

Nourishing Your Body and Mind: A Conversation on Food Freedom with Stephanie Riles

Sonja: [00:00:00] Hello, everyone welcome back. soulful listeners. So glad to have you listening to today's episode. Today's guest is Stephanie Riles and Stephanie is a registered dietitian, personal trainer, and mindset transformation coach.

And man, I met her recently inside of a mastermind that we are both a part of and got a chance to learn about how she approaches health and fitness and food and the way she approached it was just very different from what I've heard or read about from other people. And, of course, that meant I needed to share her with anybody who would listen, because I'm all about sharing concepts and perspectives, philosophies that are a little bit different. So I'm really glad to have Stephanie here. Hi, Stephanie. Thanks for

Stephanie: being here.

Thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited to be here.

Sonja: So listen, Stephanie, um, [00:01:00] before we get started, I would love for you to introduce yourself to everyone. Tell us more about

Stephanie: you. So, uh, my name is Stephanie. I, like you mentioned, I'm a registered dietitian and I coach female perfectionists to lose the weight for good. And really focusing on mindset principles and building the goal from the inside out. And most of my clients will struggle with things like all or nothing thinking. And we really focus on the mindset part in order to reach your physical goals.

Sonja: Perfect segue, I didn't even know I was going to talk about this or ask this question, but I love it. You talked about the all or nothing mentality or way of doing things.

Recently, for me, that's just shown up in a lot of different ways and I'm noticing that about certain areas for myself and in other people in general, when it comes to, like, people's health, what are some of the all or nothing [00:02:00] mindsets or thoughts that you notice a lot of times with the women that you work with?

Stephanie: So I talk a lot about diet culture versus lifestyle culture. A lot of the ladies that I talk to, they want to build a lifestyle and they want it to be a habit. They want it to be simple. They want it to be easy. They just want to be a gym girly and just go to the gym and not have to think too much about it.

But I think that because. Diet culture is a lot of stopping and starting. It's like this big announcement that is made, like I'm starting my journey today and it like changes everything in one day or in one week. And so that lends itself to all or nothing because it's like either I'm starting this journey on changing my entire life, or I'm not. And if I mess up one time, quote unquote, by make a mistake, then not only have I made a mistake and I have to start over, but now something is wrong with me. And then we start internalizing, I'm not good enough. I can't do [00:03:00] this. And you know that our thoughts are going to continue to impact our actions.

And so if I'm going into this lifestyle change, really fearful, uh, we talk a lot about. imposter syndrome. And even when they're doing the thing, even if they're like going to the gym and they're feeding themselves well, they're scared that I'm not going to be able to keep this up. I'm going to make a mistake.

I'm going to fall off. And then I'm going to have to start all over again. So it was just like a lot of, mindset. Before we get to how do you hit your macros? How do you hit your calories? Like, that's like a more advanced step. Okay,

Sonja: so the all or nothing thought is oh, I'm starting. And then if they take a break or in their minds, they fell off. Then it's like, oh, throw all that in the trash. Everything I've done up until this moment where I quote unquote fell off, let's just throw that in the trash. [00:04:00] And now I got to start all over. So that's the all or

Stephanie: nothing.

And I also think too, I used to let people pause, like if they were coaching with me and they were going on vacation, it was like, okay, well, let's pause, but really that just feeds into the all or nothing mentality because you're really never pausing. You're really never taking a break from your health.

You're always impacting your health journey. But what is helpful is to see it more as like a swing so that it ebbs and flows. So there might be a time where you're a little bit more strict and intentional. And then there's sometimes when you pull back, but that does not mean mistake. That does not mean I'm doing something wrong.

It just means that in this season. I have to allow things to ebb and flow and that approaching it that way is going to be more helpful rather than always thinking of it as turning it on and then turning it off because you're really never turning it off. You're always impacting your health journey.

Sonja: I could not agree more with [00:05:00] that.

Stephanie: Yeah. And here's the thing. Here's how I think about it. Like, if I'm going on vacation, I can decide that I'm going to intentionally eat whatever the heck I want to eat. And then the thing is, the biggest thing about vacation is that what are you doing the Sunday when you come back?

