

How Eating Mindfully Can Change Your Health

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Jen Wittman: Welcome back to Your BEST Thyroid Life. We're going to be speaking with the lovely and delightful Emily Rosen today about mindful eating. So, I have been following Emily's work with the Institute for the Psychology of Eating for the past few years and I have really admired her from afar, until now. I totally *leapt* out a couple of months ago when I met Emily at a gathering for health experts and have been personally stalking her ever since. Did you know that? So, let me tell you a little bit about this wonderful woman's work and what's on the docket for today. Emily Rosen is the director of the Institute for the Psychology of Eating where she oversees operations and teaches about dynamic eating psychology and mind-body nutrition. With an extensive and varied background in nutritional science, counseling, natural foods, the culinary arts, conscious sex education, mind-body practices and business management and marketing, Emily brings a unique skill set to her role as a consultant to corporate and professional clientele. She has been a long-term director and administrator for weight-loss camps and programs serving teens and adults and has held the position of executive chef at various retreat centers. You can learn more at www.psychologyofeating.com. And I had no idea you were a chef before this, so I am super-excited to talk to you today because you and I are in the same wheelhouse for sure. So, welcome Emily; I am so glad you are here.

Emily Rosen: Thank you so much for having me, I am really excited to be here.

Jen: So, weight loss, eating and psychology; this is such a hot topic and I am ready to dive right in; how about you?

Emily: Yes.

Jen: Tell us how did you get interested in eating psychology and nutrition and where does your passion for these come from?

Emily: Well, I think for so many of us, our interest in health is often born out of our own challenges and that was certainly the case for me. I struggled with eating disorders for nearly ten years and through that, I started studying nutrition because I was thinking it was a food issue because clearly, I was overeating or restricting, I was bulimic and I struggled with anorexia. And I thought this must be about the food and if I can just get the food right, if I can just understand exactly what to eat and when to eat it and how to eat it, then all of my issues around food are going to go away and I will be better and life will be great. But much to my dismay, what happened was actually kind of counter to what I thought was going to happen. The more I studied nutrition, the more confused I got and almost the more limited in my eating I got because I was like, 'Well, this person says I shouldn't eat this, and this person says I shouldn't eat this' and I was like, 'So I guess I am just supposed to drink lemon water.' I mean, it was like I got down to such a level of confusion that I really had to step back from it all and through that, in a lot of ways, my eating issues kind of intensified because the focus was so much on food. It felt like it was occupying so much of my brain-space and I couldn't even remember how many years ago, I ate when I was hungry, I stop when I was full, like how can I get back to that place. I realized, it must be something to do with what I am thinking and feeling because that's the other piece. It must be what I have going on in my psyche. So that led me to study psychology and then eventually eating psychology which really looks at our food story and our mindset and then how all of that influences our metabolic reality. When I started to look at the deeper reasons why these issues maybe be presented in the first place, the food issues naturally slipped away and I gained and lost hundreds a few times. I mean, I had a very tumultuous relationship with food and I thought someday I am going to finally be able to manage this. I never thought I would be able to really be free and I think that when we don't hold that goal for ourselves, the destination can feel really kind of drudgery. So a lot of what I am excited about and what we talk about at the Institute for the Psychology of Eating is how to really look at our relationship with food as a doorway into our inner world and see it more as an adventure and as a teacher because when we use that more positive psychology model, the possibilities are so much greater than 'how can I regulate what I am eating and how I am eating in order to be a certain weight or look a certain way or feel a certain way?' It's just far more expansive and that's been my journey and that's really what inspired me to kind of do this work with others because I see it time and time again. I mean, so many people know what to do, like you know, you talk to people and they are like, 'Well, I know I shouldn't be doing this and I know I should be doing that' and so for me, the question that's way more interesting is "Why aren't you? What is getting in the way of that?" That's one component and then the other component, and I am sure you have probably seen this as well, there are people who are doing everything right according to the text book but they are still miserable. They still have the energy or the weight or the body they want and usually it's because there is a place where they are holding psychologically or emotionally that's inhibiting their capacity to kind of really step into the place they want to go. So, where I think it's fun to have a conversation.

Jen: Yes, and I think it's so important especially for the thyroid community when you are trying to manage a thyroid disease, you end up finding out for a period of time, there are so many foods you have to eliminate and it just feels like you can't eat anything at all and it brings about all this kind of stress. So it's like an added stress; on top of the stress of already being sick, of already feeling overwhelmed, of getting tons and tons of conflicting information from everybody, you

just have the stress. Then you feel like you can't eat anything at all. So, can you tell us a little bit how stress plays into nutritional health?

