

Redefining Health & Wellness #10

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi

Shohreh Davoodi: Hey y'all. You're listening to episode number nine of the Redefining Health & Wellness podcast. Today is a solo episode featuring yours truly. I've been noticing a bit of a crisis of conscience in the health and wellness industry as of late as people are learning more about body positivity, Health At Every Size, diet culture, fatphobia, thin privilege, etc. It seems like a lot of people are feeling a bit lost about business models that focus solely on weight loss, aesthetic changes, and meal plans.

I'm really glad that people are starting to question the status quo. And I totally get feeling confused because I also used to be in that position before restructuring my coaching as the weight-inclusive, HAES-informed practice that it is now.

So today, I wanted to talk about why I no longer take on clients who want to focus on weight loss both because I think that's informative for my audience and because I think it might be helpful for other coaches who are feeling stuck right now. To access the show notes and a full transcript of this episode, head to shohrehdavoodi.com/10. That's shohrehdavoodi.com/10.

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Hey y'all. Welcome to the Redefining Health & Wellness podcast. I'm your host, Shohreh Davoodi. I'm a certified intuitive eating counselor and a certified personal trainer. I help people improve their relationships with exercise, food and their bodies so they can ditch diet culture for good and do what feels right for them.

Through this podcast, I want to give you the tools to redefine what health and wellness mean to you by exposing myths and misconceptions, delving into all the areas of health that often get ignored, and reminding you that health and wellness are not moral obligations. Are you ready? Let's fuck some shit up.

Hello there, everyone. Shohreh Davoodi here. Before we get into the main topic of today's podcast which is why I have chosen not to take on weight loss clients as part of my coaching practice, I do want to clarify just a couple things.

Number one - in discussing this, I am not trying to shame either people who are seeking to lose weight or coaches who are taking on weight loss clients. I am fully aware that we live in a system that prioritizes weight loss and that makes it seem like it is our only option to be happy and to be healthy.

So if you're a coach, and that's the messaging that you have received, I totally understand why you think that helping clients with weight loss is ultimately helping them. If you're an individual and you are seeking weight loss, I completely understand why you feel like you need to do

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that, you're supposed to do that, and we'll get into that a little bit further on in the podcast.

But I am not here to shame or blame anybody who wants those things. Even if you finish this podcast and you still say, "I really want weight loss," or, "I want to coach weight loss," that's fine. You have the bodily autonomy to make that decision for yourself.

My job here is simply to give an alternative option and give an alternative narrative to the main one that we have always been hearing about weight loss. And also just to talk about my own experiences moving from a weight-centric paradigm to a weight-inclusive paradigm because, for me, that has been a liberating experience. It has brought my business into alignment with my values, and I am much happier with the weight-inclusive paradigm than I ever was working within weight loss and trying to help people lose weight. So that's number one.

Number two, I also want to acknowledge my privilege as a thin, white-passing, cis woman. I do not experience systemic discrimination against my body as so many of you do. I do not experience weight stigma. I very rarely experienced racism as someone who is white-passing. I am in a heterosexual-passing relationship, so I don't experience queer bashing.

So really, have a lot of privilege here. I am well aware of that. And I want to make it known that what works for me and makes sense for me may not be the case for you given your situation and that I understand that this is very nuanced. So I'm not suggesting that there could never be a situation where it would make sense and would be very helpful for an individual to pursue weight loss or to lose weight.

So just to give some examples of this, if you are an individual who needs fertility treatment and the only clinic near you has a BMI cutoff, and you decide that having a child is so important to you that you're going to lose weight so you can fit in that cutoff so that they will be able to help you, then that is a perfectly valid choice. If you are working to maintain your current weight because you can't afford a whole new wardrobe to accommodate the size your body would prefer to be, that is your right to do so. If you're a transgender individual, and you are transitioning, and losing weight is something that would improve your gender dysphoria, then that may be the most affirming choice for your identity, and that is okay.

