

Redefining Health & Wellness

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Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi & Miranda Lipes

Shohreh Davoodi: Hey y'all, this is episode #80 of the Redefining Health & Wellness podcast, and today's episode features Miranda Lipes of the Uprooted Foodie blog and The Vegan Chub Club podcast. As the popularity of veganism has grown, many people are getting more curious about it. But as a former vegan myself, I know all too well that there are certain factions of the vegan community that are very diet culture-y and deeply invested in healthism. So I invited Miranda on the show to talk about navigating nuance in veganism and how to start embracing a vegan lifestyle without falling prey to perfectionism. To access the show notes and a full transcript of this episode, head to shohrehdavoodi.com/80. That's shohrehdavoodi.com/80.

Before we get into this episode, I want to share some of the changes that will be coming to the podcast in early 2021. This year, the podcast will be getting a brand-new name and the scope of the show will be expanding to include more than just health and wellness content. I'm so excited about this next evolution of the show, and I can't wait to reveal all the details soon. If you're already subscribed to the podcast, then there's nothing you need to do. When the changes go live, everything will roll over automatically. And if you're not subscribed to the show yet, consider this your reminder to go ahead and do so. That way, you'll never miss an episode.

[Music plays]

Welcome to the Redefining Health & Wellness podcast. I'm your host and resident rainbow glitter bomb, Shohreh Davoodi. I started this project because I saw how black-and-white messaging about health harms everyone, and I wanted to paint a more honest and vibrant picture. This podcast is a space where we can reimagine health together by confronting

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limiting misconceptions, delving into aspects of well-being that are often ignored, and prioritizing conversations with marginalized individuals. I encourage you to take what you need and leave behind what you don't. Are you ready for this? Let's fucking go!

Y'all, we have Miranda of The Vegan Chub Club podcast in the house. How are you holding up, Miranda?

Miranda Lipes: I'm doing pretty well, how are you?

Shohreh: You know, I'm okay. 2020 is almost over and I'm pretty happy about that.

Miranda: Thank god, right?

Shohreh: Yes. So, I'm super excited to do this episode with you about veganism. And just to give listeners some background, I was fully vegan for a couple of years. I started my journey into veganism, like I imagine many people did, after watching Cowspiracy on Netflix. And I've always been a huge animal lover and that documentary just broke my heart. But then as time went on, I very much found myself in the healthism space of veganism, so I kind of became obsessed with Dr. Greger and his book, How Not to Die, and just went down this very dogmatic, diet culture-y rabbit hole. So after two years, some aspects of my personal veganism really started to take a toll on me and I ended up coming back to vegetarianism, which is where I remain very happily now. Still eat vegan food probably 60-70% of the time, and basically, this is just what works for me.

But I certainly had some interesting experiences in the vegan community and I'm sure that you have too. And I also want to be clear for people, before we get into this, that the vegan community is obviously not a monolith, and both you and I will be speaking from our own experiences

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and what we've seen, but we can't speak for every single person in the community, which I think is worth saying.

So, first though, why don't you start just by telling me more about you and your journey to veganism and how Uprooted Foodie and Vegan Chub Club came to be.

Miranda:

Absolutely! Well, and first I want to say, like, good for you. Like you said, it's not a monolith and it's not the same for everyone, and you can cherry pick what works for you and what doesn't, and that's what I love about it. You know, it's a personal choice, it's a lifestyle. So I guess I'll say that first and foremost.

But I'm Miranda, and thanks for having me on today. I'm currently based in Denver, Colorado, and I haven't always been here and I probably won't always be here as I tend to live a pretty transient lifestyle, which is where my alias comes into play. I go by the Uprooted Foodie on social media because I'm about uprooting myself, whether that's from place to place or uprooting stigmas and stagnant emotions within myself and the cultures I find myself in. And I think it's important to make yourself slightly uncomfortable in order to become the most comfortable version of yourself, if that makes sense?

Shohreh:

Yeah.

Miranda:

I feel like I've lived a pretty interesting life so far. I'm 33 and I have plans to continue traveling, but obviously, once this pandemic comes to a close. But I grew up in, basically, what is a small cornfield [laughs] in Illinois, and when I was there it was just like the tiniest bubble. And I appreciate it so much now that I'm older and I absolutely adore the town. It's really

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charming, it's sweet, it's home. But I knew that there was a big world out there.

And before I left that world I found out about veganism. And I was in college and I was in French class with a girl who had been vegan for seven years. She and her family, I think, were completely vegan and she just kind of talked to me about what it was, told me mostly about the focus of slaughterhouses and how the animals were treated, and I just had no idea.