Emily: Yes and I think this has become such a hot topic; everybody is talking about stress and stress-eating and I feel like it is so important and what I find interesting is that so much of the conversation tends to be about external stressors. External stressors we don't always have control over and sometimes you are going to be in traffic, sometimes a relative does pass away, sometimes you lose a job, sometimes you are short on money and all of those things that we do have some control over, we had kind of limited control over, we can choose how we react to them. But what I think doesn't get enough air time is the self-chosen stressors. So, what I mean by that is the thoughts and beliefs that we have can literally create physiologic stress. So, stress from a definitional perspective is a real or imagined danger and the body's response to it and that's so important to understand because we can literally be thinking about a stressful situation or imagine a stressful situation or like so many of us that worry about their future and even though it's not happening in this present moment, you can have the exact same physiologic stress chemistry as if that actual event was happening in that moment. So people who are constantly reliving past events, or this break up and just like being with those memories or beating themselves up, so "I am not good enough," "I hate the way I look," "I hate the way I feel," "I hate my body," I hate this, I hate that, all of that creates a literal physiologic stress response. And we know that stress day-in and day-out long-term stress is not what we were designed for. The stress response is brilliant, it's important that we have it, it's from an evolutionary perspective imperative that when you are in a dangerous situation that you go on to a stress response, for quick fighting and fleeing. So your brain works faster, your extremities, all your blood-flow goes to your extremities so you can break quickly but if you are doing that day-in and day-out and if all of your energy is going to your extremities and your brain, you can't digest, you can't calorie-burn. Like you literally reduced your metabolic rate dramatically, you reduced your ability to digest and assimilate; so you could be eating the healthiest food on the planet but if you are not in an optimal state of digestion which is relaxing, you literally could lose 40%-60% of the nutrients in that meal even if it's the healthiest food on the planet. And I think this is so important because we get so focused on the food which is important, but what are you putting the food into? If you think of the body like a car, it's like if you had a leak in your – I don't know anything about cars so it's a terrible example..if you had a hole somewhere in your car, you know, it's like you have to look at the vehicle that you are putting the foods and the supplements or whatever you are taking into because if you are stressed out, freaked out, hitting yourself, you are not going to get even close to the potential out of those foods that you are eating. We have control over our thoughts. I mean, I think a lot of times, we get really focused on the body and we lift weights and we build muscle but the brain can be exercised just the way that our body can. A lot of us let our minds get away from us and we don't even realize that; all day long we are self-attacking. Self-attack is telling yourself, 'you are not good enough,' you hate yourself, 'you shouldn't be doing this,' 'why did this happen to you?' I mean especially people with health conditions can get very self-blaming or really down on themselves and then their chances to heal and rejuvenate decrease because of literally the thoughts that we are thinking. So, it's so important to kind of watch that and look at that and take the time and energy to shift that on a conscious level on a daily basis.

Jen: Yes, absolutely. So, then you know what would the remedy be for stress when it comes to eating and how do people counteract that because it's just constant, it's chronic and in our whole society everything is about – we are hyper-scheduled, we are overwhelmed, things are coming at us all day long and it's like almost where do you have the time to start to think about how to relax and how to de-stress? And then, how do you remedy that one when it comes to eating?

Emily: Yes, it's a million-dollar question and so a couple of different things, so in terms of remedies for stress, the first is it's free. It's relatively easy to do but it's a practice and it's deep breathing. So, every state of being has a corresponding breath pattern and you, when you are all stressed out and freaked out, you'll have a short, you know, like almost anxious, upper register breathing. The breath pattern of relaxation is long, slow, deep breathing and you can literally put yourselves in a relaxation response with ten, long, slow, deep breaths. So, before any meal or before you even take a bite of your food, I recommend taking six long, slow, deep breaths and it's interesting how hard so many people find that. I don't want to underestimate that, I don't want to undervalue that because for some people just being present and aware is not what they are used to. So many of us will go through a drive-thru or be like, 'I'm gonna grab my food and then get in the car and then drive through traffic on my way to work while I'm on my cell phone while eating' that in and of itself is a stressor because the body goes like, "Why in God's name, would you ever be driving, talking, eating and stressing out?" It goes like, "Well clearly, we are in a dangerous situation and so let's shut down digestion, let's have that food just sit in your stomach." I mean, so many people will say to me, "I have digestive issues" and I said, "What's your symptoms?" They say, "I get bloated after a meal, I feel like food just sits in my stomach" and then when I track back to the way in which they eat, they are in the car eating, they are watching the seven o'clock news which in and of itself is inherently stressful; they are not present, they are having this conversation the whole time about 'I shouldn't be eating this, I don't like this' whatever, all of those are physiologic stresses. So, first step is six long, slow, deep breaths before any meal and it can completely shift you into a relaxation response. The other thing is presence and awareness and I think we really underestimate the value there. There's something called cephalic phase digestion which is the head phase of digestion. It looks at taste, pleasure, aroma, satisfaction and the visuals of the meal and how they influence your digestive and metabolic capacity. They have done tons of studies on this; I don't think it's headline news because you can't market it. You can't be like, 'Buy this pill, it's going to help you focus;' that's not terribly sexy but what happens is without the head phase of digestion, you can lose 40%-60% of your metabolic capacity in any meal; which is huge.