So in general, I don't see my role as a coach as policing what other people want to do with their bodies or speaking out against what is working for them. If you're dieting, working on intentional weight loss, working on becoming a bikini competitor or whatever else floats your boat, I believe that you should have the bodily autonomy to do those things.

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However, I see my role as providing an alternative option to the dominant paradigm. And if people are into that, and if people want more information and education around that, they are welcome to learn from me and work with me. And if they're not, they don't have to.

In fact, when potential clients reach out to me and they are very set on losing weight for whatever reason, I explain my coaching philosophy to them and let them know that if I'm not the right fit for them, I would be happy to give them other recommendations for coaches who can help them meet their goals. I don't send them back mean, shaming emails. I don't tell them that they're bad people and that anybody who wants to lose weight is wrong. That is not what I'm about.

All I tell them is what I have to offer and my reasons why. And if they want to become a client at that point, awesome. And if they don't, then that's fine too. Because, as a coach, and as a business owner, I am looking for clients who are the right fit for me, who will be a good experience for me to work with, and will be a good experience for them as well. So it doesn't make any sense for me to take on clients who are dead set on weight loss and try to convince them not to be dead set on weight loss.

I am generally speaking, looking for clients who are a little bit further along on their journey to realizing that, yes, while they might desire weight loss, it's not gonna be the focus of their coaching relationship right now because they have other things that are more important to them. And I'll get into that a little bit later.

So let me first start by talking about my transition from working within a weight-centric paradigm to now working within a weight-inclusive paradigm. When I first started in this industry, I actually never liked doing weight loss. It was not something that I ever billed myself as. Like, I never called myself a "weight loss coach" or advertised that I did weight loss, but I accepted that that was going to be the goal of some of my clients.

I was much more into strength training, building muscle, helping women get super strong and feeling how powerful that could be in their lives. And I just accepted that, as part of that, some people were going to want to lose weight and want to lose fat.

And of course, in getting my personal training certifications and starting to work on nutrition certifications and other things like that, weight loss was always a part of those. And we were taught, you know, how to manipulate calories and what exercises to do for fat loss and all of that kind of stuff. So I knew the general implements that could get people there, but it was not my personal interest.

Now, that being said, just because I didn't work on weight loss as my main thing doesn't mean that I was not problematic. I definitely did not have the awareness then that I have now about my own internalized

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fatphobia, about fatphobia in general, about weight stigma and how it affects health, about all the bullshit that is out there about BMI and equating health and weight and all of this other stuff. So I definitely was uninformed about some very important things even as I wasn't trying to make weight loss the main part of my business.

So somewhere along the way, things switched from "I don't really like doing this" to "I don't really wanna do this anymore" to "what would happen if I didn't do this anymore?" And I was really torn. I was worried that I couldn't have a successful fitness and wellness business without offering people weight loss, but the line between weight loss and weight inclusivity started to feel more and more precarious to me.

So I did what I always do, and what my partner can confirm that I always do, which is that I went into intensive research mode. So whenever I am trying to learn about something new and understand something new, I deep dive into getting as many resources as possible into my life to learn more.

So I started listening to Christy Harrison's Food Psych podcast. I ordered a bunch of books about body image and the anti-diet approach. And through these things, I discovered a bunch more people to follow online, and I found other people who are running weight-inclusive businesses including fitness people.

And I eventually decided to jump in headfirst and rebrand. And technically, I ended up rebranding twice in a one-and-a-half-year period because, after going in this weight-inclusive mode, I also eventually decided to stop using my old business name which was "Glitter & Grit" and instead go by my name. So that was very intensive.

It might be helpful for me to talk about some of the other things that have changed outside of no longer taking clients who wanted to focus on weight loss, which I promise we are going to get to very soon. But one thing in particular is that I have become much more cognizant of what I post on my social media, especially on Instagram since Instagram is so photo-forward. When I first started my business, I was taking the lead from other people in the fitness industry, and my Instagram was almost entirely photos of me.

Now, I was never doing the whole, you know, butt posing weird shit on Instagram that so many fitness accounts do, or just like posting a shit-ton of photos of me in a bikini or anything like that. That was never my social media style. But I was on there a lot. There were a lot of full-body photos of me, a much higher percentage of that compared to any other content.