And growing up I kind of had this aversion to meat where I didn't want to eat a lot of burgers, I wouldn't finish my plate if there was a lot of meat on it, things like that. And I always just assumed I was a picky eater, but then when I found out about veganism and I gave it a try, I was like, oh, I actually feel comfortable eating everything on this vegan spectrum as long as there's no meat there, so that's great. And that's kind of how it started for me.

So, I guess fast forward, you know, I've been vegan for thirteen and a half years now. Of course, that's not perfection veganism. I was a little bit vegetarian early in the beginning, back and forth between vegan because cheese, and then—

Shohreh: [Laughter] As a fellow person who was born in the Midwest, I get it!

Miranda: Yes. And so that's hard, but eventually better cheeses came out and I was like, oh, this is no problem anymore and cooking for myself became really fun. But fast forward to modern day, I created the Uprooted Foodie because I left the Midwest and traveled all over. I worked for AmeriCorps in Montana and Texas, and I went to college in New York City at a music conservatory and moved all up and down the coast there, and then moved out to the West Coast.

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And then once I kind of got burned out with theater life and gig life, you know, I've always wanted to start a food blog. Every time I traveled for theater or for work, it was fun to stop at all these different restaurants in these different cities and see what they had to offer because growing up, again, in a small town in the Midwest, there weren't many options. It was a lot of cooking for myself. So the Uprooted Foodie blossomed because I was interested in finding those places and sharing them with people and just really writing more about them.

So then that started when I kind of stopped doing theater in 2018, and then in 2019 I was where I am now, in Colorado. We had moved here. And I started listening to The Vegan Chub Club podcast, which was started by Edyn Jacks and Joelle, and they were so much fun to listen to. They were really just good friends who were talking about veganism and vegan topics with this whole overarching theme of like, we belong here and nobody gets to tell us that because of the body that we're in, we can't be here or that we don't belong.

And so The Vegan Chub Club was just this super inclusive space, and it was with two fun hosts who just got together every week and just talked and read excerpts from the community about their experiences, and I just fell in love with it. So I reached out to Edyn and Joelle. I asked them if they ever want a guest on there, if it could work virtually, like I'd love to participate in that. But it didn't quite work out that way.

We did stay in touch. And then eventually we all met in California for the Eat Drink Vegan Festival, which I think that was the final year. And then from there, once things kind of slowed down, and Joelle stepped back, Edyn and I were still in touch and she reached out to me and the rest is history. So I took over the podcast and here we are.

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- Shohreh:** I actually didn't know the history of that, that you weren't one of the original hosts of the podcast. That is a really cool story.
- Miranda:** Yeah, it's an interesting way to get involved, but I mean, I think the lesson there is definitely that, you know, reach out to the people you admire or would love to work with because you never know what can come of it.
- Shohreh:** That's so true. And also, fellow arts degree fam over here. I have a music performance degree that I'm not using in the slightest, but was useful at the time [laughter].
- Miranda:** Can I ask, what was it? Like singing or was it an instrument?
- Shohreh:** I played the oboe.
- Miranda:** Yes, I knew you were a woodwind player for some reason.
- Shohreh:** Mhmm and specifically double reed.
- Miranda:** I love it! It's your organizational brain, I think. You're so well thought out. I feel like reed players are definitely more intelligent, so [laughs].
- Shohreh:** You're not wrong, I'm not gonna argue with that! [Laughter]
- Miranda:** And you're humble too, that's the best! [Laughs]
- Shohreh:** I mean, I'm a Sagittarius over here, so I know what I'm about. [Laughs]
- Miranda:** I play trumpet, but that wasn't what I went to school for necessarily. I did like the singing, acting, and attempted dancing [laughs]. But then I did keep up with trumpet after college and that's actually what kind of got me more gigs 'cause I was a little more unique compared to just everyone coming out cookie-cutter style from conservatory, so. It's helpful to play an instrument.

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Shohreh: It is, and it teaches you a whole lot of things outside of playing an instrument. I did a whole episode with my friend, Parisa Zaeri, who is a professional conductor for opera. And we talked a lot about, just, all the ways that having music education have affected our lives now, even for someone like me who is not in music anymore. But just all the life skills that it taught me that I'm still using today. I think it's just such an underrated and important thing. Alright, I've taken us very off topic, but we're doing what we want [laughter].

Miranda: I'm along for the ride! No worries.

Shohreh: I like it! Okay, so, we were just talking about the podcast and everything going on there, and the podcast is one of the ways that you are personally working to combat the very healthism, diet culture-y faction of veganism. 'Cause I know for me, I definitely witnessed plenty of fat shaming in my local vegan community here in Austin when I was a part of it. So what is up with this myth that all vegans are supposed to be thin and "healthy?"

Miranda: Honestly, I don't understand it because I don't know if I was just naïve or ignorant to the fact that that was even a thing to shame people for or if I just completely ignored it and didn't let it enter my world. Me, personally, I just didn't hear anything from people because they didn't even really know what veganism was.

