

# #81 - The Lazy Genius and Healthy Eating

Hi there! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast! I'm Kendra, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't! Today is episode 81 - The Lazy Genius and Healthy Eating. This is obviously a tricky topic for a lot of reasons, but much like The Lazy Genius Loses Weight episode, we're going to do some reframing because, honestly, I think the concept of healthy eating as defined by our current society and culture is something we should definitely be lazy about. Allow me to take this podcast episode to explain.

Here's the funny thing. Our impulses and insecurities around food aren't at all about the food; our concern deep down is what the food will do to our bodies. Underneath most conversations about food and diet and a balanced lifestyle is a focus on what our bodies look like. Sometimes it's about what our bodies feel like, and we'll get to that. But you and I both know that it's hugely about how we look. If you ate a plant-based diet, if you gave up sugar and bread and cheese and did all the things diet culture told you to do and your body did not change from where it is now, would you still eat that way? I don't know that answer for you, but I'm pretty confident in my own answer. I would not. We already have a weird relationship with healthy eating because of how hard it is and how it occupies so much of our thinking, but if we don't even get the payoff of a smaller stomach or thighs or whatever you want to be smaller, what's the point? And therein lies the rub. If you think there's no point to healthy eating without a change in how your body looks, you're eating that way for the wrong reason. Well, I won't say it's wrong. But, man, is it exhausting and rooted in something so not important to who you really are.

We have a lot of rationalizations about healthy eating, don't we? We want our bodies to be healthy, we want more energy, we want to be around for our grandkids. You guys, there are so many people who are "healthy eaters" who still get sick and die. I'm not saying I don't want to have a body that functions well, that has energy, or that I don't want to be around for a long time to see my kids grow up. What I am saying is that using food as the sole vehicle to get me there doesn't work.

I know there are people who have been diagnosed with diseases, and after embracing a healthier way of eating like a plant-based diet for example were completely cured of something modern medicine couldn't fix. Food is certainly important, but I also think we give it too much power.

So what then are we supposed to do? Are we supposed to just eat whatever we want and who cares what happens to our bodies? Not at all. I want to invite you into a way of living where food has no morality. Instead, you trust your body to tell you what it needs. You might have heard of this as intuitive eating, and I'm fully on board and have been for awhile now. The basic idea is that you listen to your body to know what you need and not even just with food, with other areas, too. Your body is complex and amazing, and bodies like ours have been existing for a super long time. Our bodies are excellent communicators, and when we begin the practice of listening and trusting what our bodies need, food no longer becomes the showrunner.

We've heard sayings like "it's all about balance" and "everything in moderation." We've heard people say that if you really pay attention to eating and mindfully taste and smell and create an experience around the square of dark chocolate, the square of dark chocolate will be enough and you'll no longer have any taste for a sleeve of Oreos.

In my humble and nonjudgmental opinion for what you believe, I think those are false messages. The idea of balance communicates two sides - good and bad. Chocolate and salad. Saying everything in moderation communicates that all excess is bad. A narrow view of mindful eating is a sneaky way of putting negative value on more than one or two bites of something. Even folks like Michael Pollan who are incredibly intelligent and are trying to take away diet culture and replace it with perspectives like "eat real food, mostly plants" and "if you can't pronounce the ingredient list, don't eat it" are really just contributing to a new kind of diet culture. "Eat real food, mostly plants" makes us feel like we're doing something wrong when we eat fake food with no plant in sight. Maybe we wouldn't see it that way if we were better equipped to handle the food messages berating us at every turn, but we're not equipped. We're very ill-equipped and walk in bondage to food and what it'll do to our bodies more than most people realize.

I'm not saying this is true of every single person, but based on my experience, it's true of most. Even if you're eating "healthy," it's a huge suck on your time and thinking and for what purpose? There's nothing wrong with healthy foods or at least what we think of when we think healthy foods, but there's also nothing wrong with unhealthy ones. In fact, I don't believe they're unhealthy because our bodies are smart and know what they need.

You know when you go a couple of meals where you eat a lot of fried foods and then your body is desperate for a salad? Your body isn't saying, "Why did you give me that garbage I deserve better!" It's simply your body saying, "Cool, I need a salad next." There's no moral value one way or the other.