And as I've gotten deeper into Health At Every Size, weight-inclusivity and have realized that I have so much privilege, I know how important it is for me to decenter myself and my body in my work.

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Now, that doesn't mean that you're not gonna see any photos of me on my Instagram. If you go there right now, you're definitely going to see photos of me. However, that has become a much smaller percentage of what you're going to see on my social media than it used to be. I post a lot of other different stuff now including quote posts, just whatever is around me, so food, flowers, books, all that kind of good stuff.

And then, because of this podcast, I've had the opportunity to post a lot of photos of other people because I love featuring the people that I'm interviewing on my social media as well so that even if people aren't necessarily listening to the podcast, they can go follow these wonderful people who have such great ideas.

But yeah. For me personally, I am content to still have some photos of myself in my feed because I am a personal brand, and I do not work with people in eating disorder treatment or recovery or anything like that compared to other people where that might be more important for them.

But I am very conscious of making sure that I am not using my body in a way that it is my business card. This is something that Dr. Kate Browne and I talked about on episode number nine, which is you see a lot of fit pros using their bodies to sort of imply that people will get the same results as them.

And I am very conscious about not using my body in that way, about not suggesting to people that, "Oh. If you adopt intuitive eating, adopt joyful movement and body respect, that you're magically gonna look like me" because that is not true. I'm constantly talking about body diversity, and I don't want anybody to think that. So I do think it's really just a matter of being more conscious about what you're putting out into the world.

You can have the most amazing captions ever, but if someone's scrolling down your feed and it's literally just photo after photo of you and your body and you're in a very privileged body, then that is something you need to be thinking about.

And again, this is for business owners. If you have just a personal account, then I think it's a little bit different. But specifically speaking about business owners and business owners in these spaces.

Other things that have changed in my business is that I stopped using any kind of measuring progress tracking tool. So what I mean by that is having anybody track their weight using a scale, having anybody do circumference measurements, having anybody do progress pictures. Yeah.

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At the beginning of my business, I totally had people do progress pics. So we would start with what would be the quote-unquote before photo at the beginning. And then they would take pictures as they would go along because, again, I had been taught like, "This is one of the best ways for people to see changes in themselves where maybe the scale isn't necessarily changing, but it's easier to see in photos." So in my head, I was like, "Oh, yeah. This is better than the scale if we do progress pics."

In reality, of course, all of these things are a focus on the body. And in my work, I have really moved away from a focus on what the body looks like to what the body feels like and what we need and what we feel, and getting connected with our bodies. And I think that things like progress photos, and the scale, and all these other measuring tools, are really a disconnect and really serve to make us feel unworthy and like our worth is attached to our bodies.

So if things are moving in the quote-unquote right direction, AKA if we're getting smaller and thinner, then we feel good. We feel like good people. But if things are going in the wrong direction or they stay the same, then we feel bad and like we are bad people.

So I completely did away with all those kinds of progress tracking tools. And that doesn't mean that I don't help my clients track their progress. I do. We're just tracking progress towards different goals. So, like, how are our stress levels doing? How well are we sleeping? What does our energy look like? Are we getting closer to-- maybe if we have some physical goals like being able to do a push up or a pull up? How much stronger are we feeling? How would we rate our relationship with food now versus, you know, six weeks ago? These are the things that I am measuring and that are much more important to me as a coach than stupid numbers.

Of course, there have been a ton of other changes and there will continue to be more changes because the reality is I don't know everything, and I will never know everything. And ideas and opinions will continue to change about all kinds of things. So I consider it my job to just stay open to critique and criticism, to being called in or being called out, to apologize, like sincerely apologize when I fuck it up and make mistakes, which I have done and will continue to do because that is the dynamic nature of having social justice be at the forefront of your work.

Oh, and that is a big change. When I first started my business, I was not talking about social justice stuff, and that is a travesty. I think that, if you are going to do work with people and bodies and coaching, like, social justice does need to be at the forefront of your work.

