same messaging to them in a place where you feel like that your kids feels validated and respected.

**Sarah:** Yeah, that's lovely, Lucy.

**Alexis:** Did you want to add anything, Alexis? I think, and this will probably have to be, you know, find someone to have a whole other episode on this, but I do think really sitting with the idea of like, how do we become, how can we have a food neutral home? Right. And, and, you know, we talk, we're talking about body, bodies and body image a lot today, but I think how we talk about food and how we relate to food and Lucy did touch on this, but you know, food neutrality means that we are not applying moral judgment to food.

**Alexis:** There is not good food or bad food or cheap foods or sometimes foods or, you know, like food is food. All food serves our bodies. [01:00:00] All food provides energy. I think we also be very cautious of like, Moral value on food when food insecurity is rampant in our province, in our communities, and kids are the biggest, greatest impacted by food insecurity.

**Alexis:** And so, frankly, if, like, if a child is able to get three meals a day, and those three meals a day are boxed KD and not done, like, Feed my kids candy all the time. It's fantastic. I'm always grateful when there's leftovers, or we just

make two boxes. But, a fed, like we, we take a fed as best approach to, to feeding children.

**Alexis:** I know we hear fed as best in the world of like breastfeeding and infant feeding, but like children need food first. All food is going to nourish that child. All food contains energy. Kids need sugar. Kids need fat. So do adults for that matter. But, You don't have to offer all foods at all times, but how we talk about them is so important, right?

**Alexis:** You know, oh, hey, can I have chocolate cake? You know, we're not going to chocolate cake right now. This is what's on the menu for tonight, but you know, another time chocolate cake would be [01:01:00] great, right? No, you can't have chocolate cake. That's junk food. You need real food. Like that's not going to nourish you.

**Alexis:** No, just not, not what we're having right now. But yeah, I totally hear why you want a chocolate cake. That makes sense. I love it too. Right. When in doubt, say less. I think, but I would encourage parents listening or anyone listening, like, do a quick Google search, look into food neutrality. How do we shift the language we use around food that is massively impactful on how children relate to themselves, their bodies and how they nourish their bodies going forward.

**Alexis:** And again, a growing body shouldn't be restricting period, right? They need to be All nutrition, and they're going to be fine, right? Barring like diagnosed medical conditions, your average child, they're going to be fine if they eat. Hot dogs for a week because you're camping like I've talked to people of

**Sarah:** nutritionists about this and they say it's actually a lot harder than parents think to not have your child have a lot not enough [01:02:00] nutrition, like that.

**Sarah:** There's the, you know, lots of fortified, fortified vitamins and minerals and like Processed food and that it's, you know, kids are actually often getting more nutrition than we think they are. And I also wanted to do a little Canadian to American translation for our non Canadian listeners that Katie, that Alexis just mentioned is craft dinner, which is macaroni and cheese for all of our non Canadians.

**Sarah:** Boxed macaroni and cheese, which we had a lot when my kids were growing up too.

**Alexis:** Lucy did, I will say one other thing. And again, I think of summertime and you're outside, you're at the beach you're having barbecue and people get really panicked about that the way they do it like holiday evening Lucy alluded to this one of the things our dieticians often talk about is nutrition through addition It's like your kid wants chips great that may not keep them full for very long adding some fat or protein would probably benefit them So, okay, we're gonna have chips.

**Alexis:** Let's also have you know Yogurt or something. I don't I'm not a dietician but like what do we [01:03:00] add? How do we add to the nutrition of something versus saying? right Um So just rounding out a meal, right? Balance. Great. We have part of our meal. Let's round it out. Let's add to it. So we're getting what we feel like eating, what's tasty and fun and delicious, and finding other delicious ways to make sure our bodies are getting all the nutrition that they need within someone's ability and access.

**Alexis:** Again, be very mindful that like, Food insecurity plays a really big role. We can't ignore the sort of issue around affordability with food right now either.

**Sarah:** Yeah, especially right now, 100%.

**Alexis:** Yeah.

**Sarah:** Well, thank you both so much. I'm just going to close out by asking you the question that I ask all my podcast guests, which is if you could go back in time.

**Sarah:** In this, It doesn't have any, it can have nothing to do with what we've been talking about. This is just your view as a parent, but if you could go back in time to your younger parent self, what advice would you give yourself?[01:04:00]

**Alexis:** Be less anxious.

**Alexis:** With my newborn, I wish I had just not felt so tied to the house. I think when I, you know, when you've won, I, you know, obviously that changes when you have multiple kids. But like, I wish I hadn't like had to like rush home to feed him or like I could have actually just stayed out like And just be less anxious, go with the flow a little bit more, it'll be okay.

**Alexis:** I probably could have used that as my

**Lucy:** Nice. Yeah, I think for myself it would be feel less guilty. I think there's a lot of guilt to parenting and especially working full time. I think there's a lot of expectations and I feel like lately I've just been letting it go. And I don't want to feel the guilt and and I feel like I'm remodeling something great for my kids that you can work full time.

**Lucy:** You can be [01:05:00] successful and you can be present with them as well. And so feeling less guilty of sharing your time and then being present when you can in whatever capacity. But I think that's for me. What I've been working on. I

**Sarah:** love that. Thank you both so much for your time today. Really valuable conversation.

**Sarah:** Where if folks want to find out more about you and what you do, where's the best place to go?

**Lucy:** I would suggest our best places, Banna. ca. So [www. banna. ca](http://www.banna.ca). That's our website. And they can find lots of information about everything from eating disorders to health promotion, to prevention, to how to seek help and resources.

**Sarah:** Oh, perfect. Okay. We'll put that in the show notes. Thank you. Thank you again. It was really helpful conversation.

**Lucy:** Yeah. Thank you for having us. Yeah.

**Speaker 2:** Thanks for listening to this week's episode. I hope you found this conversation insightful and exactly what you needed in this moment. Be sure to subscribe to the show on your favorite podcast platform and leave us [01:06:00] a rating and review on Apple Podcasts. Remember that I'm rooting for you. I see you out there showing up for your kids and doing the best you can.

**Speaker 2:** Sending hugs over the airwaves today. Hang in there. You've got this.