



Ditch Diets and Find Food Freedom with Chelsey Amer, MS, RD, CDN (ep – 46)

[00:00:00] **Chelsey Amer:** If you want to actually feel good in your body, we have to pay attention to what we're eating and make choices. Intuitive eating is not always saying yes. Sometimes that's actually saying no. I'm gonna wait for another occasion to eat the donut, the cookie, whatever, when it'll be more satisfying, when it'll feel better in my body, and that's okay too.

[00:00:20] **Ginger Hultin:** Welcome to The Good Clean Nutrition Podcast. I'm your host, Ginger Hultin. I'm an Integrative Practicing Registered Dietitian Nutritionist. Today, I'm really excited to introduce you to my friend and colleague, Chelsey Amer. She is a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and a Certified Intuitive Eating Counselor.

She has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology. And a master's degree in clinical nutrition. She's the author of two books, the Thrive in 5 ebook and the 28 day pescetarian meal plan and cookbook. In the last episode, we covered moms and how they model a healthy relationship to food for their kids, while also tackling their own food issues.

And in this episode, we are going to talk all about intuitive eating. What it is, and how to get there. I've found that for many people, intuitive eating and getting off the diet cycle can be one of the most important pieces of work that they do in their lives. But I've also found that there's no faster way to make a client angry than to bring up the concept of intuitive eating, especially if they're not ready for it or they're really attached to dieting.

I do not have a weight loss magic bullet. No one does, actually. I hate to say that, but I do believe it's true. The body is really complex and it's not just like how many calories you eat. And if you eat less, then you're going to be better off. I mean, that doesn't take into account age, biological sex, hormone status, muscle mass, so many things.

But we had a client that came in and she was really Really trapped in the diet cycle and really unhappy and maybe even hatred about her own body. And so we opened up the topic of intuitive eating and the client got really mad. She

said, if it was just that easy, I'd already have done it. And I thought that was an incredible comment because it's not easy.

And that's where all of this stems from. It's deep work. A lot of people have been dieting for their entire lives or many years. And so moving away from that. Shifting your perspective, moving more into getting back to the intuitive eating that we have so innately as children. It really is a lot of work.

It's what a lot of dietitians like myself and Chelsey do. Therapists can do some of this incredible work too. And it does take time and effort and really a shift of paradigm.

Welcome Chelsey. I'm so excited to be talking to you today.

Chelsey Amer: Happy to be here.

Ginger Hultin: Can you define intuitive eating?

[00:02:51] **Chelsey Amer:** Absolutely. So, intuitive eating is an evidence based, self care eating framework that really focuses on following your body's internal cues versus external rules of dieting. I really like to think about it as rediscovering this mind body connection to honor your health.

We're not following the rules of a diet. We're not, um, restrictively eating. We are really following these ten principles of intuitive eating that help you break free from diet rules and follow your body's internal hunger cues, your fullness cues, being satisfied from food, and really you relearn how to eat in a way that feels good for your best health versus just dieting for intentional weight loss.

[00:03:35] **Ginger Hultin:** Right. And when you say evidence based, I mean, this is dietitian created.

[00:03:40] **Chelsey Amer:** Yeah. So it was created by two dietitians. There are over, I think, 125 studies that support intuitive eating. So it is proven to be an effective and health promoting way of eating.

[00:03:53] **Ginger Hultin:** How long have you had your certification, and why did you get it?

[00:03:57] **Chelsey Amer:** I, like many dieticians, was trained in a weight centric model, really promoting, you know, this is how you lose weight. Calories in versus calories out. And when I started practicing, something really just took off. wasn't feeling right to me. I would have a lot of repeat clients and

clients that would come back who had lost some weight and then they would regain it.

They weren't able to make sustainable behavior changes in a way that also helped them feel good and was doable in their real lives. And so over time I learned more about intuitive eating and what it was, that it was evidence based. It's not just a free for all. And then started to become an even more intuitive eater myself.

I had a huge history of dining, that's probably one of the reasons that I got into the field of dietetics, like many dieticians. But the more I learned about it, I was like, this is something I need to learn more and I need to become certified in this so that I can really support my clients in a better way.

[00:04:55] **Ginger Hultin:** A long time ago, when I was a really early on dietician, it was probably within my first one or two years of practicing. I realized that it's not calories in versus calories out and that really just blew my mind. I had a person that I was working with and she told me that she ate And then we did some tracking and I got a really good picture of exactly what she was eating and she was literally eating 800 calories a day and not meeting her, her nutrient needs, of course.

And that was my first realization. Wow, you can eat less. And it doesn't just make you lose weight, like your body will rebel, your metabolism will slow, and you will also end up on a roller coaster.

[00:05:35] **Chelsey Amer:** Yeah, you're yo yo dieting, and studies even show that that yo yo dieting is actually worse for your health.