You can't say that you help people love and respect and trust their bodies without also recognizing all of the things out in the world that keep them from being able to do so whether that is because trans

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people are being murdered in the streets in the United States, whether that is because black bodies are being over-policed and harmed by our law enforcement.

Like, there's a million different examples that I could give. But these things contribute to our health and our wellness and our bodies. I mean, that's literally one of the reasons I started this podcast was so that we can discuss all of these intersections and how they affect our health and wellness.

But before, I had a lot of privilege. I didn't realize necessarily all these intersecting things. I didn't think it was that important to quote-unquote get political. And now I realize that it is supremely important. So that has definitely been a big change in my business. And I think it can be really scary for people to delve into that because they're so worried about saying the wrong thing.

But someone reminded me recently about this idea of learning in public. And that's kind of what you have to do if you have a business, and it's going to be social justice-oriented which it should be. We're in the year fucking 2019. If social justice isn't important to you as a business owner, you need to rethink that shit.

So learning in public, understanding that you are going to make mistakes, and it is going to feel really shitty when people call you in or out on those, but recognizing that that's, again, centering yourself when you get caught up in the shittiness, and we need to focus on the people that we are trying to help, the systems we are trying to shape and improve because that's where the real work is at.

Okay. So let's get to the big change, which is no longer taking on clients who want to focus on weight loss. As a certified personal trainer and certified intuitive eating counselor, I see my job as helping people improve their relationships with exercise, food, and their bodies. And the way that I see it is that focusing on weight loss and changing their body often worsens a person's relationship with exercise, food, and their body as opposed to making it better.

Now, are there people out there who can divorce their quest to change their body from their own self-worth and self-confidence? I'm sure that there are. But because of the culture that we live in which insists that we all need to be focusing on getting as lean and thin as possible, that's not most people.

As I already mentioned, the vast majority of people equate being able to lose weight and change their body with being good and worthy. And not being able to do so, or not being able to sustain it, with being bad and unworthy. And that's an especially big problem when you consider that weight loss, for the vast majority of people, is not sustainable for the long-term. The long-term being at least three to five years.

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And I'm really glad that this fact is starting to become more well-known, that people are realizing that maybe somewhere between, like, 80 and 95 percent of people will gain weight back that they have tried to lose through whatever method whether that's dieting, or exercise, or anything else. Basically, if you've intentionally tried to lose weight, there is a very high percentage, well over 50 percent, that you're going to gain that weight back within three to five years from the initial loss.

But even though that information is now really starting to get out into the world, it doesn't matter because there are so many problems in life that we've been taught that the solution to is weight loss. So this includes a desire for belonging, to feel beautiful or sexy, to get healthy which we will get to, to get fit, to be successful, to be able to wear certain clothes. There are so many things in our world that we associate with weight loss and being thin. And we say, "You cannot do these things. You cannot have these things until you lose some weight."

But here's the thing, for most people, weight loss is not a particularly direct method to solve most of the problems that I just listed. You know why? Because weight loss and/or aesthetic changes are not behaviors. They are outcomes. So as a coach, you have to ask yourself, "How can I get people from point A where they are right now to point B where they want to get?"

And if where they want to get is losing weight or losing a certain amount of weight, you've got a big problem. Because we don't have any known way to help people lose weight for the long term. Most people can help their clients be successful at this at least off the bat. Initially, most people are able to lose some weight.

But even that is dependent on what they've been doing in their past because if you're someone who has been yo-yo dieting and weight-cycling for a long time, each time that you weight cycle, it gets harder and harder to lose weight, and your body fights harder and harder against you so that you cannot lose weight.

As coaches, we are taught the calories-in versus calories-out equation that literally everybody else is taught. I cannot tell you the amount of trainers who are out in the world that are still spewing the whole "eat less, move more" bullshit. It is so much more complicated than that.

