



938: Setting Women Free From the Chains of Dieting
With Shay Pascale

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I talk about that so much on this podcast. And magnesium is the one nutrient that helps my sleep so much as well as so many other aspects of my health because magnesium is vital for so many things within the body, and it is nearly impossible to get enough from food anymore. And Magnesium Breakthrough from BIOptimizers is in a category of its own.

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Hello and welcome to the Wellness Mama podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com, and I'm here today with Shay Pascale to talk about setting women free from the chains of dieting. And I love her evidence backed approach to this. We talk about reverse dieting, healing metabolic damage, confounding factors like hormones, gut stuff that might be going on.

She's an absolute wealth of knowledge on this, and she intimately understands the challenges of restrictive diets and perpetual restarts because she was trapped in this

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herself. In fact, she and I both share our stories with kind of learning these things the hard way and having struggled with that along with gut and hormone imbalance for most of her life.

She set out to figure out how to reverse these things in herself, address her own root causes and rebuild her relationship with food. And now she guides her clients toward the path of food freedom and lean body composition by supporting their body. And we talk about nurturing versus restriction. We talk about reverse dieting. We talk about the optimal macros, especially as we get older. How fitness comes into play and so much more. I know you will learn a lot, so let's join Shea.

Katie: Shay, welcome. Thank you so much for being here.

Shay: Thank you so much for having me Katie.

Katie: Well, I am so excited to jump into this conversation and learn from you and get to hear your perspective and your knowledge on this topic of setting women free from the chains of dieting. And this is something that I have personally experienced. Learning that I had a lot of misconceptions about the things that actually would work versus the things that didn't.

And also the ways I had even just created metabolic dysfunction by over dieting for too long. And I know there's a lot of things that will enter this conversation, but to start broad, can you maybe introduce us to some of the problems that you see in the conventional approaches that are often suggested for fat loss? And, or like maybe some of the hurdles women don't even know to look out for when it comes to this?

Shay: Absolutely. So some of the things that I hear all the time from women is, you know, what used to work is no longer working for me or everything I've tried just to lose weight, to drop some pounds, drop some inches, it's not working. It's not working anymore. I've tried everything. You know, I track my calories, I track my calories that I burn in my workouts. I feel like I'm doing everything right, but like nothing is changing. Right? I hear this all the time. And what I've found is when women, like once you get to about 30, 35 years old, we start losing muscle pretty quickly if we're not actively working to increase it.

And so our metabolism is going to shift with that, right? This thing that like you don't even realize is happening underneath is completely changing. And so the old things naturally are not going to work for those types, those people because they don't realize, Oh my gosh, all of this metabolism stuff is changing.

So just this calories in calories out model just is pretty short sighted for a lot for, for the most part for these women.

Katie: Yeah, I'm so glad you brought that up and I think this is an important point to really highlight because this is seemingly what I see the most in mainstream kind of diet culture. And the idea that if it's not working, it's because you're either doing it wrong or you're not being honest about your calories or you're not moving enough. And as someone who, when I was in my like chronic over dieting and trying to lose weight with thyroid issues, for instance, I was drastically under eating. Like 800 calories a day under eating. I now eat more than double that. And I lost 80 pounds by eating more. So that kind of breaks the mold of what we're told is the conventional calories in calories out.

And it seems to me like it's not an either or it's actually a both and. That it's not that calories don't matter, it's just that there's a lot more to the story that gets missed when we're only thinking about calories. But I know you have a lot more on this topic, so is that your experience as well? And if so, what are we missing when we only kind of simplify down to calories?

Shay: Yes. So I used to do the same thing. It's when I started, I was like 25, I started gaining some weight and I did kind of what a lot of women do is, okay, I need to watch my calories. I need to track my calories, track my workouts, make sure I'm losing, right? In a caloric deficit.

And I think this is like the initial thing that most people do. And it typically... here's the trick. It does work, maybe that first time. And so I saw it come down. I saw the scale come down. I was like, Oh my God, this is great. Right? All I have to do is go into calorie deficit. All my weight's coming off.

No problem. But then what happens is a lot of times people can't stick to that. And this is what I found is, okay, trying to eat 1200, 1500 calories a day. You can do it for a period of time, but no person, no adult woman should be eating that low of calories. Right? And so what happens? What's reality is we kind of rebound, right?

Unfortunately. And so if we don't do a proper, what I call a reverse diet, if we don't actually look at what our food is comprised of, we typically see that rebound weight gain. Right? And so then I hear this with my clients, right? I tried keto, it worked and then I gained it all back. I tried, you know, this or that or whatever diet and I gained it all back.