The day that you come back is the more important thing. Now on every vacation, I don't have to decide that I'm just going to eat and drink whatever. But if I do decide that I decided it. It didn't just happen because I don't have impulse control in the moment. Right? So part of what I teach my clients is like your consistency and everyone says, consistency is key is really about managing small moments to where I'm aware of what's happening. I have already planned for this And I know exactly what mental tools to use to overcome this temporary Temptation. Now [00:06:00] you get to decide how you want to show up right on vacation.

But what matters the most is what is your life like when you come back and how quickly are you planning to get back on track? Quote unquote.

Sonja: Yeah, consistency to is I have made this a priority versus, you know, maybe before ever embarking on it it was like, oh, I'll get to that. Or that's the last thing on the list. 1 day. I will where now it's like, the consistency part is. This is a priority. However, I choose to go about

Stephanie: that. And I think too, that what I also help my clients see is that a lot of times they already are consistent, but they're just not giving themselves credit for it.

So you can frame your story as I have tried all these different diets and I keep falling off and I'm a failure. Like, and you can stop there, but if you kept going. You [00:07:00] didn't stop at quitting the diet. You're you continued and tried another one that makes you resilient, persistent, determined, disciplined, like you already have the skillset.

You're just not telling the full story. So like, how can you reframe your story to make yourself not the victim, right? Like, how can you frame your story and

what is happening to, to put you at the advantage and that's going to help you with your confidence going forward to know that like, okay. I don't quit.

I'm self disciplined. I can manage what goes in my mouth. I can do this and that, those are the thoughts and the sentences in your brain that are going to help you move forward. So

Sonja: true. Everything is about how you think and the feelings that come from it.

I mean, at the end of the day, those two things are running the ship. All the time. And so, yeah, period. Right. So it's funny because I get people who are like, you know, mindset, like, it's cool. But [00:08:00] and I'm like, you can call it whatever you want, but at its core mindset is not just like the thoughts running in your head.

It's sort of the fuel that fuel dictates. How the rest of the engine is running and how far you're going to get, you know, um, in your vehicle. I'm an analogy person.

Stephanie: I just come up. Oh, am I though? I get it. No, I get it,

Sonja: hey there listeners, right now is absolutely the best time for you to achieve your number one goal. Whatever your goal is, if it keeps calling out to you, it's definitely your calling. I'm currently offering private one to one coaching sessions to help women over 30 fulfill your number one goal by your next birthday.

Even if you're super busy or carry the bulk of the responsibilities in your household. Within our first session, I will help you create your custom, soul centered strategy for success that will propel you closer [00:09:00] to achieving your goals in the first 30 days than you've ever been before. Through dedicated weekly coaching sessions, private messaging access in between for accountability, Unlimited access to my signature mini trainings and courses.

You will be able to take small, simple actions and manifest the life you want by fulfilling one goal at a time. My holistic life and business coaching starts at 3k for 3 months and payment plans are available. To discuss your goals and learn about how my coaching will help you fulfill them, book a call with me today by visiting [SonjaTompkins.com](#).

com. You can also find the link in my show notes.

I'm going to backtrack just a little bit. Um, where you talked about imposter syndrome. I have been working with people on mindset going on 12 years, I have never thought about people having imposter syndrome when it comes [00:10:00] to weight loss or their health tell me

Stephanie: more. So this shows up as... Being fearful that I won't continue or that the progress that I have already created was a fluke and somehow I didn't really create this result. it shows up as not being able to count your wins and being, resistant to accepting compliments or accomplishments. And I have seen this so many times with clients who I talk a lot about, you know, eating more to weigh less.

That's a whole thing, but eating more. And one of my clients who was coming to me, she was eating literally like small snacks. Like she was hardly eating anything way over exercising. And over time we have worked where she is confidently planning her meals. She's eating more food and she's just like. The scale is going down now [00:11:00] because her metabolism, her hormones, she's feeling better.

And she's just like, I don't believe it. It's like, I don't believe it. And I'm like, how do you not believe it? Do you not see the numbers? But it, it goes to the core of like your identity and what you believed that you could create and what you believe you think that you can have. You know what I'm saying?