Jen: Wow.

Emily: So, just by literally not being aware and present, not looking at what you are about to eat, not taking it in, 40%-60% of your digestive metabolic calorie-burning capacity at any meal can be lost and it takes a minute to get present. Because what happens is that the brain is scanning for what's going on, what's happening, you'll hear all the time, people will say, "It takes 20 minutes for the brain to kind of catch up with the belly" to know that you are full. Basically what they are saying is that the body needs time. We need time to be able to tell what's going on and so I feel like you are saying, 'It's so hard because there's so much going on in your life and how do you make time for this?' And I say like if you are rushing through every single meal and you are a fast eater, start with one meal; so then if you can't do breakfast, can you do lunch? 'Oh

wait, I'm busy at work,' can you do dinner? Sometimes we have to make adjustments in order to really improve our health. Sometimes people want to go, 'I don't want to change anything but I want to get better, I want to feel better;' that's just not how it works.

Jen: Right.

Emily: You have to prioritize things. Think about how much money or time you will spend with digestive issues; I mean, weight-loss in this country is a billion-dollar industry and so many people that I have worked with or I have seen or even myself, they don't have a diet deficiency; they don't need yet another plan. They are just constantly searching outside of themselves, they are constantly self-attacking, they are not present, they are not aware, they are never slowing down and so it's inevitable that these strategies won't work long term. What's fascinating is just getting present and slow and aware just before a meal, really only takes a couple of minutes but it can be challenging. So it's making the intention to do so, it's making the time to do so and figuring out when you can do it so it's realistic. So, sometimes people will be like, 'Okay, well, I got to do this before every single meal' and I think we tend to have an "all or nothing" mentality. I know I did and I'm like, "I wasn't going to eat sugar and I just ate a piece of sugar, so screw it. I'm gonna eat sugar all day." We tend to do that, we go like, "Well, I rushed through one meal, I'm going to rush through the rest of the meals" and it's a practice of incorporating it in the ways that you can on a daily basis and it can make a massive difference. I have seen people who change literally nothing they eat and they do six to ten long, slow, deep breaths before a meal and digestive issues and weight issues they have had for years and years completely shift because we underestimate the power of the mind. I mean, there is one of my favorite studies and I always tell this because I am super-resistant and very skeptical; like that's my nature and when I heard a lot of this stuff, I was like, "Really? Whatever. I just want to fix this, I just want to rid of this weight, I just want to stop having issues." All of this stuff sounds like, 'I don't understand, how is it tangible? Does it really work?' There was a study done with cancer patients where they took a group of cancer patients and they split them up into two groups and they gave one group chemotherapy and the other group, they told they were getting chemotherapy but they actually had a placebo. So they had a fake, harmless, inert substance; they were actually given water injections and at the end of the study, I don't remember how many months it was but at the end of the study, they took the two groups of people and the group that had had chemotherapy, both the groups had cancer and the group that had chemotherapy, had a very common side effect, which is they lost their hair. The other group who had not had chemotherapy, they had the placebo, they had the fake, harmless, inert substance was actually water injections in this case, 31% of them lost their hair just having water injections. The reason why this is so profound is because what happened was is they had this association, 'Go on chemo, lose hair.' They literally created that experience for themselves. So, I think the power of the mind cannot be underestimated. If we can cause ourselves to literally go bald because we believe that's what's going to happen, imagine the implications if when we sit down to a meal we go, "I shouldn't eat this, this is not good for me." "Every time I take a bit of this, I can't stop." "I am going to have this thing to struggle with for the rest of my life." So when people get a diagnosis, so often what happens is, on one level, there can be a sense of relief, because now they kind of understand maybe what's going on for me but people can get very self-identified with that in a way that is not necessarily supportive. Like, you are a human being, you are not someone who has a thyroid issue; you are not someone who has a weight issue, that is something

that is going on in your life but people get very identified with a diagnosis and then they create a whole story around it. If we are not careful about that story, it can really shape the rest of our life in profound ways.