So the problem with that is we aren't looking at the balance of macronutrients within that caloric spend that you get each day. I kind of look at it like a budget. You said, both and,

correct. Like, I agree with you a hundred percent. Calories matter, but it's just not the only piece of the puzzle here.

We have to look at what our food is comprised of so that we can be satiated. We can be like full and satisfied and not feeling like we need to snack all day or, you know, have good digestive health, have good hormone health. It's so important to look at the full picture.

Katie: Yeah, my friend JJ likes to say that your body's not a bank account, it's a chemistry lab. Which I think touches on that piece of like, it's not just the amount, but also very much the makeup of what we're consuming and how they send different signals to our body, including signals of safety or not. And what I didn't know at the time when I was in that chronic kind of downward spiral was that my body was actually doing exactly what it was designed to do.

As I was adapting to like lower and lower and lower calories, it was getting better and better and better at operating in a low energy state, preserving all resources and not releasing fat because it was literally trying to keep me alive. And I was trying to override it's literally trying to keep me alive with willpower, which as you explained, only can work for a little while, thankfully, because our body is designed to have that survival instinct to get us to eat enough food. And you, mentioned the word reverse dieting and I really would love to go into this because I think this can be so paradigm shifting for so many people and is maybe a new concept for some people listening. So can you define what reverse dieting is and how this kind of helps break that cycle?

Yes, and I would love to tell my story with that as well. So Reverse dieting is basically this method where you take... you might have started at a low calorie place. So you start at like 1,500 calories is what you're typically eating. So like you said you had reduced your calories down your body kind of adapted to that level, is basically what happened.

You're in that kind of set mode there. That was where your metabolism sat, so to speak. And what we want to do with a reverse diet is slowly bring calories up along with the proper macronutrient balance so that your metabolism adapts up. Kind of like it had already adapted down. So we're re-introducing more food.

We're adding to your your body. We're adding to your metabolism. We're increasing it over time and watching for key shifts in energy and weight and body composition and sleep, and digestion. All of these components that go into how do we help someone increase their metabolism. You know, you hear people say, my metabolism is broken.

My metabolism feels like it's just shot. I need a reset, right? This is one of the most magical ways to reset your metabolism. And I'll just tell you my story on this is, when I was eating

around, what I thought was a lot of food, 1,800 to 2,000 calories a day, right? Somewhere in that realm. I'm, for example, 150 pounds, I'm 5'9 so I'm not a small person, but like, I thought I was eating a good amount of food because what I used to do was 1,200 to 1,500.

That was where I used to try to hang out and thought, I just need to eat less to lose. So I was kind of trapped in this low calorie gain that so many women and even some men are kind of stuck there and they never see any results of their workouts. They never see any changes happen.

So when I did a reverse diet, I got to tell you, I don't think I could have done it without a coach because there is a mental component here. There is an absolute mental shift that happens. And, you know, I went through this process. I had started at 2000, 2100, you know, 2200, 2300, kind of like slowly increasing over time, and there was very little to no change maybe in the first two months.

And so I probably, if I didn't have a coach, I probably would have given up to be honest with you. You know, this isn't working, what's going on, the scale went up a pound, what's happening. I'm still doing the right... you have to have the right workouts, that's key, you have to have the right workouts to make this work. We can't just be doing cardio all the time, but as long as you have the right muscle centric workouts, and you're increasing your calories, you're going to give your body the fuel it needs. And one of the things you said on your previous episode was something about your metabolism is like that fire.

Your metabolism is like, okay, we need to add more wood to the fire to get your metabolism to burn more and use calories more effectively. That's what we're doing here, right? When we're doing weight training types of workouts, when we're increasing the calories with the balanced protein, carbohydrates, and fat for that person.

It's unique to that individual, then magic happens. And what happened to me was I went from around that 8, 1,900 ish, we'll call it to 2,400 to 2,500 calories a day. I did that over about three to four months. And I did gain technically like a couple pounds. And throughout the process, I saw my weight go up.

And then one day it like dropped and it was almost like a reset, literal reset of my metabolism. Like, Oh my God, the weight I just gained dropped. It's like my body was finally like accepting the new calories. And then I noticed, like, I was leaner. I was stronger. I was getting somewhere in the gym again.

And yet the weight, my initial weight from there, it never really changed. But everything was getting leaner. My body composition. So when women say I don't really care what the scale

says. I want to look a certain way. This is the shift that needs to happen in order to do that. And what you get on the other side of that reverse diet is absolute food freedom.

You have so much more ability to eat. So eat fun foods too.

Katie: Which, yeah, that's super inspiring and hopefully offers hope to a lot of people listening. And just to clarify also what is the benefit of doing kind of that slow step up of reverse dieting versus just saying like, okay, maybe I need to jump to 2,500 calories like overnight. Like, what is the benefit to kind of doing that incrementally?