It's worse for your heart health, even premature risk of death is higher when you're constantly losing and gaining weight.

[00:05:48] **Ginger Hultin:** A lot of folks might not realize that, but Chelsey, when somebody comes to me and says, I want to lose weight, and I open the conversation about mindfulness and intuitive eating, it doesn't always go over very well.

How do you open the conversation with people?

[00:06:03] **Chelsey Amer:** A lot of people constantly say, I want to lose weight. And I always have to make sure before I work with a client that I'm telling them, you're not going to get a set meal plan from me. We're not going to be counting calories together. I'm But if you do want to have more energy, feel

better from food, if you want to sleep better, if you want to improve your health and your blood markers that support good health, then I can help you do that.

And so a lot of times, clients come to me when they've sort of hit that diet rock bottom. And oftentimes when these clients hit this diet rock bottom, they start binge eating, they start feeling out of control around food, they're thinking about food all day long, and that is really consuming, especially because I work with a lot of parents and moms, they just don't have that headspace to be thinking about food so much.

[00:06:51] **Ginger Hultin:** Is it hard to get buy in from clients when you don't prescribe a regimented diet or program? Do you get pushback on that?

[00:06:58] **Chelsey Amer:** I work with my clients on sustainable behavior change. So if a client comes to me and they're like, I'll cut out all alcohol, I'll cut out all sugar, I won't eat any starchy carbs. I'm like, great, but like for how long?

And most of them have tried that before. They've tried cutting out all of those foods and it just doesn't work for the long haul. So what can we do that's different? Maybe we're more mindful about what we're eating. Maybe we're practicing eating foods that you love more often so that you're not binging on them every weekend or having this like ginormous cheat day on Sundays where you feel totally out of control around food.

I could always meet you where you are, but I'm not going to prescribe a meal plan that I just don't believe in.

[00:07:39] **Ginger Hultin:** You work with certain folks that want to do this sort of work, and if they don't, there's other wonderful dietitians that might practice in a different way. So there really is dietetics out there for all people, but you and I definitely lean more into intuitive eating as a way towards freedom.

[00:07:55] **Chelsey Amer:** There's a big misconception that you can improve your health or that you can't follow a medically necessary diet while also learning how to improve your relationship with food and follow intuitive eating and that is a myth. It's a big myth. I had a client who had a gallbladder concern and so yes, we had to limit her fat intake because it was medically necessary, But where else could we open up her diet?

What substitutions could we use? How could she feel more at peace with food? And so we were still able to work on all those other aspects of her relationship with food, even though we had to be careful of a medically necessary diet.

[00:08:30] **Ginger Hultin:** I had a similar situation with, um, pancreatitis. a patient, very, very challenging, very restrictive diet.

And this patient came to me losing massive amounts of weight, so miserable, just not able to eat, like felt like she couldn't eat anything. And her doctor told her that she had to be on a low carb, low fat diet. And I said, well, that's not really possible because there's only three macros, right? There's protein, carbs, and fat.

If you can't be low in two, it doesn't quite work that way. And so what we did together is we liberalized and just said, what can we bring back in? I work with a lot of restrictive diets. Like we mentioned low FODMAP, which is for IBS or other gastrointestinal diseases. But people often are very surprised at how much we can add back in.

Because the first thing people do when they get on a medically necessary diet is just cut everything out, and that can really hurt your relationship to food.

[00:09:21] **Chelsey Amer:** When you're cutting out anything from your diet, we need to do it really carefully, and I would always suggest if you're cutting out a whole macronutrient, to really work with someone so that you are cutting out as little as possible.

[00:09:32] **Ginger Hultin:** Tell me about how you help people personalize intuitive eating.

[00:09:36] **Chelsey Amer:** Everyone comes to any dietitian, really, with their own history. So what is your number one concern? And for a lot of my clients, it's binge eating and it's the mindless eating at night. I call it the nighttime snack marathon, where you just grab one thing after another.

You're sitting on the couch in front of the TV. The spoon hits the bottom of the ice cream carton and you have no idea how you got there. Oftentimes, I have to start by making sure my clients are eating enough, they're eating often throughout the day so that they're not getting over hungry, and that they're eating satisfying meals.

And I find that those three things are really common for all of my clients.

[00:10:12] **Ginger Hultin:** Yeah, I see that a lot too. I just talk to my clients a lot about biology and how when your blood sugar gets low enough and your brain gets starved enough, your body is just going to know that it needs a lot of

calories and it needs a lot of carbohydrates and I call it the brain hijacking the body.

[00:10:29] **Chelsey Amer:** That's a great way of putting it. If you're really looking for like the first place to start, if you are trying to get into intuitive eating, well, there are 10 principles of intuitive eating and, you know, you could follow them systematically one by one, but it can be really overwhelming to try and adopt intuitive eating on your own.