From a pure energy perspective, it is absolutely true that the equation is calories-in versus calories-out. The only way to lose weight or lose fat is to be in a caloric-deficit. And all that really means is that you are burning off more calories than you are taking in. So we're all told this. We're like, "Yeah. It's so very simple. If you just do some tweaking and some calorie-counting or some macro-counting or whatever. You're going to be able to get this perfectly, and you'll be able to lose weight."

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Well first of all, we know it's not that simple because you can't sustain weight loss for forever, right, because if we could, we would all end up becoming nothing. We would just die, right, because we would lose so much weight that it would be impossible. You could just keep sustaining that weight loss for as long as you wanted to. Well, you can't. And there are many reasons for that.

But in general, there are so many different factors that affect whether or not a person is going to lose weight. This includes genetics. Size diversity is a real thing. There are so many different body shapes and sizes. Usually, you can look within a person's family, and you're gonna be able to see similar shapes and sizes. Even maybe if it's not in the immediate family, but you can see it in aunts and uncles or grandparents or anything like that.

Families look similarly. Among different races as well, people look different. Like, there's a whole thing with white supremacist beauty standards. Why is the thin body the body that we look at? Well, oh, check it out. White bodies on the whole tend to be thinner than bodies of people of color. So when you have white supremacist beauty standards, this is the thing that we are all striving for.

Other factors include your metabolism. Your hormones, how much sleep you're getting, how stressed out you are, and if you are chronically stressed because of, for instance, maybe being marginalized, maybe because you've experienced weight stigma or you've experienced racism, what kind of movement practices that you are partaking in, how often you're, you know, sitting versus standing. So many different things.

And the way that these affect the energy equation is that they slow down or speed up our body's ability to take nutrients from food and to take energy and use energy from food. So yes, the energy equation is correct when it comes to a caloric deficit, but there are way more things that affect how energy is being spent in our bodies than most trainers are taught.

In fact, a lot of coaches will go on and on about saying that people who can't lose weight just aren't trying hard enough, and they're lazy or they're liars. I cannot even tell you the sheer amount of Facebook groups that I've been in where someone will be like, "Oh. I have this client, and they can't lose weight. And here's some information about them." And people in the comments are like, "Your client is a liar because that doesn't match up with the energy equation. They must be lying about what they're eating or they must not be understanding what they're eating. Blah, blah, blah" when in reality, there are so many other pieces that have to do with it.

So here's what it comes down to for me as a coach. One, who am I to be promising people weight loss that I don't even know if I can provide because there are so many different factors at play, and I can't possibly

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know or understand those factors even if I have a very thorough intake process, which I do. I still can't possibly know how all these things are going to affect my client's body. And I can't know what their set point weight is.

In the show notes, I will link to my favorite YouTube video about set point theory for those who haven't heard of this before. But the general idea is that each of us has a weight range usually between, like, five and 20 pounds or so. That's called the set point, and that's where our body really prefers to be.

And then two, why do I want to promise weight loss knowing that there is a chance it's going to require my client to do some things that are really unhealthy for them or that make them really unhappy?

And this is kind of how I approach it with potential clients who want to work with me. I let them know that I just cannot guarantee what is going to happen with their body when we start working on their relationship with food and exercise because it depends on so many factors. Some people's weights go up. Some people's weights stay the same. And yes, some people's weights go down.

And as I talked about with Dr. Kate Browne on episode number nine, I'm not worried about unintentional weight loss, right? Like, if you lose weight as a result of these different things that we're doing that are making your life better, then that's where your body wants to be when you're doing those things, and that's totally okay. That's not any kind of weight loss that I am worried about.

But for most people, even if you can lose the weight through intentional weight loss, the cost is not going to be worth the benefit. So asking what do they have to give up to get there, what quote-unquote healthy things did they do to get there that actually didn't feel so healthy for their body, and maybe they don't even discover that until they've lost the weight or they've started gaining it back.

So something that I focus on in my work is how can we get you the things you think weight loss will give you without actually setting out to lose weight? How can we focus on behaviors instead of outcomes? Because again, weight loss is an outcome. It's not a behavior.