Jen: Absolutely and that's one of the things we work with here especially with people who – you are so happy you have received a diagnosis and then you do create this almost victim story about look at how my thyroid is attacking me and it's all the chatter is about how you are being attacked. Well, if you are being attacked, you are going into fight-or-flight because you are trying to survive here. So, with thyroid disease, as it plays into weight-gain, because that's what happens, you tend to gain weight and then there's all the stress about 'How am I going to lose it?' 'What can I eat?' And 'I am being attacked, I am being attacked, I am being attacked.' So, I think it's really important that you made that point that our brains are so powerful and if we change this story and we tell our bodies instead – I learned this several years ago, I had gone into the Chopra center and one thing they taught us was to sit down with our food and kind of thank it for nourishing me. So, it's like, "Thank you for nourishing me, apple" or whatever, "I am glad to have this opportunity to eat you." But it really changed how I thought about food and it was just enough to make me stop and get present with my meal. I know of lot of people especially moms, you end up maybe standing up to eat or eating really fast because you are shoveling it and you are trying to get it to everybody else or my husband stands up to eat, it drives me crazy, he's like hovering over us and we are sitting down and it's like, "Where are you going?" So, let's talk a little bit about eating speed factor, and how that plays into good nutrition.

Emily: Yes, eating speed is huge. The body literally thinks when you are eating fast, like you must be in danger. One of the things we forget about is our culture, our society has grown and changed and shifted so much faster than our biology. We don't shift to meet our culture the way it does. I mean, think about ten years ago, we didn't have – I mean, I never was online. I remember when I had to research a book, I went to the library and I flipped through those little cards and now it's like if my internet speed is not super-high – I mean I've been on an airplane getting frustrated that my Wi-Fi is not working and you're like "I can't believe how long this is taking" but we used to take so much longer to do everything. So, what happens is we kind of forget that and we expect ourselves be able to keep up with a completely artificial pace. So eating fast is a literal physiologic stress. It's literally what happens, you go into a stress response, and the result of that is inability to digest and assimilate properly, your calorie-burning – a lot of times, people think like if I am going really fast, I am burning more calories which is actually not necessarily the case. I mean, there are some really fascinating studies on weight gain that comes from over-exercising.

Jen: Right.

Emily: Because a lot of times people go, "I am going to eat 1000 calories a day and I am going to work out for three hours a day and I am going to get this weight off really quickly because I have this event or this wedding" or whatever. And what happens is, is a bunch of things; you put your body into starvation response invariably because the body goes, "We must be in a desert island. Why would you ever be making me eat all these fat-free, weird foods and 1000 calories a day and exercising my brains out? We must be in a dangerous situation." So what happens is, your metabolic rate will actually decrease to kind of match what's going on because the body

goes, "Uh-oh, we clearly don't have enough food here. If we continue to burn calories at this high rate, we will run out of food and we will go hungry." It doesn't know, oh you are trying to fit into a size two for some event; like there's no way it would pass that, it doesn't make any sense to your biology. So what happens is, so often we create this artificial scenarios that land up creating the exact opposite of what we are looking for. So slowing down with food is like long, slow, deep breaths, slowing down with food are two things that are really – I want to say everybody can do and I know that somebody who is watching this they go like, 'You don't know my life, I get fat' but we can make a priority to do that can make such a huge impact. I tell people, don't believe me, try it out. Like literally go ahead, try it out for a week, two weeks. I had chronic digestive issues; I literally was like, "I'm going to take this acid I'm gonna take these digestive enzymes –" I mean was like I literally though I had digestive issues that were going to last the rest of my life and I am very high speed, very high strung. It was incredibly hard for me so I am not underestimating that. I mean there are some people for who this is easy-breezy for but for me this was incredibly challenging. I have had clients where go, "Listen, I want you to take 20 minutes for dinner, I want you to make a beautiful plate for you, I want you to light a candle for yourself and I want you to sit down –" and they called me the next day and they like sobbed their way through the meal because often times, what's underlying that is food is such an intimate experience. It's like we eat it and it becomes who we are and no matter what we want to say, we all have a food story. We all have a journey with food, it's our longest term relationship, it shifts based on the relationships we are in, the people we are around, the foods we are in, how we feel about ourselves, how we feel about our bodies and when we are not in touch with that, we can lose a huge way to have insight into our inner world and how we are in the world. So, I always say, that food challenges are raised in which we might struggle with food, really can be such a great doorway into our inner world but we have to slow down and stop and listen because if we don't, we are going to miss those signals and then often what happens is we get symptoms. When we are not listening, the body goes like, okay – so it would kind of be like if you kept getting a headache and all you did was take a painkiller, like how many stories do you hear; when people take headaches and they just keep taking painkillers and then they find out that they have a brain tumor. Had they been listening all along or people who have intense digestive issues, who just keep like not listening and it turns out they have something as intense as Celiac disease. So, what happens is, when we don't slow down and we don't listen, we miss all those signals and then we can get really sick and then it can be a lot harder to reverse than it would be if like right away, we were like, "Wow, every time I eat this, I get a stomach ache," "Every time I eat this, I get a headache." So many people say to me, because it's become such a hot thing to talk about body wisdom and for so many of us, it's like what is that? There is no way we can listen to the body if we don't listen to the body, if we don't slow down and listen to it. So I can now tell when I eat a food, "Wow, that really didn't sit well with me" but for years I had no capacity to know that all of my decisions on food really came from nutrition information I was getting from books or other experts. I had lost my ability to see, like when I eat this, this is what happens and that to me is the most valuable information; you will never ever get that information going fast. There is just no time for the brain and the body to catch up with each other.