There's a lot of misinformation on the internet about it, but you really have to figure out, well, where do I need help? And most of my clients benefit from really focusing on, when are you hungry? Do you understand your body's physical signs of hunger? Do you understand how to honor your hunger and understand what your body is trying to tell you?

And for a lot of my clients, we're staying there for several weeks because they really don't know when they're hungry. And it takes practice because if you get over hungry, that increases your chance of that nighttime Zach marathon.

[00:11:16] **Ginger Hultin:** Hunger can be really confusing. Children are intuitively hungry or full, and then we force our ways out of that as we get older.

So a lot of people don't realize there's different types of hunger. Can you talk a little bit about how you define different types of hunger?

[00:11:33] **Chelsey Amer:** There are four different types of hunger, and the first one is your physical hunger, and that is, yes, your stomach may be growling, but it can also be gnawing at the back of your throat, it can be increased thoughts of food, your energy is decreasing, maybe you feel a little empty, or you're having difficulty focusing, maybe you're lightheaded, that might be pushing it a little too far, Those are all physical signs of hunger, and it is so important that we honor those physical signs of hunger by eating, because that means that your body needs energy.

But that's just one type of hunger. There's also practical hunger, and this is my favorite type of hunger, because if you try and follow the hunger fullness diet, that's also not going to work, because you're bound to get over hungry at some point, and then that will lead to more cravings, those nighttime snack marathons and binge eating.

But, uh, You can be practical about your hunger. So if you're going into a meeting or you have a really long day and you don't know when you're going to

get the chance to eat, it makes more sense and it's practical for you to eat ahead of your actual physical signs of hunger. So practical hunger is really all about eating when it makes sense for your body so that you don't get to that point of being over hungry.

[00:12:44] **Ginger Hultin:** Like eating in preparation for not being too hungry.

[00:12:47] **Chelsey Amer:** A lot of teachers have to do this, nurses have to do this, because when you work at a job where you're told when you can take a break, that break may not line up perfectly with your physical signs of hunger. So we have to go one step past your physical hunger and say, well, when is it practical for me to eat?

So that you avoid getting over hungry. And that's your practical hunger.

[00:13:07] **Ginger Hultin:** That is brilliant. And you see that clearly fitting into intuitive eating.

[00:13:13] **Chelsey Amer:** Yes, because it's not just following a hunger fullness diet, but we have to be practical and do the things that make sense for our body. It's going to be really hard to be satisfied from food and to respect your body if you're constantly getting over hungry.

[00:13:29] **Ginger Hultin:** I love that, but I have a lot of practical eating in my life because I just know that I need to keep my blood sugar from dipping so that I'm really struggling with that physical hunger. So I'm really happy to hear you say that.

[00:13:40] **Chelsey Amer:** Yeah, that's really important. There's also two other types of hunger. So there's taste hunger, which is eating something because it tastes good.

And maybe you go out for dinner and you have a really delicious meal and you physically feel full. So you're not physically hungry anymore, but the table orders dessert and it looks so delicious and you don't know the next time you're going to get back to that restaurant. So you have a bite of dessert to get the taste of it.

That is taste hunger. Not giving yourself permission to honor that taste hunger is important. Now we don't want to ignore our physical fullness signs, but if you are not going to be satisfied from your meal because you didn't have that taste of dessert, then it's important to honor that taste hunger and take a taste of something.

[00:14:21] **Ginger Hultin:** That could also play a role in important cultural or traditional foods. Like some of my clients say, Oh, you know, it's a special holiday or I, you know, I went to this party and I didn't really want to have a lot of this certain food, but it was important for me to have it in that occasion. Is that an example of it too?

[00:14:36] **Chelsey Amer:** Yeah, that sounds like it would be. It doesn't have to be the perfect time to eat, and that is a Big part of intuitive eating is that, you know, you have permission to eat. You can be satisfied from food. And the last type of hunger is emotional hunger. And a lot of people are familiar with emotional eating, and it really is the hardest type of hunger to conquer and to understand, but it's eating from a place of emotion.

So I'm feeling stressed. These cookies sound really good. Or I'm sad, I'm gonna have the ice cream. It's like that classic rom com. Girl gets broken up, she's like eating the ice cream. That is your emotional eating. And it can be really hard to overcome emotional eating because A lot of us grow up not having other coping mechanisms.

A lot of people are taught, you know, put your emotions under the rug and self soothe with food. Uh, in order to conquer that, we need to say like, what am I feeling? Get in touch with those emotions. Am I eating because I'm hungry? Or am I eating because I'm sad? And if you're eating because you're sad, that's okay, all emotional eating is not bad, it's just, do we actually have those other coping mechanisms to address our emotions as well, because otherwise emotional eating can get out of control and make us feel out of control, which doesn't feel good in our body.