So let me give you some examples. If a client comes to me and is experiencing a lot of shortness of breath, their initial reaction might be, "I need to lose weight to improve this" because of course we've been told, "Oh, Well, the reason you're experiencing shortness of breath is because you're too heavy. If you lose weight, you will feel better." And a lot of times, people think that if they do lose weight and their breathing improves, that it was because of the weight lost.

But here's the thing, with that same client, I could work on improving cardiovascular endurance and their muscle strength without focusing

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specifically on weight loss to improve that problem. And even if they didn't lose a pound, it would likely improve their breathing.

So is it the weight loss that is creating this change, or is it the behavior change? Because usually, you need some kind of behavior change to achieve weight loss, right? And as a culture, because we put weight loss on a pedestal, we say, "Oh, it was the loss of weight that cured this problem, that made it better."

Here's the thing, if you chop off your arm, you're going to lose weight. And I promise you, it's not going to fix your cardiovascular endurance, right? You need to adopt a behavior that is going to help you with that.

So this is a more direct approach to dealing with a specific problem someone's experiencing. So here's another example. If someone wants to lose weight so they can feel comfortable wearing certain kinds of clothing. Instead of working on weight loss, we could instead work on having them expose themselves to people in similar-sized bodies who are wearing and rocking whatever clothes they want. We can work on them building up confidence and self-worth until they feel like they deserve to wear whatever they want no matter their size.

So maybe they first purchase an item of clothing that, right now, they wouldn't be caught dead wearing but that they're interested in. And they kind of see how that feels. Maybe then they try just putting that item on at home. Maybe then they try putting that item on around a close friend who comes over to their house.

And so you build it up until they feel comfortable enough that they would be willing to go outside of the house, and they realize that they are deserving of doing so.

So yeah. Could they potentially lose weight and feel better in their bodies enough that they could wear those clothes? Maybe. That's definitely not always the case for people because, again, it's not about the weight. It's about the underlying beliefs underneath it. And for so many people, it's never enough weight loss. It's never enough physique change. It's always seeking more, and the goalposts are always moving.

So why not deal with these problems directly instead of throw on the band-aid of weight loss to help them, especially knowing that, chances are, that weight is going to come back?

At the end of the day, as someone working in the health and wellness industry, and as someone hosting a podcast called Redefining Health & Wellness, guess what I care about about my clients. I care about their health and well-being. And usually, clients are coming to me because they want to feel healthier.

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And again, I do not think that anybody owes anybody else health. They don't owe anybody else performative exercise or performative eating. But, usually, that is what people are coming to me for. They have made the choice for themselves that they're interested in getting healthier and feeling better.

Unfortunately, we live in a culture that equates being thin with being healthy and being in a larger body with being unhealthy. If you still believe this, please, please, please do some research. Come to understand that this is not the gospel. I am going to put a whole bunch of articles and book recommendations into the show notes for this episode specifically related to health and size for those of you who have not done your homework on this and are still believing that to be fat is to be unhealthy and to be thin is to be healthy. That is not true.

And I can tell you that everyone is really sick of the concern trolling of people in larger bodies. So what is concern trolling? Concern trolling is where you say things like, Well, of course I want people to be able to love their bodies and be happy. But I really, really worry about their health," or, "Of course, like, body-positivity is great, but only up to a certain size or to a point where someone is still healthy."

I have several articles that I'm going to link to that specifically talk about why you might think that you're helping your friend in a larger body by saying such things, but you are not, and it is super patronizing for you to do so.

You know who no one is saying shit about when it comes to their health? Like, someone who looks like me who is chain-smoking, who is binge-drinking, who is, like, not getting any sleep, is super stressed out. No one is saying anything to them. You don't have freaking strangers on the internet being like, "I'm just so worried about your health."

No. We reserve this bullshit and this vitriol specifically for people in larger bodies, and it is because of weight stigma and fatphobia. 'Cause here's the thing, if you really cared about the health and well-being of people in larger bodies, then you would probably realize that shame and guilt aren't health-promoting behaviors, that making people feel shitty about themselves is not something that is going to get them into the gym or, like, into a salad which I guess are the two places that you have deemed are acceptable for people in larger bodies to go. Fuck off with that noise.