And so, honestly, it was when I heard Edyn and Joelle talking about their experiences in Austin, Texas, and other areas, and then Joelle out in California, she experienced a lot of just like that Hollywood/L.A./So-Cal environment, and people just assumed that veganism was diet and that it was something that celebrities took on and that it was something that was an exclusionary club. Which, I think, is why they coined the phrase, "The Vegan Chub Club" because it's an inclusionary club now, with this podcast.

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So, I guess it is a myth. I mean, I can't even begin to understand why people would come up with that. I think it kind of comes from, well, if veganism is a diet, then a diet means you're skinny, and skinny means you're beautiful, beautiful means you're accepted, and if you're anything but those things, you cannot get to that ultimate acceptance, and therefore we should bully whoever isn't there. And I just think it's that toxic bullying mentality is just sad to see in the vegan community because again, I thought it was so inclusive growing up and getting into veganism. And then being vegan, I was like the only vegan wherever I went for so long. And then to hear other vegans say, like, "Oh, I just got made fun of all the time," "Oh, I just got bullied all the time," "I got fat shamed all the time."

I think that's different, too, than just being fat shamed in general. To be fat shamed in a place where you feel safe and where you feel like you thrive the most in your lifestyle, that's a special kind of hell. That's a special kind of bullying.

Shohreh:

I think you're right that it does come from this vegan equals diet aspect because the original intent behind veganism has very much been co-opted by diet culture and by people who are like, veganism is the way to get somewhere, where the somewhere is, again, "healthy," whatever that is supposed to mean. It's like the whole-foods-only faction of veganism where it's like clean eating and veganism kind of clash together. I remember people specifically saying, "junk food vegans," as essentially a slur, like in the vegan community when I was in it.

Miranda:

Yes, and it has become that. It has become very, ugh, toxically elite, unfortunately, in certain areas. And like, I'm not going to smack talk the place where I live, but I will say that I haven't really experienced an in-person vegan community until I got to Colorado. I'm in the Denver area,

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and I heard from a few people a little bit of a warning when I got here. When I met a few vegans, they were like, it's a little intense around here in the vegan community. And I was like, oh, okay, I wonder what that means. I guess I'll find out.

And then come to find out it's been a couple of years and I'm still finding out every day things that surprise me about these opinions that people have on this, and how if you're in a vegan Facebook group for this town you can't talk about these topics, and you can't bring up Impossible or Beyond, and you can't talk about Just because of all the controversy surrounding those companies and are they really ethically vegan? Is it really meant to be vegan or is it plant-based? And it's just kind of crazy.

And I know that it's like that in so many other places too. But I think that because my area has like a small town feel, even though it's a city, it's a little more like in your face. But I feel like places like L.A. and stuff like that, it just kind of runs through the course of that city's veins, which ends up in all this toxic leaking of just hey, you're not welcome. Hey, you're not doing it right. Hey, you look unhealthy and we don't want an unhealthy image for the vegan movement. And like, that's where it just kind of spirals.

Shohreh:

It's so interesting to me because if you are vegan because you feel like that's the right direction for the planet—maybe you care about sustainability or more importantly, that you really care about animals' rights. So how is it gonna help your cause to treat people in this way and to have this very all-or-nothing mentality where you're like, there is one right way to be vegan and then there's wrong ways to be vegan. Oh, and anybody who isn't a vegan is essentially a murderer who we don't want to talk to.

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I remember literally seeing posts in the Austin vegan Facebook group being like, I'm having a really hard time even talking to any of my friends who aren't vegan anymore. Like, every time I look at them all I can just think of is that they're murderers. And I was like, what? What is even happening right here? Like, I just do not understand [laughs]. Because, you know, my whole thought when I was very strongly vegan was that, if we do this as an all-or-nothing thing, then far less people will be interested—

Miranda: Will get on board.

Shohreh: Yeah, will be interested in eating less animal products. For me I was like, shouldn't we just be encouraging people to eat less animal products and to start to reduce that versus saying, if you're not fully vegan, it's not good enough?

Miranda: Right, and I talked with Taylor Wolfram, who's an RD, on one of The Vegan Chub Club episodes, and she put it really well when I was talking about why I was vegan and how I don't discriminate against people who, like you, are just like, "Qell, I adopt mostly vegan, but I consider myself vegetarian. That's where I live, that's where I thrive, that's where I'm comfortable." And like, I kind of put it as, I accept people who do whatever they want or can to reduce harm, and she called it a "harm-reduction plan," or just a "harm-reduction lifestyle," and I really liked that phrase where it just comes off as like, do the least amount of harm you can. That's like the original definition of veganism.