[00:15:48] **Ginger Hultin:** Emotional eating is so loaded and I feel constantly associated with negative. Like, I shouldn't be emotional eating, but what I'm hearing from you is it has a role and it is a type of hunger and it's important.

[00:16:02] **Chelsey Amer:** Emotional eating can also be positive. Like, it's your child's birthday and you're all having cake.

Maybe you're not hungry, but you're happy and you want to partake in the festivities. That could be technically a type of emotional eating as well. It does often get like a negative connotation and it's often harder. to overcome when you're in the moment and you're stressed and you're like just eating.

I work with most of my clients on emotional eating to overcome it, to bring mindfulness to it, to bring awareness about it. And then if you still want the

cookie because you're stressed, great, eat the cookie, but also do something about the feeling that you're feeling. I always like to say, how do you feel?

And then what do you actually need? So do you need the cookie? No, that's a want, um, but you need maybe to practice the presentation that you have at work tomorrow so that you feel more confident. Or you need to journal, or you need to go for a walk, or call a friend to have connection. Do what you actually need as well, and then enjoy your cookie mindfully without feeling out of control around it.

[00:16:56] **Ginger Hultin:** A lot of people grew up that way, and understanding that there are other options could be a huge area of growth.

[00:17:02] **Chelsey Amer:** Absolutely, and we need to just figure out what those options are for you, and they're different for everyone.

[00:17:10] **Ginger Hultin:** Orgain's all in one nutrition shakes are formulated for everyday nutrition and cater to a variety of health needs and conditions.

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Ginger Hultin: We jumped into talking about intuitive eating and I just wondered if we should present the steps. Like, should we say what the steps are?

[00:18:02] **Chelsey Amer:** Yeah, sure. The creators of intuitive eating, Evelyn Risch, they created ten principles of intuitive eating, but that doesn't mean that they need to be followed in a stepwise order.

[00:18:13] **Ginger Hultin:** Yeah, that's really important, and you said something that reminded me of how I practice, too. I don't go in order. I'll usually talk to the individual and be like, what, I'll show them the list and be like, what's most exciting here for you? Like, what do you think you have down, and where do you want to focus?

So the 10 steps of intuitive eating are to reject the diet mentality, and I actually think that is a good place to start, because if you don't reject the diet mentality, it's hard to move into the different pieces of this. One is honor your hunger, and another is feel your fullness.

[00:18:44] **Chelsey Amer:** Yeah. So oftentimes we hit like that diet rock bottom that I mentioned before and that helps us reject the diet mentality.

It kind of is happening like almost subconsciously when someone's reaching out to work with me and then the like, the next practical step of like, well, what can I actually do is working on that hunger and fullness I find for most of my clients.

[00:19:03] **Ginger Hultin:** Absolutely. My favorite one is to challenge the food police and the food police is that little chatter in your brain or that comes into us through the media or other people's comments about food being good or bad or, you know, the old rules.

[00:19:17] **Chelsey Amer:** That's a really hard one for a lot of people as well because a lot of people who are looking into intuitive eating have dieted for so long and people really hold on to those rules from diets. They're so ingrained in our head that I think it's really hard to work through that one sometimes. Yeah, absolutely.

[00:19:32] **Ginger Hultin:** Yeah, that one can be really challenging and it reminds me also of another challenging one, make peace with food. I think those two are somewhat related.

[00:19:40] **Chelsey Amer:** I find that sometimes it takes a little bit longer for my clients to really feel comfortable to make peace and free introduce foods that maybe they haven't eaten for so long.

[00:19:50] **Ginger Hultin:** And when you talk about the different types of hunger. It reminds me of number five, which is discover the satisfaction factor.

[00:19:56] **Chelsey Amer:** Yes. It's so important to be satisfied from the foods that you eat because if you're not, you're still thinking about food and you might actually misinterpret that as your physical hunger.

You might be, I'm still hungry, but no, you're just not satisfied from what you're eating. You know, you can eat a big bowl of air food. I like to call it like rice cakes or, um, like iceberg lettuce. Like these foods and you could physically fill

up, but if you're not satisfied, you're not going to really shut off those hunger hormones and be able to move on from your meal.

[00:20:24] **Ginger Hultin:** You also mentioned cope with your emotions with kindness. So this has that tie to emotional eating.

[00:20:29] **Chelsey Amer:** Yes, we want to really understand how to navigate your emotions and your feelings without using food.

[00:20:36] **Ginger Hultin:** Absolutely. And then eight is respect your body. How do you define that one?

[00:20:40] **Chelsey Amer:** Yeah, that's a hard one and that's really a hard one for people to work through.

I think that that goes back to diet culture and what we're sort of told from such a young age of the ideal physical body. And you really have to understand that, you know, some people are born with a size eight shoe and some people are born with a size six shoe. And if you have a size eight, you're not fitting in the size six shoe.