Shay: That's a really good question. So if you think about, I'll just use my example. If my metabolism is really kind of adapted to that, like 1,900 calorie place, me doing a 2,500 calorie consistent jump and then staying there consistently, my body would have probably seen that as a bit of a surplus because it didn't have the time to adapt.

And is it possible for some people to do that jump and not have weight gain happen? Absolutely. There's people out there who could do that. But for someone who had been dieting down for so long, I had to do it gradually so that my metabolism could kind of catch up. So the digestive component was going to be okay because could you imagine trying to throw another 600 calories of protein and all this stuff when the body's not used to that amount of food?

It can create a little digestive situation for some people, right? And it can also just not allow you to break down your food as well. So that's, why I typically do a slow reverse. So my clients don't gain weight in the process.

Katie: That makes sense. And I will say as someone who's been through something similar and it actually took me a while to retrain my body to be able to like accept enough calories to just maintain normal healthy baseline. And I think actually that was the hardest part for me, not even the workouts, but the learning to actually eat enough food and to get my body to get used to and feel comfortable digesting that much food after years of kind of depriving it from getting enough calories. And I didn't realize until I shifted out of that, how much of a stress state I was in and how much I had adapted to that, like below, truly below survival amount of calories. And it seems like in your case too, a big part of this is also a really important mindset shift away from fat loss and restriction and into the more positive mindset of fueling and giving your body what it needs.

And I know for me, that was a learning process. I had to learn to listen to my body and to be friend it. It didn't happen overnight, but can you speak to the mindset shift of that? Cause I also feel like often if we can kind of work on the mindset shift, the practical application gets a little bit easier because we're not fighting ourselves.

Shay: Yeah, I love this and the mindset shift. So again, when I was going through reverse diet, trying to rebuild things, trying to get out of this calorie restriction, I could not, I know myself enough to know that I would have given up multiple times, seeing the scale go up, seeing little change in the first couple months. I would have given up if I didn't have a coach to be like, no, this is right.

Look at these things instead. This is the other data here that we need to be looking at instead of just the number on the scale. So when we're able piece together all of the data points. It's like, okay, this is painting a picture. And I think having that data really helped me with my mindset in terms of, okay, this is actually working.

I was just only looking at this much of it versus the whole story about what's happening with my body and my health. And so, I think so many women are just stuck with this, I need to lose, I need to release fat. I need to let go of, it's always in this kind of like lack, I guess, mindset more so is how I would describe it almost. If you are always thinking about what you need to lose, that's really kind of a crummy place to live.

Like, just that's your mindset that you go through. Like, I can't have this. I need to get rid of that. I can't have... it's like a restriction just mindset wise. So if we can start to shift into this, well, what do I stand to gain? How can I bring things in that will actually help the fat take care of itself?

Which is muscle, right? Which muscle sets us free if we know how to do it, right? What I've seen over and over again, I'm sure many fitness people, many fitness professionals. When you bring in muscle, when you focus on muscle, that tends to take care of itself. Right? And then we are so much more free with food, with health, with getting to go out and have that Italian pasta dinner.

It's not a big deal. I went out to dinner last night. I didn't worry about eating what I wanted to eat because I have that metabolic health on my side. I have muscle centric nutrition, muscle centric workouts that fuel my body and I don't have to live in that restrictive place of needing to lose all the time.

Katie: Yeah, I think that's huge. And even just psychologically, like we're wired to not want to lose things. I think of the psychological studies they've done where it's like people were given choices between like they could win, they could gain \$100 or there was a situation where they would lose like \$20. And people were more tightly like holding on in the situations where they didn't want to lose \$20 because we're just wired not to want to lose.

So you're right when we're framing everything from that perspective and that's, what's taking up all of our mental energy. Like that is a frustrating place kind of to be stuck in. And

I do want to make sure we also get to touch on the building muscle part. Cause I think this is super important and I would love if more and more women could build muscle as we get older and move into better metabolic health.

Before we get to that though, what are some of the kind of the key tenants of the macros of this approach and, or what women maybe don't understand yet and things they can implement that would help with this fueling versus restriction model?

Shay: Okay, so what can somebody do? What can somebody actually give you some tangibles? Kind of thing. So here's where I would start. If I was just like listening to this, I'm like, okay, how do I get out of this restrictive dieting cycle? Yoyo all of that. I would start with protein, which is where I start with all of my clients.

And I think the fitness world is very clear on protein at this point that we need a lot of it and we need a lot more than we've kind of been led to believe. And I think so many people think, oh, I just need to eat more vegetables. And it's like, yeah, you need to eat your vegetables. That's really helpful, but that's not going to fill you up.