Jen: Yes, and we are so distracted these days and one of the exercises we do in the Thyroid Fix In 6 they have people look at their schedule and say, where am I using a to-do to distract myself from something that's really going on in my life; something major that is going on with my life. And so I have people journal that out and also where am I using food as a distraction as well

because I think people use food and use to-dos as a way to not have to sit and think about is going on in their lives, what I need to work on. Then you are right, when you just don't stop to just even see what's going on with yourself, it's hard to track; is the food actually causing some of this, is my body reacting to this food or not? I think it's just so hard to like what do you say the hyper-scheduled, over-scheduled, the typical profile of the thyroid-sufferers, like the type-A, go-getter, care-giver, we give to everybody else, we don't ever fill this vessel up, we are coming from a depleted place, and we put everybody first but we also do a bazillion things at one time. So, do you have like any advice for just people on – I loved what you said about sitting down at the table and taking those six deep, breaths; but is there anything else that's pretty simple that people can do to just kind of remember who they are and fill the tank a little bit more?

Emily: Yes, I feel like one of the things I struggle with around this is it depends on the person because I think a lot of times, like for example, with positive affirmations and I do think thinking positive thoughts is really useful. But at the same time, if you are saying stuff to yourself that you don't believe – you can't lie to yourself, that's not an effective strategy. So you wake up every morning and you'll be like "Wow, I am amazing, I'm so beautiful, I love everything about myself –" but no part of you believes that; it's so dissonant that it has no impact. So, different people different things speak to. Some people really find journaling, some people really find scheduling helpful, some people find positive affirmations, some people find yoga classes or maybe it's more meditation. Other people like they have such an aversion to that and other people it's taking a walk. It depends on who you are and so I feel like for example, in a relationship, I think a lot of this comes from – sometimes people want to distract themselves from maybe what's going on in their relationship. So for someone like that, it might be that a lot of their stress and their *avoidant* behavior comes from a relationship where they don't feel like they are being themselves, they don't feel like they are speaking their truth or they feel like they are not getting their emotional or sexual or intimacy needs met. So that's going to be very different than somebody who is really thriving in a relationship where they have a work-life that's crushing them. So, there is not like a simple answer here, I wish I could give a simple answer, but I really think that looking at the major areas of your life and how you feel – like if you can show up fully in them, is a really great place to find where the action is. Because food issues will be to distract for sure and I think my concern was that anybody would feel like ashamed of that or feel self-judging about that because it makes so much sense. If we are not getting the intimacy we desire or we are not getting the comfort we want in a relationship, it makes perfect sense that we would reach for something that is the closest approximation. In psychological lingo, it's called *symbolic substitute*. So, food could be a symbolic substitute for that, it could be a symbolic substitute for feeling like, in my job but I am not getting to use my potential, I don't feel like I am supporting anything that is of meaning or value to me. So I don't know what it is for any one person without really diving into it but just using that to start to track for yourselves; if you are the kind of person who is like 'I hate journaling, don't tell me to do a journal,' but it's so important to start to track like, 'Wow, every night at 9:00 PM, this is what happens for me' and if you for once like kind of start from the behavior, you can start to feel the emotion that comes up underneath it and it is so uncomfortable. Like that's the hardest part because they feel like for – I wish I could say to people, you know, I wish I was like one of those people that are like, "Buy this program, lose seven pounds in seven days and have a bunch of energy –" like that's just not what I teach because that's not what I have experienced and it's not what I have seen. You have to get comfortable with discomfort and when you

down what's on the other side, is so much more freedom that you could possibly have imagined but the road there is not always comfortable. Some people will be like, 'Well, I get that I am not expressing my truth but if I do, things are going to explode.' That actually might happen but you are killing yourself with food and you hate your life and you feel alone and you are unhappy. So, do you want to live in that place or do you want to risk that if you say what's really true for you, the relationship might end or that job might end? I think we get so scared of that that we completely stop even the conversation within ourselves. So, I don't have a simple answer.