And I think the same thing goes for our bodies. Some people are born at a larger size. Some people are born with a smaller size and you really can't force yourself to be a different size than what you are. That doesn't feel good in your body and it's often not sustainable or healthy.

[00:21:19] **Ginger Hultin:** Yeah, that's a tough one because that is not the common messaging out there.

[00:21:22] **Chelsey Amer:** Yes, yes, absolutely. It's definitely going against the grain and it's really hard for people to overcome of like, I've been told my whole life that thinner is better and thinner is not always better and it's not always healthier for you either. And so we need to find what is that weight that really feels good in your body that is sustainable, that is realistic for you and that's practical in your life.

There's a lot of studies about the Biggest Loser contestants, and a lot of them lose all this weight on the show, but they're not able to maintain it because they're not working out all day. They're not having a chef prepare their meals anymore, and that gets really hard and challenging.

[00:21:59] **Ginger Hultin:** Well, that actually reminds me of number nine, which is movement.

Feel the difference.

[00:22:04] **Chelsey Amer:** Yes. How could movement and exercise be added into your life in a way that feels good? A bootcamp class isn't going to feel good for everyone the same way yoga doesn't feel good for everyone. And so you really have to find movement that you enjoy doing. And that's what that principle is all about.

[00:22:19] **Ginger Hultin:** I quit a gym not too long ago because they had so much messaging about, Oh, you did this workout. Now you can go eat food. Or, you know, this really toxic messaging about earning food through exercise. And that's such a common way of thinking about movement. But this goes against that concept.

[00:22:36] **Chelsey Amer:** That is also a game changer for your health.

Because when you actually enjoy exercising, and that doesn't mean, I just want to put this out there, that doesn't mean that you're gonna love waking up at 6am to exercise every day. I don't know, maybe you do like waking up at 6am, but I can't wake up at 6am with a smile on my face every day. But I know that if I do the exercise I enjoy, I feel better and it has lasting benefits, so that motivates me to keep going and do it.

And I'm doing an activity that I actually enjoy. And that's the difference. It's not that like, it can't be almost like a chore to work out, because it's hard to fit it in. Everyone is so busy, but at least you're doing something that brings a smile to your face, that you enjoy doing, and that feels good in your body for the hours and days following.

[00:23:18] **Ginger Hultin:** Intuitive eating gets misinterpreted a lot as, Oh, I never have to work out because I don't feel like it. Or, you know, I can just eat, you know, all the, my forbidden foods all the time. But that's really, if you understand this concept, not how it's written, because it's both feel your fullness and honor your hunger and have movement, but not be earning your food.

So there's a lot of complexity that you really have to understand about intuitive eating. Absolutely. The final one is number 10 is honor your health through gentle nutrition. I'd love to hear your thoughts on that one.

[00:23:50] **Chelsey Amer:** It's hard to really understand this principle because we're not telling you to follow a specific diet, but that doesn't mean that nutrition is not important.

Intuitive eating is not eating. Pizza all day, but it's about how can I feel good from food and when it comes to this gentle nutrition a balance of nutrients is Best because it will help you feel better, but that doesn't mean that you need to always have a perfectly balanced plate It's great to focus on balanced nutrition, but sometimes you just want a burger and fries It's really if you zoom out, like, what is your overall diet like?

And so gentle nutrition is really about what can I add to my diet to feel a little bit better? Maybe I'm lacking some vegetables. Let me add a vegetable to my burger. Or maybe I haven't been having as much protein lately. So let me really try and add a protein to my plate. And so if you think about what can I add, it's not a strict rule, but it's really a more gentle approach to nutrition.

[00:24:46] **Ginger Hultin:** It's also a broader approach to nutrition. You know, a lot of folks ask me, you know, what do I, what exactly do I eat for breakfast, lunch or dinner? But I like to say, well, you have to look at your whole day and your whole week and your whole year and your whole life, because it really is overarching.

[00:25:02] **Chelsey Amer:** Absolutely. We're so focused on like this one meal or this one day or I blew it so now like I'll throw in the towel because I had one meal that was maybe a more indulgent meal. But if we take that approach, you're constantly going to be starting over because there's constantly holidays and weekends and parties in the summer and all these different things coming up that are going to, quote, interrupt your diet.

So instead, what if you just take a bird's eye view, zoom out and say, well, like. How can I feel good from my food? How will this food make you feel? And how do you want to feel in an hour? How do you actually want to feel? And then honor that and then think about, well, where can I add some nutrition to whatever it is you're actually in the mood for?

[00:25:42] **Ginger Hultin:** You have two cookbooks, and I'm wondering how you think about the four types of hunger in relation to recipe development.

[00:25:51] **Chelsey Amer:** We need to honor all of our types of hunger. Sometimes we're honoring that physical hunger of having a balanced recipe, and sometimes we're honoring that taste hunger, or that emotional hunger, or something that feels nostalgic.