That's not going to fuel you and satiate you. It's not going to keep you from wanting, you know, chocolate at nine o'clock at night. So let's look at protein because that's huge. So start with eating real animal based protein, right? I'm all about grass fed, grass finished, pasture raised, I'm all about all the healthy versions of protein.

But even if you can just start eating more grass fed beef, chicken, wild caught fish, even shrimp. Like, those kinds of things are great. Even eggs, dairy, all of these things have tons of protein in them. So bringing more of those things into our diet, is a really tangible place for people to start.

I always start with breakfast, because if you can get your breakfast right, it kind of sets you up for success the rest of the day. So it's the first meal we fix when somebody comes and works in our coaching program. So breakfast should have 30 to 50 grams of protein to start off your first meal of the day whenever you break your fast.

So I always say 30 to 50 grams of chewable protein. Something that you have to chew ideally. Some people can get away with a smoothie, but honestly smoothies tend to kind of, you know, you're not chewing it, it doesn't signal that satiety as much. So chewable protein, 30 to 50 grams in the morning.

You're going to set yourself up for so much more energy during the day, less cravings, less blood sugar swings, and cravings that come with that and mood issues that come with

that. You're going to just have a more level set, get through your day, have more energy for your kids at night. Be able to sleep better.

I literally had a client, we implemented this one strategy with her. She went from sleeping, maybe three to four hours, very broken every night. And the next night she implemented our protein strategy. She's like, I slept eight and a half hours. I have not had this happen in 10 years. And I asked her, it's been about a month that she's been working with us, I said, how has the sleep been? Has it been consistent? She goes, I sleep six to eight hours a night, every single night since I've implemented this strategy. So when I say go eat your protein, go do it, it makes such a big difference.

Katie: One, especially with breakfast, it seems like there's actually some like really good data on that getting protein signaling as early as possible after waking up. And I'm like bonus points if you're eating outside in the sunlight and getting natural light as well. And if you're getting some gentle movement right after breakfast. But that really makes a drastic difference in our hormone cascade for the whole day. Like you said. So that makes it easier to do all the other things throughout the day, not to mention if you get that burst of energy in the morning that carries you throughout the day, like the motivation is so much better.

Like that was what I actually noticed before any of the fat loss and anything else was just how much more energy I had. And how much it wasn't a struggle to just do the stuff that was on my to do list for the day because I wasn't just in an energy deficit as well. And I'd love to also bring in now the fitness component because I know this can be an elusive one and tough if we're busy moms and seemingly more and more data points to just how important it is to build muscle as we get older.

I know Dr. Gabrielle Lyon calls muscle the organ of longevity and essentially it seems like with almost no upper limit for women without taking steroids, like the more muscle, the better. Like you said, it gives us so much more leeway in what we can eat and still stay metabolically healthy. And we know that over 90 percent of Americans are not metabolically healthy and muscle is a big part of this solution. So for people who maybe don't have this fully dialed in yet, what are some of the top strategies or things we can implement that help us build muscle as we age and kind of make this a stable lifestyle habit?

Shay: Yes. Okay. So I'll try to keep it super simple, right? If we want to build muscle, we have to be lifting weights. There's kind of no way around that. You need resistance training. I would say for someone who's maybe just getting into this world, it can feel very overwhelming, very intimidating.

So I would recommend either following a video at home or just, if you really want to make a big difference, just go get a trainer. I tell my clients, go get a trainer, even if it's like 10

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sessions. It will be money well spent because you're going to learn the right form. You're going to learn how to act, what you need specifically at like, okay, this is too heavy, this is too light. What moves are going to make your body feel the best? Because for some people, squats don't feel very good. For other people, lunges don't feel very good, right? You have to find what works for your body. And so going to the gym for me is almost...what people don't realize, me doing this for, I've been working out for 15 years, but it can be a little bit of an experiment every day, what my body might allow me to do. And I think people realize that like everyone at the gym is kind of at their own level. And they're always kind of figuring out their body. But if you try to do that alone, it can be super intimidating. And I feel like people just, they kind of give up a little too soon if they don't have a guide. Just like we need help doing any new venture in life, this is a new venture. You need someone to guide you through it, to help you get the right movements in without hurting yourself. Because I think that's another component here is okay, if I go do this thing, I don't want to hurt myself.

I don't want to do it wrong. I want to make sure I'm getting the most out of this. So you need a plan. You need a program to follow. You need the right amount of weights. You need the right movements, compound movements, meaning heavier weights, not like just bicep curls all the time. I know bicep curls are great, we can do those once or twice a week, but we got to do heavier weights. Looking at those big muscle groups that make the bigger impact on your body. So I always say with my workouts, kind of like the minimum effective dose, right? Let's do the minimum effective dose so that I don't have to be in the gym very long.