All right. So that was a bit of a rant. But you know what? It was justified. So bringing it back now. Because I do care about the health and wellness of my clients, and I recognize that weight loss is not the answer to improving your health, this is where Health At Every Size and weight-inclusivity really break from mainstream beliefs. So in HAES and weight-inclusivity, the belief is that anyone, regardless of their size, and so we're talking from a 90 pound person to a 600 pound person, can work on health-promoting behaviors without focusing specifically on

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weight loss. So health promoting behaviors are things like moving more, standing more instead of sitting, eating more fruits and vegetables, getting better sleep, reducing stress levels, increasing your coping mechanisms.

There are so many things that we know improve our health. Weight loss is not one of them because, again, weight loss is an outcome which means that, usually, people have changed one or many of these health-promoting behaviors, and they also happen to lose weight.

And in fact, in mainstream culture, we ask people in larger bodies to essentially adopt behaviors to lose weight that would be considered eating-disorder behaviors in people in smaller bodies. So I'm talking things like intensive exercise for hours a day, crash-dieting or barely eating any calories, taking diet pills etc. We tell them, "Do anything to lose weight" even if, in reality, these things are actually unhealthy.

So you have people who lose weight, but they do it in horribly unhealthy ways. And they actually feel worse than they did when they were at a bigger size. And people who weight-cycle have said the same thing. They feel worse as they go up and down and up and down than if they had just stayed the same size and focused on their health.

So for me, I don't care about my clients' weight on a scale, not when they come to me, not while we work together, and not after. Because their weight doesn't tell me anything about their health, or wellbeing, or their quality of life.

If you think that you can look at somebody, and you can have an understanding of their health status, you are wrong. Instead, I ask a lot of questions, none of which have anything to do with weight.

So remember that thorough intake questionnaire that I had mentioned earlier? When a client first starts with me, I ask them all kinds of questions about their relationship with food, about their relationship with exercise and themselves.

I want to know what kinds of feelings are brought up for them around food and around exercise. I want to know their dieting history. I want to know the history of any injuries, or chronic illnesses, or mental health issues that they've had. I want to know if they have experience trauma and if that trauma is relevant to the work that we're going to be doing together. These are the important questions, not, "How much do you weigh? And how much would you like to weigh?"

And I do want to clarify that some of you might think by listening to this episode that most of my clients feel absolutely amazing in their bodies and don't have any desire to lose weight, and it's actually just the opposite. Most of my clients who sign up to work with me knowing that I take a weight-inclusive approach still have a desire to lose weight. And that's totally normal and totally fine because, again, we live in a

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culture that puts the idea into our heads from a very young age, especially if you have always been in a larger body, that you are supposed to be focusing on weight loss, and you're supposed to be focusing on being thin.

So even if you start to intellectually understand diet culture, understand fatphobia, and all these other things that I've been talking about, that doesn't mean that desire to lose weight is going to just magically go away. It absolutely doesn't. I think every single one of us battles those days or even longer, weeks months, whatever, where we're like, "Ugh. I really still want to lose weight. I feel uncomfortable in my body." And that is normal.

So desiring to lose weight is something that I talk about with my clients, and I don't want them to be afraid to talk about with me. And then we work through it together. Again, we're not actively taking steps to lose weight. When someone comes on as a client with me, they know that we're putting that desire for weight loss on the back burner. We're giving it space. We recognize that it exists and it's out there, and we can definitely talk about it, but we're not going to specifically choose to do things that we know are going to make us lose weight because we want to focus on how we feel, not how we look.

There are a million coaches out there who coach weight loss and aesthetic changes who help people to achieve these things if that's something that they want to achieve. In fact, I count many of them as my friends even though we have completely different philosophies, or, you know, sometimes, it's not that different of a philosophy.