Because I work with moms so much, I really want them to have energy because you need to have energy to get through your day, and so having more balanced meals can really help you get there, and my Thrive in 5 eBook is all about 20

minute meals, 5 ingredients, and you can make delicious meals that are quick and fun and easy, and that's why I created this resource.

[00:26:25] **Ginger Hultin:** And you've also got a meal plan book, like me, yours is 28 Day Pescatarian Meal Plan and Cookbook. And I'm wondering about the role of meal prepping in intuitive eating.

[00:26:34] **Chelsey Amer:** This is another widely misunderstood concept. You can plan your meals and prep and also follow all of the principles of intuitive eating at the same time because that's practical.

So, if you are a busy parent, there's no way that you can Eat on the fly every single night and also feel good from the food that you're eating. You really want to focus on having a plan so that you're not getting over hungry. You're not making it super complicated because you have to first think about what you're going to eat.

So it actually is easier to honor your hunger and respect that fullness when you have a plan and you have ingredients in your house and it's quick to throw together.

[00:27:11] **Ginger Hultin:** The meal planning cookbook that I wrote is more prescriptive, but when I'm talking to clients about it and helping them personalize, I will have them use the concept of it and put all the different meals in their fridge and label them and then grab what you want, right?

Just depending on how you're feeling in the moment and that's how you weave in intuition.

[00:27:27] **Chelsey Amer:** Absolutely. Not every meal is going to be the most satisfying meal experience. That's normal. That's part of life. But what tiny thing can I add to this meal on the side that'll make this meal a little bit more satisfying?

And that's also how you can take a mundane, everyday meal and enhance the satisfaction. If you keep a pesto on hand, or maybe different salad dressings, or you could always add a different sauce, a teriyaki sauce, the stir fry sauce, Sometimes repurpose your leftovers with a different sauce or sometimes add pickles to a meal.

You can add so many different things that you already have in your fridge and recreate or reinvent the meal to make it more satisfying.

[00:28:04] **Ginger Hultin:** I wanted to hear more about how we talk to ourselves in relationship to food and intuitive eating. There's a lot of harmful language that I see out there. Some of these get in the way of intuitive eating.

I'll hear somebody say, for example, Why can't I control myself? Or I just need to have more willpower. What do you do with that?

[00:28:24] **Chelsey Amer:** Yeah, that's a really big one. Willpower is this concept that it's in your mind. When someone tells me that, like, I have no control or I need more willpower, I always want to say, well, what are you actually eating?

Because chances are, if you think you need more willpower, you're probably not eating enough. And that's making you think about food all the time. And if you're thinking about food all the time, you're going to feel out of control around food. And so it's this cycle that we need to end. If you are satisfied from your meals, Then, you often don't need to rely on willpower.

You're not looking for other food to fill in that satisfaction piece. So I'll give you an actual culinary example. Let's say you're having a taco salad for dinner and you're trying to be low carb and you're on this diet and maybe you're having a salad and some ground taco meat and some flavoring and maybe you add a little bit of avocado, but that salad would taste so much better with some tortilla chips crumbled in there, right?

So much more satisfying, but if you tell yourself, I can't have the tortilla chips, I'm bad for eating the tortilla chips, you're going to want them more, you're going to be relying on that willpower to tell yourself not to eat them instead of having a few tortilla chips, being fully satisfied, and then you stop thinking about it so much.

Being satisfied actually proves that you don't need to rely on willpower so much.

[00:29:43] **Ginger Hultin:** What about trying to be quote unquote good, like, oh, I'm being good today, or I'm being good this week, or I'm being good before my vacation?

[00:29:51] **Chelsey Amer:** We hear this all the time. It's like, what are you talking about? Every eating occasion is a new opportunity to make a choice that helps you feel good.

How can we shift your mindset to be a little bit more neutral about food? Why don't you reframe it and label the food or the feeling as it is? So, instead of saying, this cookie is bad, I can say, this cookie gives me energy and it satisfies my sweet tooth. Instead of saying, the broccoli is good, you could say, this broccoli has vitamin C in it or it's rich in iron and move on like that.

[00:30:22] **Ginger Hultin:** If a patient tells me that they were bad or good, the first thing I'll say is, what does that mean to you? Tell me more about that.

[00:30:31] **Chelsey Amer:** People are like, oh, I was so bad. And I'm like, did you steal your food? Did you, you know, did you take it from a crying baby? Like, that's bad, you know, like, you're not bad for eating a food that you really enjoy.

[00:30:43] **Ginger Hultin:** What about saying I can't keep that in the house or I don't trust myself?

[00:30:50] **Chelsey Amer:** For a lot of people, think that keeping the food out of the house is helping them, but in reality, that's just making them more out of control around food. They think about food more, and oftentimes, the foods you keep out of your house are the foods that you're going to see at a party, or at some social event, and when you see the food, you're then out of control around that food.