So if I can be in the gym three hours a week, maybe four sometimes, I'm trying to do the kind of biggest bang for my buck type of workout. Which is heavy stuff like deadlifts, squats, lunges, pull ups, push ups and chest, bench press, things like that, overhead press. So those bigger compound movements that just are going to make your fitness, like your actual results go so much faster.

Katie: Yeah, I love that. And I love the M. E. D. Like the minimum effective dose approach because I think that's what was really helpful for me to learn. Was that actually you can get effective results without actually having to spend as much time as you would think, especially when you're lifting weights versus just doing cardio. The payoff on that is so big. And whatever you do, if you can just do it consistently and with some form of progressive overload where you're over time being able to add either more weight or more reps or both over time, within a strength window, like that's been kind of a game changer for me.

And I found for me personally, what really seems to work is like three to four, like you said, three to four days a week of strength training. And then I've started adding in one day a week of sprinting, which again, make sure your knees and joints are ready for this.

But I've read that statistic that think it was like, yeah, 98 percent of people over the age of 30 will never sprint again. And I was like I don't want to be part of that statistic. And it's insane, the data on one sprint session per week and what it can do for growth hormone, which is anti aging, what it can do for like your metabolic rate is potentially, I think one of the highest ROI things we can do and we're just never told that.

Shay: I mean, I typically, my typical client is one that is pretty depleted and energy deficient and so we're not usually throwing in sprints. But for most of my clients until they're like, well, through most of our phases in the program, once they're in that more optimized phase, it's like, okay, yeah, we could throw in some sprints in here and we could throw in some hit training, but let's make sure hormones and everything else is on board. You're sleeping, you have, you know, good energy, you don't need 14 cups of coffee a day.

As long as that's good yeah, we can definitely do some sprints, but even me, I don't sprint because I know my hormones aren't there right now. And I have to keep that stress level low, but there's been other periods of time in my life that I could do the sprints. And you just kind of have to like know where your body's at and really listen to that.

Katie: That's such a good point. And I'll say, even from my side, like I didn't, when I was in the healing phase and I was doing what I didn't know it was called, but essentially reverse dieting. I, for basically two years was very rest focused because I realized I am in this intense autoimmune disease. I have been living in stress hormones for a decade. My body does not need any more stressors. So I walked and I slept and I napped and I spent time in the sun and I fueled my body for years before I added these things back in. So I'm so glad you brought that up.

And I think also, to that point, it's like as we develop that resilience and we get more capacity too and like that's the point to challenge ourselves when it's a safety signal, not a stress signal. And I think like long term, how awesome would it be if of us as women in our like thirties, forties, fifties, we're able to start sprinting and doing pull ups. That's not where we start, but how cool would that be? If more and more...the average pull ups a woman can do is zero. So how cool would it be if we could all do a pull up? But even things like, I know it's trending right now, but I've been doing a lot of just weighted vest walks when I have to take phone calls or if I want to listen to a podcast, just gets me outside. I'm walking and then a little bit of weighted vest helps with bone density as well.

Shay: I actually love that. I love that weighted vest idea. And it's one that I forget about a lot. Cause I have like a knee and a hip issue that I can't actually do it. So it's what I forget about a lot, but actually for the majority of people, that'd be amazing. Like imagine if you just wore a weighted vest all day. I think it was Gary Breka I heard on a podcast that he has like a fancy weighted vest where he doesn't even look, it looks like just a nice vest, but it's actually weighted. And he just wears that all the time. I'm like, that's so genius. And how

good of a hack is that where you can just be doing, like we could be talking here, we could be doing our laundry and chores around the house and just wear a weighted vest. That's just going to give you some resistance and so I love that idea.

Katie And I know you have links for all these things too, so I'm going to make sure I put lots of links in the show notes for people to get more specifics from you on all the things we're talking about. I also know from experience there's going to be a subset of the population who these are going to be very important steps to get their nutrition dialed in to get their movement piece right.

And there still might be other things going on that might be confounding variables that make it hard to actually get metabolically healthy or to fully heal until they address them. And I know you work on this part as well. So I'd love to also touch on maybe when you're implementing these strategies, you're building a good foundation and things still aren't working well, like when does functional testing come in?

When are there other things to look at? I know cortisol is having its moment in the sun right now, but also like parasites, liver health, like there's so many other confounding variables. So I'd love to get to touch on some of those as well.