So I think that when we talk about your health journey, we're really talking about your spiritual journey. We're talking about your relationship with you. This is all about you and your relationship with you. And so if you have limiting beliefs. If you have fear about your future self, if you have anxiety, not understanding or being competent in your future self, then all of that's showing up in your health journey too.

So confidence is all about confiding in yourself and confiding in the future version of yourself. And so a lot of perfectionists will always be in the future, like really worrying about like how they can [00:12:00] maintain or do even better or do more and sometimes it's not about doing more. Sometimes it's about being, and that's the part that we work on so that you can be the person that can create the result.

It's not just about the action. Cause you already know how to lose weight. Like a lot of my clients, they know how to lose weight. It's, I don't know how to keep this. I'm scared that even when I get the result I'm not going to be able to keep it, and that's not a good feeling either, even though the scale is lower.

Ooh, and that, ooh, and

Sonja: I can see how that rolls right into self sabotage. 100%. That last little piece right there where it's like, oh, okay, well, I don't believe I can keep it off, or I can't believe I'm even here. So sometimes it's just the, you're here, and you can't even sit in the space that you have arrived? Oh, subconsciously, you're about to start self sabotaging, sort of like knee jerk reaction to be like, oh, you don't feel safe here. So [00:13:00] let's get back to where you felt safe. Let's go and get that bag of Lay's and have at it.

I love what you said there about confidence is about confiding in yourself. That is a whole word. If that is not your branding, it should, that is that right there I love that.

I Want to sort of switch gears a little bit as someone in her forties, I'm 45 at the time we're recording this and a lot of the women in the audience, they're over 30. So then they're, you know, forties, fifties, can we talk about that perimenopause menopausal area of life? What do you find most women who are experiencing that, why they're fed up with dieting and maybe what some solutions are?

Stephanie: Well, I think that a lot of,

even from like a mindset place, you want to

go from there too. Yeah. Okay. [00:14:00] So mindset is my jam. So let me start there first. So I think that comparison is a huge thief of your goals and self esteem in, in this era. And we are comparing ourselves to previous versions of ourselves. Right? So in your twenties, you may have looked like this and I have an intake form when I sign on a client and I will say, okay, what's your goal weight?

And they tell me, and I'm like, when was the last time that you were in this weight category? And it was like, years ago. And I'm like, there's an idealistic number that you might feel like, okay, this is me, but I'm maybe stuck identity wise in like, this was the body that I had then, even though a lot of times I was like, well, when you weighed that, [00:15:00] how did you feel about yourself?

They were still unhappy with their body, complaining about this and that. And it's like, now we're romanticizing this. Weight and trying to now do lots and lots of cardio, lots and lots of bootcamp and what's happening during this phase. And I am transitioning. I just turned 40 in September and when people would

say women in their 40s I was 39. I wasn't thinking they're talking about me, but now I'm like, Oh, you're talking about me. So I think like there has to be a shift from just thinking number one that, okay, I want to lose weight. So I got to eat less and move more. And a lot of ladies will just go to cardio. And what needs to be shifting here is number one mindset to know, like, this is the body that I'm in right now.

How can I be the best version of this body? After kids and life, right? And then also [00:16:00] really focusing more on strength training, more on getting enough protein, eating more. I don't want my clients to lose weight by eating less and less and less and less and less. Number one, you get stuck at the bottom.

But our metabolism is shifting and thinking about nourishing our body more. Doing more exercises that are not so triggering to our nervous system. Walking in nature is like a big one and it's so simple. But also the way that we're feeding our body is not, is not focused on how little food can I eat.

It's the wrong approach in this season. We need to be nourishing our body more, more protein, more water that that's one of the things that could be helpful in this season.

I

Sonja: can 100 percent attest to what you're saying because I was there for like, hot minute mindset wise.

Um, the number that you're pulling, why is that the [00:17:00] number you're pulling and where is that coming from? And I'll just say this, like no dig on my husband. My husband loves me. Like if anything, I can't get him off me. So it's not like he has issues with my body but he's a guy who works out like six, seven days a week.

For all the time I spent on meditation and mindfulness practices he's lifting a weight. Okay. So that's his thing. That's how he keeps himself together mentally, physically, emotionally. However, there is a difference okay. in how we approach our health journeys and how we take care of our bodies.