If you don't keep tortilla chips in your house, but then you go out to a Mexican restaurant, you eat the entire basket of the tortilla chips, ask for more, and eat them all again, and then that doesn't feel so good. But if you learn how to keep the tortilla chips in your house, add them as a part of a balanced meal or as a snack, then you have some and you're able to close the bag and move on.

And when you actually do this in a systematic process, which takes time, you know, you have to work through it carefully, which is why working with someone can be really beneficial. But you learn how to keep these foods in your house, and honestly, sometimes you forget that they're there.

[00:31:44] **Ginger Hultin:** There's so much freedom in that, and I had a patient that I love working with so much, and chips were just so triggering to her.

And we worked together for a long time, and finally she was like, yeah, I can have some if I want them. They're in the house. She can have them or not, and it's like this neutral space where she feels so much happier.

[00:32:03] **Chelsey Amer:** It's not consuming your brain space, you have space to think about other things, things that really matter in your life instead of just being so preoccupied around food.

[00:32:14] **Ginger Hultin:** So those were some examples of how not to talk to yourself. What language, on the other hand, should we use that supports the practice of intuitive eating?

[00:32:24] **Chelsey Amer:** That one of the best things you can do is to really show yourself a little bit more compassion. Talk to yourself in a gentler way. Maybe the way you would talk to your daughter or the way you would talk to your best friend.

We're so harsh with ourselves. Like, oh, you really messed up. I've heard some really crazy things that my clients say to themselves. And dad, what if you just say, well, How would I say this to a friend? And oftentimes it's just gentler. You could still be frustrated with yourself, but if you just start to talk to yourself in a really supportive way, in a more compassionate way, maybe it's like, well, what can I learn from this experience?

Really think about your eating as an experiment and say, well, what can I actually do to help myself feel better? Why did I overeat? Why did I let myself get there? Was I not being mindful? Was I overhungry? Be a little bit of a detective. Why did this happen? How did that feel? How can I remember that for next time?

Instead of berating yourself and being really harsh with yourself.

[00:33:21] **Ginger Hultin:** Yeah, the words that we use affect our own relationship to food. How do you deal with people that are hearing this diet culture messaging and struggling with that at work or at school or in their lives.

[00:33:35] **Chelsey Amer:** One of the best things you could do is surround yourself with the messaging that you actually want to hear.

So we're all going to hear messages. It's everywhere. But if you want to have more supportive messaging, then audit your Instagram feed. Watch who you follow on TikTok. Watch which programs you're following. And if you see something that doesn't sit right with you, acknowledge that. You know, you can let a thought seep into your brain or you can let thoughts go.

And so, if something doesn't feel right to you Think about it and then let it go and don't let it occupy so much of your brain space. Focus on something else that is more important in your life.

[00:34:09] **Ginger Hultin:** Yeah, it can be really hard when you're first moving into intuitive eating because I think the chatter gets louder before it gets quieter.

[00:34:16] **Chelsey Amer:** And also there are certain times of year where it's so hard. In December, we're gearing up with all that new year, new you messaging, and that can be really challenging. I have clients who will, like, rage message me, being like, I heard this and it really, you know, I'm like, good, send it to me. Let me be that sounding board so that you acknowledge it and then we can let it go.

[00:34:34] **Ginger Hultin:** I love a good client rage text. It makes me so happy every time. If you haven't had a chance yet, I encourage you to take a listen to the last episode that Chelsey did on moms wanting to model healthy food relationships for their kids. And kids are sponges that will absorb the language you hear, so treating yourself with kindness also instills in them to treat themselves with the same grace.

Chelsey, bingeing is an issue that you address a lot, and I wanted to hear more about it because intuitive eating, not more self control, is the way to stop. I tell my clients all the time, with a lot of success, that the way out of bingeing is to stop restricting. How do you approach it?

[00:35:15] **Chelsey Amer:** There are a few things that we really have to do on the practical level to stop bingeing.

Aside from that, we also need to really understand where the bingeing is coming from. There might be some unresolved trauma or there might be some heightened emotions or a big life change that might have brought it on that we also needs to be addressed. And that's where also working with a therapist can be helpful.

But from the practical standpoint, when it comes to your nutrition for bingeing, if you are not eating enough, if you're getting over hungry and not eating consistently throughout the day, and you're not eating satisfying meals, you're literally setting yourself up to start bingeing. It seems simple, but it can be really hard to cover all three of those things on a daily basis.

You just have to start slow. Start with eating enough throughout the day, paying attention to those hunger cues, making sure that you're honoring those hunger

cues in eating when you're hungry, not pushing off your hunger as long as possible. Those are what's the most important to really start to move the needle to reduce binging.