Shay: Okay. Yeah, so it's that, you know, majority of people might be able to do some good workouts, do some macros and they shed some weight. And I typically do see most of my clients come in, we're able to implement those things really, really quickly and we see results happen. But sometimes there is this plateau where we only get so far, or maybe the first 10 pounds can come off or first 10 inches come off. And then we get to this, we get to the stuck one. Or you have the case of someone's like, I have been doing, I know how to do macros. Like I had a client who said, I know macros. I know weights. I've been lifting weights for a long, long time and I am stuck. I don't see results. I'm exhausted. I'm tired. I've had gut issues my whole life. I'm diagnosed with Crohn's colitis. I've got people who have like pretty severe gut issues and they're like, I am just depleted. And I think I just need help.

And you know, you go to the doctor for these things. We typically go to the doctor for these things and they say, well, yep, you have...you know, I had IBS my whole life, which I've healed since, but I had IBS and they give you a pamphlet and they say, off you go. Cause there's really nothing until it gets to that IBD level, which would be the next level irritable bowel disease.

Like, okay now we can give you drugs because we have a diagnosis, but until then you're kind of stuck on your own. And so what I see is these gut issues or hormonal imbalances, whether it's cortisol stress, something like that, something's usually driving that. And it's usually something internal in your GI tract somewhere. Obviously we have external stressors and those are always going to be there. We have jobs with kids, we have a life

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that we have to manage. But what about what's going on under the hood? What about how well you are digesting and assimilating your nutrients. How well are you absorbing the vitamins, the minerals from the food you're actually eating?

So imagine someone has a massive parasite infection, for example, and they don't know it. They have no idea. Maybe they have some irritable bowels symptoms like gas or bloating. They have constipation, maybe random diarrhea, right? I mean, they might have some of these different things, even heartburn.

And they have no idea that they have this massive parasite infection because there's really no good test for it. And then they're like, I've gained 20 pounds in a year. This is an actual type of case I might come across. And every time I try to eat less I just feel like I'm exhausted, like I get hit by a bus.

I can't even get out of bed anymore. I'm frustrated because I put everything I have into my work and then I come home I have nothing left for my family, right? They're in these situations that almost feel pretty dire of like you're in it and you're like, oh my god what's happening to my body? And I know because I was there.

Okay, and so what happens is you could have something going on underneath that you have no idea. And it could be stealing your nutrients, making you hungry, exhausting you, changing your kind of brain chemicals, then your signaling and your neurotransmitters and all of this stuff. Now you have sleep issues and anxiety.

All of these things kind of start to compound. And I never had joint pain before and now I have joint pain. I never had headaches and now I have headaches. Like you see all these things start to compound over time. And I sometimes get people who we catch it earlier on. Like if you handle this now, it's going to be a lot easier than if you wait 10 years.

Cause I've seen the trajectory on this stuff, right? Because health issues compound, they don't necessarily go away unless you fix the root cause. So when we see these types of examples it's time to run some functional lab testing. And these types of labs, it's not traditional blood work. It's not going to your doctor, getting your blood drawn, having certain levels checked, and saying, Oh, you know, everything looks normal. For the majority of people that's what they get, right? Everything looks good, you're healthy. And the women are like what? Like, I don't feel like myself. I don't feel good. I have no energy.

I can barely get out of bed. I'm not sleeping well, right? All of this stuff is happening to them and it's almost just like dismissed. And it's incredibly frustrating and just you feel lost. You feel confused. You feel like what the heck is happening to my body and it just feels really scary. And so these are the type of women that I love to help because there are so many

more options. There are so many more answers that we can provide for them through running functional labs. And even just doing some basic symptom analysis. We do a scorecard, a symptom scorecard for all of our new clients within the first week. Where we are able to really pinpoint, okay, your hormone, your immune system, your digestive, your detoxification.

Whatever system needs that help, your energy, whatever it might be. If this system is like the biggest problem, let's support that with certain protocols, diet, lifestyle changes. Kind of like you said earlier with, we're talking about like getting light, like sunlight, circadian rhythm, different things like that. Just little things, but you have to know which ones to implement for the right person that are going to make the biggest impact for them.

I think that's huge. So it's diet, it's rest, it's exercise, it's stress reduction strategies. It's learning how to support your body's optimal function, circadian rhythm, and using nutrition and nutrition therapies to be able to restore and almost rewind the clock on the internal organ systems that can give them their life back.

It starts to rebuild energy. It starts to restore function. And, oh my God, I can eat this food without repercussions and being able to digest your food, absorb your nutrients. I mean if you can't do that, right. And most of us don't even know whether we can or not.

So if we can't do that, we're just probably going to keep eating until our bodies get, our cells get the energy it needs to function every day. So I'm like, why am I gaining so much weight? And maybe we have a digestive issue. Like we got to fix that problem or we're probably going to keep on that same path.