Jen: Well, I think – we are not even really socialized to feel discomfort; like we are always kind of socialized glossed over pick yourself up, dust yourself off, get going, have a smile, don't let people in, don't let people know what's really going on. So as a culture, it's something that we have to move toward or people just need to start doing and experiencing the power of sitting in that discomfort. I mean, it's hard to do; I just started – in the last decade – showing my age but in the last decade, I have been doing that; sitting in my discomfort more but to get to that place was just so hard to do because as a girl, a lot of times, you are raised to be a good girl. Be polite to everyone and not really share your true thoughts because you don't want to offend anyone or you don't want to get in trouble or you don't want anybody to get mad at you and so I think a lot of times we do that. And people don't really understand when you are not really living your true authentic self, how that turns in on the body and either manifest as disease, it can manifest as weight gain or stress or whatever.

Emily: Yes, it's huge and I think there are so many books about this but we are not one person and I don't mean that like in a schizophrenic way but I do kind of – like we literally are multiple people. We have, inside of us, like there is a part of you that is a good girl and there is a part of you that is probably a bitch and there's a part of you that is a caretaker and there's a part of you that's really selfish and there's a part of you that is a rebel. So what happens is that when we get locked into one persona, it will come out expressed or distorted in another place. So, if I never – I think we probably all have a rebel within us and if I never let that part of me out, if I never just do something on a whim, or really say what I am thinking in a conversation where I know it's going to be unpopular or, you know, date the person I really want who I know may not be good for me or whatever it is, when that doesn't get expressed, invariably, it will come out in behaviors. So, a lot of times people – like I see all the time, women who are in the good girl archetype, everybody can count on them, they are the one you are always – like when nobody wants to pick up the kids, they are the one you call; "Oh Liz will throw the baby shower," like that person is often times, someone who struggles with kind of like a compulsive binge-eating like secret binge-eating pattern. I'll say that because there's a part of them that's just like, 'I am trapped in this persona, it never gets expressed' and they'll find themselves like voraciously eating bags of chips, this aggressive kind of crunching action and it makes perfect sense because it's not getting expressed. So for them, it might be playing with where can you introduce that into your daily life or into your relationships and sometimes, it will cause relationships to end and you'll have to get new friends or you'll have to change the way in which you engage with people and there will be shifts around that. But what's on the other side is being around with people who actually like you for who you are and living a life that's more in alignment with your core values because I think it's really hard to be physically healthy when you hate your life or you don't like a majority of your life; if you truly go to bed at night, feeling like 'This is not me and this is not my life' which I think so many people feel. Like I remember going to bed all the

time being – literally feeling like 'This isn't my life, like what is going on here?' So, it wasn't until I did that really hard work of discovering what it is. So many of us get detached from our desires because we are so busy as you talk about it, we are so filled with obligations that even just taking four hours and sitting down to be like, 'What do I actually want? What do you actually desire? Who do I want to be? What do I want to do?' And then to actually see that and see it expressed can be in and of itself so freeing. And then to gradually make the changes to have that happen, I feel like that's where real health comes from and that's where real health starts because we get – from that place, when we are healthy of mind and we are healthy of spirit, food choices become so much more easeful. I used to eat tons of garbage and when I say garbage – like I was an artificial sweetener addict; I mean, I drank Diet Coke like it was my job and I literally can't put it into my mouth now. When I think about the fact that at a restaurant, the first thing I would do I would sit down and I would say, "Can I have a Diet Coke with lemon?" because of course, the lemon makes it healthy [*sarcasm*] –

Jen: Right.

Emily: Now I taste it and I am like -- I gag because I can taste how toxic it is and how chemical it was but when I was not in that place in my mind and in my heart and my spirit, it was like, I had to will food choices that were better for me, if that makes sense.

Jen: Yes, totally. So, a few minutes ago, you mentioned pleasure and I know you like to talk about the metabolic power of pleasure; can you tell us a little bit about that and what does that mean?