And I don't expect him to think the way the thing I don't get upset that he doesn't think the way that I think I have enough awareness and acceptance of myself to know that's what you do over there for you. And that works for you.

But [00:18:00] this doesn't work for me. So he'll be like, oh, well, you just need to and you gotta go harder.

And I'm like, sir, you go harder. Okay. So, on top of just different, um, I was almost at species because I do think that men are different species. He can be saying do more, you got to go harder but eat less it's like, number one, we ain't got to do all of that. And we don't have to live in a place where everything is all about a limitation. And then we wonder why we're in a society where people have limiting beliefs about what they can do, what they can experience, who they can be.

It's because everything is about, it's, it's the either or. It's the either or you were talking about. It's either do all of the things. And, you know, and exert all the effort, all the time, or eat less, spend less, expect less. And really, it's all about being in the middle. [00:19:00] That's that's kind of what I'm pulling from the whole thing.

And I've also personally really experienced a transformation just by walking. I was really doing

it for my emotional health and it's been amazing. And subsequently, I did experience the weight loss, you know, that you talked about and it was, it was very shocking.

Like, wait, what? Like, what have I done differently? Oh, I walk at least a mile every day. Oh, okay. Well, I'll keep doing that, you know, so I really appreciate you sharing that.

So when it comes to achieving your health goals, right. And having freedom, you talk about this in your messaging. So food freedom and just, you know, the freedom from not having to track things all the time.

Talk a little bit more about. That strategy, that process that you've created for your clients.

Stephanie: So when I talk about food freedom, I [00:20:00] am not only talking about intuitive eating after you've learned about your food and I'm going to circle back to that but also eating a wide variety of things. So for example, when I ask people, well, what's your goal?

And they say, weight loss. And I say, well, what have, what are you trying? They immediately tell me everything that they have taken out of their diet. They

don't tell me what they're actually eating. They're focused on what I took out of my diet, but that doesn't inform me about what I actually have in my diet.

So I know like intermittent fasting right now is a big thing. And. It's fine if you want to intervene fast, but just cutting out a breakfast or just cutting out a dinner Doesn't tell you much about what you're actually eating So I think the thing that people resist the most which is why a lot of people will just say just give me a meal Plan there are meal plans on apps for free You go to Pinterest get all the the meal plans that you want, right?

If that was the solution you would [00:21:00] have done that already because that's super simple and free. So I, in my program, I start out super simple, helping you understand your food. And then we do track your food for a while.

Because if we want to get to intuitive eating, where it's just, I know how to put together a balanced plate. I have to do the work first of understanding my food because if I skip over that part, how will I know what's intuitive? How will I know what it looks like on my plate? What it feels like in my body to eat in a calorie deficit.

And then . And I have to coach my clients on this because they There's a lot of pushback and I'm like I am expecting their resistance.

Let's talk about it. Let's coach on it learn About your food, then I can take what I have learned about my food and then I can eat intuitively and now that's food freedom because I understand it. It's not just about cutting out a food group. It's not about cutting out a meal time. It's about understanding what I'm actually putting on my [00:22:00] plate and that gives you the freedom, but you got to lean in first before you can create that.

Absolutely

Sonja: is the calorie deficit concept or that process dependent on each individual, or is it sort of like there's a percentage, or it really just depends on each person and where they are starting from and where they're trying to go

Stephanie: well to get into a calorie deficit, you have to take into account what your current weight is.

Your, uh, current body fat percentage and how much muscle you have. So two people who weigh 150 pounds, let's say one person has significantly more muscle. They're going to have a higher metabolism. They're going to have a

higher BMR. They're going to burn more calories at rest, which means I can eat more, which is why it's so important to lift because I can eat more food because I have more active tissue on my body [00:23:00] and lifting is the biggest way to help with your metabolism because I personally like to eat. I don't, I don't like to skip meals. If I, if someone tells me I have to skip meals or not eat cheese or not eat fruit, I'm going to be angry. So for me, I like to lift anyway, but I think that it does definitely help you to be able to handle more food, even at rest.

And then you also factor in your activity, your age, right? So we plug in equations, right? And so that kind of spits out a number and then we test that. So again, this goes back to all or nothing. A lot of people will ask me, well, what's the right number? What's the right thing? And it's like, there is no right thing.