Katie: Well and I love that you brought up that experience that probably a lot of women listening have had of being told their labs are normal. Or that I know I was told like that's normal postpartum, or it's all in your head, or your thyroid is within normal range and learning that for one, normal is not optimal. For two, normal ranges are determined by the labs based on the people who come to get tested, who, as you might expect, something might be off if they're getting tested. But I think it would do all of us a service to separate normal from optimal when it comes to health. And unfortunately, that means working with someone who has a deeper understanding of that.

I don't feel like women are getting this necessarily from a lot of the conventional options. Of course, there are amazing doctors out there who have a deeper understanding of that. But I feel like for most of us, it requires getting to do a deep dive on your own health and then finding an aligned practitioner who can really help you interpret that and move toward optimal, not just dismiss you because you're in a quote normal range. I know another thing that's, of course, very popular right now, and I would love to get your take on, is kind of the rise of GLPs and things like semaglutide and people using those for weight loss. I

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personally am wondering if we're going to see a whole wave of side effects of this years down the road, since we know, I think it's 40 percent of the weight loss comes from muscle.

And in light of everything we talked about earlier on, to me, that doesn't seem like a good sign, but I would love to get your take on semaglutide and, or like, what would be, if it's not the ideal, what would be some alternative things that women can do if they really are trying to lose weight and that's a really important thing for them that wouldn't be kind of down the road semaglutide.

Shay: Yeah. Okay. I will be the first to say I'm not like a semaglutide specialist. I'm not an expert on these drugs by any means. So I don't want to say that like I have done extreme research and have extensive knowledge on these things. But I will say that maybe in certain cases it's a good idea for certain people to really bring down body weight.

If it's at a severe point, it can probably be useful in a lot of cases. However, when I see women, and I'm just going to use an example of somebody who I can think of off the top of my head. I talked to her, she says, I've been on semaglutide. I'm 38 years old. I've been doing this for, you know, on and off for the last year. I did lose an initial like 20 pounds. And I want to get off semaglutide, so I started reducing my dose, just kind of on my own. And she goes, you know, and I lost the 20 pounds, but the thing is, I didn't really look like the way I wanted to look.

I didn't see what I wanted to see in the mirror. The scale might have said the number I wanted it to say. But I didn't feel like a fit, healthy, lean person. And here's the problem: you are not over fat, you are under muscled. You are muscle deficient. And that is never going to be solved by semaglutide.

Not ever. It will be the antithesis of that, in fact. So, if we're just trying to lose, lose, lose, again, that's the mindset shift we've talked about. If we're just always in this lose more fat mindset, and we now take drugs to do that, it's perpetuating a cycle. If you look at it this way, it's like, what is big food doing?

They're putting chemicals in the foods, making us fat, obesogens. That's, kind of like another root cause of weight loss resistance is these obesogens. And then people can't lose weight because they're addicted to Doritos. Like addicted to these foods that they're kind of chemically processed.

They're addicted. They can't lose the weight. They feel like their metabolism is broken because they don't build muscle. They've lost muscle. And we have sedentary lifestyles now that really ramp up that muscle loss, especially after about age 30. So we're in this

position of now you're almost 40, you have a very low or slow metabolic rate, you're depleted, you're 20 pounds overweight, you're like, what do I do?

I can't, nothing's working like it used to. Well, you have a very different muscle profile at 39, then you did at probably 29, first of all. And so if we just add more semaglutide to this picture of already tons of muscle loss, it might get some of the weight off, but muscle and bone is going to go with it.

So now we're in this like, heading into perimenopause, heading into times where hormones are going to drop. It's going to be even more difficult for a woman at this age range to build muscle. And then you add semaglutide that's just adding fuel to the fire in the wrong direction. And it's going to keep someone reliant on that medication.

So it's this full circle. The food screws us up, makes us fat, makes us sick. Now we need medication to stay a certain weight.

Katie: And it seems like, I'm also not an expert in semaglutide, but especially if a woman were going to use it in one of those like appropriate pharmaceutical uses, it would seem like it would be even more important for her to do the things that you're talking about with nourishing correctly, getting enough protein, not optionally getting enough protein, strength training to kind of mitigate that difference.

So again, it's to me like a both/and, even if someone's going to go down that path, that does not remove the need for all the things we've talked about today. And hopefully in this conversation, we've gotten to kind of like dispel some of the myths surrounding fat loss. Hopefully inspire people to step into building more muscle, which I think is universally beneficial, especially as we get older. And I would guess there are a lot of people who are hopefully feeling very hopeful and inspired and motivated. So I would love for you to give us a few action steps for women who want to like start right now. What are some baby steps that we can implement that help us move in this direction of positive change?