Emily: Yes, I always like to talk about it because it was probably the concept that I was like most skeptical of and I think a little bit indoctrinated, depending on where we grew up or how we grew up, that pleasure is frivolous. I mean, that was definitely something that I kind of believed was that like whatever, and then there was that whole movement and especially people who struggled – I identified as someone who was so compulsive around food, I felt powerless to it. So I got very drawn to the "eat to live, not live to eat" kind of idea which I think has a lot of value. But on the other side, it is okay to get pleasure from food. In fact, it's like an imperative because we are designed on a biological level to seek pleasure and avoid pain. And what will happen is when the body is denied pleasure, you will inevitably land up going for it in probably more extreme ways. So, what happens is, pleasure is a literal metabolic enhancer; so if you are eating food, you hate the taste of it, you don't like it, it's not pleasurable, you don't enjoy any part of it, you won't get the full nutrient value, you won't get your whole full metabolic capacity. Pleasure will literally enhance that and they have done a billion studies on this. Again, I don't know why they are not on headline news, but getting pleasure from what you are doing, from what you are eating, from your life – and doesn't only come from food but I do think it's really important to bring pleasure back to the table because when it's denied, that's when I see people binge-eating. That's when I see people – there is a quote, "For every diet, there is an equal and opposing binge" and I know – you mentioned in the beginning that when people first get diagnosed with the thyroid issue and they are told that all these foods they cannot eat, I think even within that, there is an ability to make sure that you are getting some pleasure from the food that you are eating. So, making choices to prepare them in ways that are good, that taste good because without that, your ability to extract the nutrients from that meal are decreased and

pleasure puts you in a relaxation response. So, relaxation response as we have already said, is the optimum place for calorie burning, digestion and assimilation. So, you can't really underestimate the value there and I want to say, pleasure from all areas of life and I think you know about some of them but I mean, even just regularly getting a backrub – I have worked with clients, often times where they are like, they don't get any touch. They are single, they maybe be got out of a relationship and what's happening in their world is – and especially if they have any kind of diagnosis or kind of condition, their life is kind of devoid of pleasure. Without that, we can kind of get apathetic, we can get a little bit depressed, we can kind of get into this question of like 'why do it,' 'why try' and so for them, I might look at ways to introduce pleasure that are food-related or not food-related and for people it's different. Don't take what I find pleasurable; I really like a massage so for me, even just introducing massage on a regular basis had a big impact on my eating issues because I was – at the time I wasn't in a relationship and I remember going to a retreat and I got a massage while I was there and I could literally feel, on a cellular level, my system relaxed in a way it hadn't in so long. We are people who are used to touch and sensation and when we live these very isolated lives, it becomes, it's so bizarre. I live in Boulders where people touch a lot but I am from the East Coast and I remember when I moved out here, I'd meet people and they'd be like "Hi, it's so good to meet you" and they would hug me. And I'd feel my whole body just like – I'd be like, "Why are you touching me? I don't know you" and now I have gotten so used to it and there's a way where it's like wow, that's actually kind of more how we are hardwired. And we live these really – these distant, removed lives where our source of connection is through technology, where we don't touch, we don't indulge in pleasure, where we eat these diets that are rigid to shape our body and to some shape that we have in our head that's going to make us more attractive and more lovable. Of course, we wouldn't really want to do that; it's not fun. So, those are just some thoughts around it.

Jen: Yes, totally. So you are talking about bingeing and over eating, what is sort of your approach to this topic because it's wildly popular and people hide it, they – you've had experience with it and what is your approach to it?

Emily: Again, I think – and I am aware of the time and in three minutes, everybodys binge eating challenges –

Jen: Can you do it?

Emily: I think we have touched on a lot of the stuff here; one of the things I would say about binge-eating and I mentioned it a little bit is kind of the thoughts that we think in terms of, "If I have one bite of this, I am never going to be able to stop" and for a lot of people, that's a reality. That's their lived experience but what happens is with binge-eating is that invariably when we are eating a food, we are looking for a bunch of different things. We are looking for a taste sensation but we are also looking for a physiologic or kind of mental effect. Now, that might be happening on a subconscious level; I don't think most people sit around going like, 'I want to eat a piece of chocolate cake because I have this childhood association with it and on a subconscious level, I feel like I am being nurtured and simultaneously the hit of sugar and –' but that's what's happening. We are looking for a sensation and you'll notice like people, during different periods of their life, will be really drawn to salty, crunchy food, or they'll be drawn to ice cream, or they will be drawn to cake. So there can be nutritive reasons. There's people who struggle with

binge-eating, literally because they are nutrient-deficient. If you are not getting essential fats, you are not getting appropriate amounts of protein, you are not getting those things that your body needs, your body will not say, "Hey Emily, you need three tablespoons of olive oil," it will just scream "Hungry" and it will scream hungry for something that is probably high in fat because it's like, I need something, something is missing on a nutritive level. So there's nutrient reasons and then on top of that there's often emotional reasons. So, a lot of people who struggle with binge-eating, I'll see because there's a place in their life where they are not expressing the truth, where they feel really contracted, where they feel almost suffocated by their life. It's a way to release that energy. We are always seeking balance, we just are. So, if you have a super-uptight, high-stress day, you eat coffee for breakfast and you have a salad with fat-free dressing for lunch, and you are type-A and you are uptight all day long, of course you are going to come home and drink a bottle of wine and eat a cake because your body is like, "You just tortured me all day," You know what I mean? You are so uptight. So there's that reason, there are sometimes deep issues around trauma, around past history of sexual challenges, sometimes it is literally a matter of what we talked about before around pleasure and sometimes it is literally changing your beliefs around food. I mean, I was the kind of person who ate an entire sheet-cake and I am not talking like the little ones, the ones that go for the kids' parties –

Jen: Yes.