But also you have to think What am I binging on? And if it's foods that you don't allow yourself to eat, maybe add those foods in and that can also help dissipate the binging.

[00:36:24] **Ginger Hultin:** Yeah. It's a way to disarm and normalize. Absolutely. Some people are so afraid of gaining weight, but they want to intuitively eat.

How do you handle those kinds of questions?

[00:36:33] **Chelsey Amer:** Yeah. And I 100 percent understand that. And I was there myself when I first was learning to become a more intuitive eater. And there are three things that can happen to your weight when you learn how to become an intuitive eater. Number one is that you can maintain your weight.

You won't gain, you won't lose, you just maintain your weight. You can gain weight or you might lose weight. And so we don't really know what's going to happen to your body. If you've been consistently under eating and maybe that's why you're binging or you're not giving yourself enough nourishment and in order to stop the binging you need to eat more, it might lead to weight gain.

But you will be extinguishing that behavior so that you're not thinking about food anymore. You're not stressed about food. You have more energy throughout the day. You're not waking up feeling bloated and blah because you had this huge binge the night before. Someone needs to be ready to get to the point where they're like, I don't want to be binging anymore.

I don't want to be thinking about food anymore. If you really want to just live your life and have a much fuller life, then we have to accept that my body might change. We're still promoting your best health, and when you're able to maintain your weight, it can actually be healthier for your body. And so we need to just get to that point of acceptance, and usually that's where I see people are able to really embrace intuitive eating.

But that's not to say it's hard for a lot of people to overcome.

[00:37:53] **Ginger Hultin:** And that's why it's one of the steps of intuitive eating, right? And that's also why this is a process and requires an expert like yourself to work with over time.

[00:38:02] **Chelsey Amer:** A lot of people who try intuitive eating on their own might say, well, I'm becoming an intuitive eater.

I'm not dieting anymore. And so they just start eating whatever they want, whenever they want. But then that doesn't feel good in your body. If you want to actually feel good in your body, we have to pay attention to what we're eating and make choices. Intuitive eating is not always saying yes. Sometimes that's actually saying no, I'm gonna wait for another occasion to eat the donut, the cookie, whatever, when it'll be more satisfying, when it'll feel better in my body, and that's okay too.

[00:38:31] **Ginger Hultin:** What happens so often with non intuitive eating is the food is forbidden. You're like, okay, I better have it now because I'm never going to have it again. It's this black or white thinking that creates overeating or eating this forbidden food. And once we can let go of that and make it more neutral, you can move forward more positively.

[00:38:47] **Chelsey Amer:** Yeah, it's that last supper mentality. If you tell yourself you're starting a diet on Monday, on Sunday, you're eating all the foods that you tell yourself you can't have. But when you allow all foods, over time You're able to really use more discretion with when you decide to eat certain foods.

[00:39:02] **Ginger Hultin:** And the work that you do with parents, specifically moms, is so important because you do have to start there in order to help your kids.

But how do you teach kids intuitive eating?

[00:39:12] **Chelsey Amer:** Well, the great thing is that kids are born intuitive eaters. So you don't really have to teach your kids intuitive eating. If you try to promote a food neutral environment in your house by working on your own relationship with food, your kids should grow up having a good relationship with food.

Of course, they're influenced by friends at school and the media and all of these things, but if you can really talk to your kids in a neutral way about food, that is one step of helping maintain that relationship. The intuitive eater that they were born as.

[00:39:42] **Ginger Hultin:** Bring it out, what is already there.

[00:39:44] **Chelsey Amer:** I hear so many stories from my kids.

They're like, well, the kids were saying this. And a lot of times they're echoing what they hear at home. And that's how it sort of gets spread around. So if you do the work on yourself and you try to foster a good environment and open communication with your kids so that they come to you when they have questions and you can really take a neutral approach around food and their body, that's the best thing that you can do for your kids.

[00:40:08] **Ginger Hultin:** I love that. Chelsey, this has been incredibly enlightening, and I have so many takeaways and thoughts to ponder, but do you have any last tips for us or intuitive eating thoughts?

[00:40:17] **Chelsey Amer:** Um, my last tip is that if you want to start somewhere, just look at what you're doing right now and say, what can I add?

Because I think that so often we get overwhelmed with making changes all at once, but really, If you just ask yourself that one simple question, maybe it's adding in a 10 minute walk. Maybe it's adding in a glass of water, adding in a vegetable. If you make these little additions over time, you don't think about what you're taking away, but think about it in a more positive way of what you can add.

You're going to make so many great changes in your life.

[00:40:47] **Ginger Hultin:** Hmm. Thanks for sharing all these amazing tips and all your expertise today. Of course. Thanks for having me. Our show is sponsored by Orgain and produced in collaboration with Larj Media. That's L A R J Media. Thanks for listening to this episode of The Good Clean Nutrition Podcast.

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