Shay: Okay, let's do some action steps. So if I were to have someone start, I would say, why don't you start with logging your food for a week? Like put your food in an app, right? Imagine you're trying to like redo your budget for your finances. You're like, okay, I need to redo my budget. I need to monitor what I'm spending. I need to monitor what I'm saving, what I'm bringing in. It's just like a baseline. So it's the same thing with food. Like, let's just monitor what you're eating, and figure out what that baseline is. What's that protein number look like? Is it, you know, 60 grams per day, which is really common.

And you might think, I try to eat so much protein. You're probably only at 90 grams a day. Like you need probably one gram per ideal pound of body weight that you want to be. So if

your goal is say 130 pounds, you probably need 130 grams of protein a day at least. And maybe more if you've been in a protein deficiency, which is pretty likely if you haven't been tracking it for however many years. Which I could again, I tend to go to client examples, but clients who come to me, 30 years I can't lose the weight and then we get their protein up and it's to their optimal amount and it's like oh my god, the fats coming off. And I feel better, I have more energy. So just getting to the point where you're like, okay, what do I have, log your food for seven days, get the protein up. Fix breakfast, 30 to 50 grams of protein at breakfast.

I love fruit at breakfast from a carb standpoint. If somebody's like really wanting to lose fat and build muscle, I think fruit is an amazing carb source instead of things that are super starchy, like toast or even potatoes. Those can be fine in certain cases where the training capacity requires those additional foods, but I think just eggs, egg whites, sausages, things like that. Like chicken sausage, turkey sausage, even breakfast steaks that are kind of like a leaner breakfast meat or I'll even do eggs and some lean ground beef. Maybe four ounces of lean ground beef in the morning with some fruit.

I keep it super, super simple. I don't do fancy meals cause most people, especially if you've got kids and you're trying to get out of the house and you've got to go to your work, you got to commute, you got all this stuff. It's like, just, let's keep it really simple of like beef, eggs, fruit, and you could even technically eat the fruit in the car if you needed to.

So, super simple in the morning. Get your 30 to 50 grams, log that, make sure you're actually hitting it and then see how you feel. Start monitoring, how do I feel during the day when I ate like this? Start getting curious with how you feel and how when you feel yourself a certain way, what is that doing to your mental clarity? Maybe, did I used to have brain fog, now I don't. How is my sleep? Am I falling asleep faster? Am I staying asleep longer? Do I wake up needing that cup of coffee immediately? Like what's my anxiety doing? Cause a lot of us hit there and we're like, Oh God. So, what's my mood telling me? What are my menstrual cycles telling me? That's a big one, right? And so I'm looking at all of these different signs and starting to pay attention to if I make this change, what happens.

And then a couple movement things. So walks. I love outdoor walks. I know it's cold in the majority of the United States, and I know it can kind of feel crappy to do it, but I'm telling you, even when it's cold, even when I'm in the cold, I still go and I still work. I still take a walk because that fresh air, the sun, even if it's cloudy, it's hitting you in some ways and it's going to give you life. It's going to reduce your stress. It's going to bring cortisol levels down while helping you shed excess fat to be honest with you. So if you think about it, the walk is just like a magical, magical tool in everyone's toolbox, if you want to add a way to invest to that and get extra credit, go for it. So I think those are a couple of really simple strategies that someone could start.

And then obviously we talked about the weight training 3 to 4 days a week would be awesome. But, yeah, we talked about that one.

Katie: Amazing. Well, I will put links to follow ups with you for all the things we talked about in the show notes. But for anybody listening who wants maybe additional support or a little bit of like a, you mentioned a coach was so helpful to you, where can they find you and connect with you and work with you?

Shay: Well, I think the best place to reach out to me, I'm on Instagram @thebodybulletin. And so just send me a message, DM me if you want to chat about your case, if you want to chat about what you've been experiencing, I've got gut issues, hormone issues, I can't lose weight, whatever it might be, that's our specialty. That's who we help women 35 plus with. We also, I have a free clean eating challenge that it's a five day menu done for you, grocery list, all laid out with like five days of coaching you via email. So if you want to sign up for that, it's totally free. [Thebodybulletin.com/cleaneatingchallenge](https://thebodybulletin.com/cleaneatingchallenge). And I'm sure we can link that. That'd be awesome, just to get you started on how can I eat to fuel my body?

Katie: Amazing. Well, all of those links will be included and Shay, I have so much enjoyed this conversation. Hopefully it gave some really practical takeaways for everyone listening and some inspiration and starting points. I love all of your approach on this and the work that you do, and I'm so grateful for your time today.

Thank you so much for being here.

Shay: Thank you so much for having me.

Katie: And thank you as always for listening and sharing your most valuable resources, your time, your energy, and your attention with us today. We're both so grateful that you did. And I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of the Wellness Mama podcast.