Emily: So I know what that experience is like and that sense of powerlessness and if you had told me five years ago, "Hey Emily, there's going to be a time in your life where you can have bite or two of cake and you will literally feel done," I would say, "You don't know me and you are crazy."

Jen: Oh my God.

Emily: But I had to literally start to trust myself in a way that was so uncomfortable. So, what that meant was like literally sitting down – I am going to sit down with one piece of cake and I am going to try and eat it really, really slowly which was really, really hard. And so it was practice, it wasn't like overnight that went away but a lot of people who struggle with binge-eating say that's a self-trust issue. It's lack of – they literally don't trust themselves to be able to stop and so you have to start to do it and stop and *re-story* what's going on for you. It's a process and it can take time and maybe out of that you find, 'I actually hate cake' which is what I found, which was baffling to me. I don't like cake, I don't ever eat cake anymore. I don't have any interest in it but I have this whole crazy relation with cake and now I am like – I much prefer an ice cream or like a nice torte or a green tea crumble but I didn't even know what I liked anymore. So, it's a process of unwinding, so it's changing the beliefs, looking at why it's happening in the first place, looking at if there's nutritive reasons, emotional, psychological, lifestyle all of it.

Jen: Okay, wow. I mean, you have really opened us up to some different ways to view our relationships through ourselves and eating today. I know we are running low on time so, I want to ask you for two things; one, if you could give us, kind of just summarize three tips we can walk away with, something that we can do today to start changing our relationship to food and also to tell us a little bit more about the Institute for the Psychology of Eating, what you do and the kind of programs that you have.

Emily: So, a couple of things to do would be the first, pickups – the first would be the breathing; I can't underestimate how important that is. At the very least, doing six long, slow, deep breaths before every meal and also any time you notice yourself, you are about to freak out – and this can change your life. I mean I notice even in like social situations, you get a little uncomfortable sometimes and I literally – nobody is going to be like, "Could you stop breathing?" Like nobody can even tell. So when you notice yourself starting to feel that anxiety or that uncomfortability or starting to panic, long, slow deep breathing is always the shortcut out of that. So, I use it all the time, into your belly. A lot of us think we are deep breathing, but we are only breathing up here because we have been trained to like kind of suck in and pull up. So really let your belly go long, slow, deep breathing; slowing down and listening around your food issues or your food challenges and just playing with the notion that this is happening for a really beautiful reason. So many times when we have a health symptom or when we have a food issue, we just want it to go away and we are so focused on getting it away that we don't listen for the wisdom there. And I know it can feel hard especially when you have a diagnosis, you are like "Okay, right, it's such a gift!" But just try on the idea that this happened for a really beautiful reason and that when you discover what that is for you, I really feel like it's magic what happens. So just listening, slowing down and breathing.

Jen: Great.

Emily: So those are simple but kind of hard. And then, to learn more about what we do, so I run the Institute for the Psychology of Eating with Marc David; he's the founder of the institute and you can learn more about us at psychologyofeating.com. We do a couple of things; we train coaches and so we have a certification program to become a certified, eating psychology coach. So much of what I talked about in this is talked about the training about how to specifically work with clients. So if you are already a professional and you want to incorporate eating psychology into your practice or if you are career-changer and if you are like, 'I actually really want to do this work,' we have a program, it's eight months and that's distance learning so you can take it from anywhere in the world. And then we also have a program for the public which is an eight-week program which is called '*Transform your relation with food*' and it really takes you through a lot of what I talked about today. So, it's diet-agnostic in terms of like you can be eating whatever you are – whatever plan you have to be on but it's really working with mindset and why the issues are presenting in the first place. We take you through a lot of exercises and so forth. So certification program, public program, we have a free video series if you want to learn more on the website; so you can just go there. It's the *Dynamic Eating Psychology Free Video Series* and it takes you through everything I just said and more and slower.

Jen: Great and I have been to your website a million times and read your newsletters and just the content and just the info that you give us is so helpful and is so easy to understand. So, I encourage everybody to check that out as a resource.

Emily: Thank you so much, it was really an honor to be here and I love the work you are doing, so I really appreciate it.

Jen: Thank you, it was beyond great speaking with you today. It was just a pleasure. Thank you so much.

How Eating Mindfully Can Change Your Health
Expert: Emily Rosen



Emily: Okay, bye-bye.

Jen: Bye.

END OF PRESENTATION