Like if you went to 10 dietitians, you'd probably get 10 variations of your calorie level because the equation is an equation. Right. It is not specific to you. So what is specific to you is how can I [00:24:00] educate myself about how to accurately do this and then track my progress? And my progress is not just tracked by the scale, please, ladies, please track more than just the scale.

You're going to have to pull out your camera and get your photos, you know, do your measurements. I only take like hips and waist measurement just to keep it simple. But if you want to do all the things you can, but I think that tracking the progress Not only keeps you motivated to keep going, but to see that, Oh, my body can change and I can look fit and I can look tone, especially if I'm lifting and the scale might not change that much, but I can fit into a medium now, right?

Like I can fit into clothes that I used to not be able to fit into. And so it's so much more than that. It's so much more than just. Here's one calorie level for you. There's so much nuance. and understanding the numbers. The numbers is one thing, but understanding and the perspective of everything is a totally another thing, which is why [00:25:00] it's always good to get help to help you kind of synthesize those numbers.

Oh, my God, absolutely. You talked about because you

Sonja: don't want to cut out food. You like to eat. I like to eat food as a hobby for me. Listen, food is a hobby for me. I will travel for food. I will work for food. I go on a vacation before I even scoped out where I'm staying. I am looking at restaurants. I am.

I am that person. I liked how you talked about it's not just about what you're eating, or the numbers, it's the totality of everything. And I'm really huge on getting people to really tap into all of the senses and especially how are you feeling?

You kind of touched on like intuitive eating and things like that. I think if we could get back as a society, to listening This is why artists have mastered and all of that and self awareness is such a big thing for me is when you know who you are You can approach anything with a level of knowledge [00:26:00] is what helps you do anything that you're doing in any realm, right? And so knowing who you are and knowing how you feel as a baseline, knowing how you feel when you're doing something that is not in alignment with you, knowing how you feel when something is in alignment for you. Right? And I keep saying feel and not think and how you think if you think something is working or if you think because I'm so much like, let's get out of the brain so much and get into the body because the brain.

The brain is not here to make decisions. The brain is not here. The brain is here to help you survive. And it's here to help you figure something out after you've decided, but the decision making process comes from the inside.

Stephanie: It's like a lot of people have no idea because they've been too busy people pleasing or gaslighting themselves and how they feel. So now I don't know how I feel. And so we do this exercise of I'm going to say a [00:27:00] sentence I say, okay, hold this sentence in your brain. And I, I'll make them pause for 10 seconds. Cause nobody likes silence. Be quiet for 10 seconds. And then tell me what is vibrating in your body. Like give me an emotion word. And it is sometimes really hard to get people to say an emotion word.

All they want to talk about is. Up here or something, it go all the way around the emotion. So that is a whole skill of like being and knowing who you actually are. Cause that's like the foundation. And so if that impacts everything else, it's kind of like, that's what you got to work on first, the being, who are you, what feels good to you.

And then how does that inform my decisions? How does that inform what kind of exercise I like to do? What type of diet I want to be on, right. Or if I have certain preferences, but knowing yourself, I think is like the biggest [00:28:00] thing and it's the cornerstone of every big thing you'll ever do.

That just wraps it up, folks.

Sonja: Like seriously, you're not getting very far in a way that you can sustain without knowing who you are. Why wouldn't you want to know, like who you are on every level and in every area of your life.

Steph, this was amazing. This was just so good. I just love how you approach everything from a mindset first standpoint that is just. I, if I feel like we should just run for president and vice president, because I think, you know, that's a whole other topic, girl.

Well, before we go. Where can people find you and connect with you Steph so that they can hire you and work with you.

Okay, great. Facebook is normally my jam. Um, you can find me there at Stephanie Riles. I have a free Facebook group called the fit figure formula. And I also on Instagram at Stephanie underscore Riles underscore coach. So if [00:29:00] anyone is interested, they can reach out to me there.

No worries. We will put both

of those links into the show notes. And you guys, I have to say, I have had the opportunity of being in Stephanie's Facebook group. She shares so unselfishly in there. And I definitely recommend you popping over and joining.

Thank you so much, Stephanie, for being here. You guys for listening and we'll see you on the next episode.