When certain foods are forbidden, even in the tiniest way, like only desserts one day a week or I'll eat anything I want on a cheat day or whatever it is, it makes that forbidden food more desirable. We all know that and have experienced it, probably multiple times. But if you were to say to yourself, I'm going to eat whatever I feel like my body wants right now, it takes the pressure off everything in your house. You don't have to be scared that you'll eat so many chips so you either need to finish the entire bag now so you're not tempted to eat more chips tomorrow or just keep chips out of your house altogether. No! Chips are fine. Chips aren't good or bad; they're just food. And when you take away the forbidden nature of chips, you don't binge because you can just eat more later. Your body might want just one chip or it might want a giant handful or two next to your burger, but as you listen to your body and hear it tell you that it's full, you won't panic and eat any chips that are left because you can literally have them whenever your body wants them.

You might be thinking "Well, if I trusted my body and ate whatever it wanted, I'd only eat cheese fries and ice cream sandwiches." I'm not smart enough to say whether or not that's true, but I wonder if you might consider giving yourself and your body more credit than that. This isn't a switch that flips necessarily where any baggage or addictions around food will be fixed just like that, but if we take the food out of it - which intuitive eating does - it leaves space for us to consider what's underneath.

Are you eating a certain way or obsessed with certain foods or want to eat more healthy because you want your body to look differently? And why is that? Honestly? I get it. I talked about this in the weight episode, but for years I thought that having a stomach that wasn't sculpted and flat meant I was a garbage person or at least not as important or valuable as someone with that kind of stomach. Which is utter nonsense. Intuitively - that intuition that is trying to tell you what to eat without all the weirdness - intuitively we know that's nonsense, but we're hit with conflicting messages from everywhere that we feel stuck.

You will always fail a diet. Every time. You will never eat completely healthfully in the traditional sense. Ever. It's a losing game. And yet we keep playing it. We keep saying "I'll do better!" or "I'm worth it!" or any other kind of message that still doesn't address the fact that we're sticking morality onto food.

Healthy eating is a trap. I'm just going to say it. Well, I've been saying it, but now I'll say it like that. I believe that healthy eating is a trap. Or the terminology is a trap. It's just a nicer, less extreme way of saying certain foods are better or worse, and when it comes to our bodies which are completely different from each other and from themselves over time, better and worse just isn't a thing.

You might say well sugar causes addictions for everyone! I've done a couple of sugar-free challenges. Guess what? I was a garbage person during them. My body was so sad because baking is something that brings me tremendous joy. Not being able to bake and eat and share was ignoring my body and my soul. It's all connected. Listening to our bodies isn't just listening to our hunger pains or our immediate reactions to a McDonald's commercial. It's listening to our bodies as a whole - mind, soul, physiology, intuition. Because intuition is different than instinct. Intuition is different than instinct. You might have an instinct to want a Frosty when you pass the Wendy's sign because our brains are triggered easily, and we remember how delicious a Frosty is. But if you're listening to your intuition, I'm not saying you'll drive by and skip it and be a better person. Whether you pull into the drivethru or keep driving is irrelevant. If your intuition says, "A Frosty! It's been a long time since I've had one, but it's not what I need right now. Maybe another time, and I'll bring the kids!" Or maybe your body is like, "You've had a hard day. Driving with the windows down and eating a Frosty and remembering eating one as a kid with your cousins at the beach is a good call right now." There's no right or wrong. It's more right time or wrong time. Your body knows the difference.

And if your body tells you, "We love sugar, but most days, let's skip it at night because our stomach needs the movement and action of the day to handle it well," that's fantastic. Your body might adore a green smoothie every morning and crave it and thrive on it. Wonderful. No food is better than another. You don't have to feel badly about what your body needs either way. If you need more salads than a friend does, you're not a healthier eater. Your body just needs different things, and that's great and normal amen. Your body is trustworthy. I believe that for everyone. Just remember that intuition is different than instinct, and you can trust your intuition.

I've already said a lot of words, and there are a lot more that could be said, but for now, I encourage you to just start thinking about this idea. Start noticing when you put morality on food, how often you think about food, how there might be messages that you believe that sound good but are maybe keeping you in bondage to food and body image more than you realized. Just pay attention.

Let's talk more about this on Instagram this week, shall we? Follow me @thelazygenius, and I'll be there Thursday around 12:15pm EST. I'm excited to hear your thoughts. Alright, that's it for today. I'm honored you were here today, and I hope you leave this time every time encouraged. It's a great honor that you listen and share this show with your people. And remember that it's okay to not always have an answer. Sometimes we talk about things that can't be wrapped up in a bow or stuck inside a routine. That's okay. It's good even. You're okay sitting with questions, and I can't wait to sit in them with you on Thursday. I'll see you here on the podcast next week, and until then be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Bye, guys!