But as Dr. Kate Browne and I talked about in episode nine, which I know I've referenced like three times, but it was a great episode, and you should go listen to it if you haven't yet. You know, we talked about people who are billing themselves as body positive and who are still coaching weight loss. And again, I don't necessarily agree with that, but that doesn't mean that I hate these people and that I think they're all evil. I think there are a lot of different opinions in this space, and I have found the thing that works best for me.

So the reality is, this weight-centric paradigm isn't going anywhere. There are so much money behind it, so many industries, billions of dollars that it's going to be around for the long haul. And that is one of the reasons I'm so committed to a weight-inclusive paradigm because people deserve options. People who are fed up with weight loss and diet culture and white supremacist beauty standards are seeking something else.

And that's where my work and the work of so many of my wonderful colleagues in the Health At Every Size and intuitive eating spaces comes in. This is where we shine. Because not offering weight loss sends a clear message that this is a space where you will not be fat-shamed. This is a space where no one is going to expect you to

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change your body or to be seen as less valuable. And I think at the end of the day, people deserve to have those spaces.

So yeah. There's going to be a spectrum of offerings out there in the fitness, health and wellness world. There's going to be people who are intentional weight loss or bust, who are super fatphobic, who refuse to look at the science and understand that fat does not automatically equal unhealthy. And, oh, by the way, even fat people who are unhealthy still deserve to be treated like human beings and treated with kindness and respect, goddamnit. So there are those people.

And then, there are gonna be people who are kind of in the middle like I used to be who were trying to straddle this line between the two where, like, maybe they're not actively advertising fat loss, but they still do it if clients want it, and they just kind of try to talk to them about other things and learn to care for their bodies.

And then, there are people like me who are on the other side of the spectrum who have decided that they're going to be staunchly anti-diet, fat-positive, Health-At-Every-Size-friendly, weight-inclusive.

And I think it's important that people on this side of the spectrum, again, exist, that people who need us can find us. And speaking of, if you're out in the world, and you are looking for people who meet that bill, let me give you a couple of options of places that you can go to look for those practitioners. So the first is going to be the Association for Size Diversity & Health, ASDAH's, website. And I will link to all of these in the show notes.

So you can go there. They have a list of practitioners of all different varieties, so that's going to be things like therapists, registered dietitians, coaches, all kinds of different people that you can find on the ASDAH website.

You can also go to the intuitive eating website, to the certified intuitive eating counselor database, to find people all over the U.S. and all over the world who are certified in intuitive eating and can help you with that.

And then, Superfit Hero has also put out a body-positive fitness finder. So if you're specifically looking for people in fitness, you can go there to find studios and individuals who you know are going to be safe to understand these concepts.

I know I just threw a whole lot of stuff at you in this episode. So if you're reeling right now, don't panic. Use the show notes to your advantage. Like I said, I'm going to be putting a lot of different links and sources in there to help you understand some of these concepts if you've maybe not heard of them before.

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I'm always down to chat in the DMs. So come over on Instagram. Send me a message. I also do individual, one-off coaching calls. So I'm happy to talk that way as well if what you want to talk about is more involved, and then you can just pay me for that, and we will hop on the phone and chat.

So a lot of different options, but don't be discouraged if a lot of this information is new to you. It's all very familiar to me at this point, so I tend to forget that maybe this is a giant brain dump for some of you, and it goes against everything that you have ever heard about some of these topics. I was once there as well. Don't worry. I promise, go into that research mode like I did. You're going to learn a lot of stuff, and you're going to be better for it.

So thank you guys so much for listening to the podcast today. And let me know how you like the solo episode situation because, personally, I love doing interviews, and I find solo episodes more challenging, but hopefully, this is helpful for you. And if there are other things you want to hear me do solo episodes on, just let me know.

[music plays]

And that's our show for today. I appreciate you listening to and supporting the Redefining Health & Wellness podcast.

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I also love chatting with listeners. So feel free to screenshot from your podcast player, post on social media, and tag me.

And if you're looking for more information on what I'm all about and how to work with me, head on over to shohrehdavoodi.com.

Hope to see you for the next episode.