And if you do talk about the difference between veganism and plant-based, I think you just kind of come into this ethics limbo of like, okay, well, what is the definition of those things? Because when I was like early vegan, plant-based was just like another way to describe the vegan "diet" aspect, just like the food aspect of it. So I just assumed, like, okay, plant-

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based is fine to say as an alternative to vegan because it just means that's how you can describe it as, oh, I just eat a lot more whole foods as opposed to processed foods or something.

But then I think the culture ran off with it within the last few years, and now, nope! They're not the same, they're totally different. If you call it this, then you're not ethical. If you call it that, then you don't care. And it's just gotten so twisted up in labels that we've lost the meaning of it. Which to an extent can happen just in our culture today in general, getting so caught up in the labels that we lose that humanity aspect of it sometimes.

Shohreh:

Yeah, that's so true. You see this everywhere, it's not just in veganism. Again, it's this black-and-white thinking, this all-or-nothing thinking that is pervasive in diet culture and stems, frankly, from white supremacy culture. You know, that is where this perfectionism is born from and causing all these issues, and people aren't able to make those connections, unfortunately, and to see how all of these things thread together.

And, you know, many people do find their way to veganism in a diet culture-y way, and there are certainly people who have used veganism as a way of hiding an eating disorder and use it just as a very restrictive way to eat. So how can people know that they are choosing a vegan diet for the right reasons and not fall into this diet-culture space?

Miranda:

Right. So yeah, it's hard to tell, maybe, reasons deep down as to why you want to do this. Maybe you wanted to try it and you started to like it, but you don't know why you're getting into it. I mean, I would be lying if I didn't say that when I started veganism it was for that shock of what happens in slaughterhouses with animals. But then I immediately enjoyed the health benefits of it—the “health benefits”—and I had a major energy shift. I was super upbeat all the time, I had so much energy, I didn't really even need

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coffee. And I was eating mostly whole foods because back then, and in the Midwest, not a lot of grocery stores had all of these like, wonderful, magical, ready-to-go vegan foods that are good substitutes for other things.

Shohreh: Yeah.

Miranda: But the more that I researched, because I wanted to be educated when I told people what it was because a lot of people didn't know, the more I realized I never wanted anything to do with animal products again. And so it kind of circled back to that original curiosity of like, whoa, you know, I heard this happens behind these closed barn doors and I don't want to be a part of that.

And so, I made myself read some more books. And then I did watch some documentaries. It was so long ago that I can't really remember which ones I watched. And also, I'm a little bit, like, perturbed by the documentaries. Like, I'm a visual person and if it's too gory I'm really unsettled, so I can't watch those, personally. But I don't feel like I need to remember what goes on, so that's a personal thing for me. You have to know your own boundaries.

But I think in the simplest sense you have to think of it as veganism is an ethical way of life, and any views of it, in regards to health, could fall prey to diet culture. Plant-based is an example of that if we're going by the labels that are set out today. It started out as an innocent alternative to saying vegan, but got picked up by diet industries and coined as the health incentive to, perhaps veganism, but just perhaps buying into something else, like diet culture.

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And if you look at veganism for what it is, it is a harm-reduction plan, or just a lifestyle where you can do the least amount of cruelty, and then I think your life can begin to rotate around that reasoning as opposed to “Is this healthy,” so to speak.

Shohreh: I know a lot of people, they’re interested in veganism or vegetarianism, they’re thinking, that sounds like a direction I’d like to go in, but I’m really freaked out by it. I don’t know if I can get all the way there. Practically speaking, do you have any tips for people who maybe just want to dip their toe in, start trying things out? Like you said, finding ways to reduce harm that maybe aren’t going all the way of like, I am vegan, I’m in the vegan community?

Miranda: Yeah! If you’re kind of freaked out by the food aspect, you can absolutely start with other things in your life. I mean, I think people assume that adopting the lifestyle aspect outside of food is kind of a more progressive level of veganism I guess you could say [laughs]. But I don’t think that there are any rules, and you can definitely start with that if you’re not ready to change what you ingest. You can start by substituting out your shampoos, and your soaps, and your lotions, and your dish soap, and your laundry detergent, if you’re looking for less harm. A, more eco-friendly, that can tie into veganism, but B, you know, just have no animal products or have certain labels on them. Like, there’s that cruelty-free bunny.

Shohreh: Love the bunny!

Miranda: Yeah. Sometimes there’s PETA-approved, if you go that route. And there’s just other marks of approval that typically help you figure that out. Or you can look at certain websites. Maybe I can send you some links to put in the description or something.

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Shohreh: For sure.

Miranda: But there's ways that you can just adopt that very slowly. And I know it can take a lot of money and investment, like morally and financially, to totally change your lifestyle, but again, whatever you are curious about how can I reduce the harm that's happening, I think consumerism is the most direct way. Think about what you buy, vote with your dollars, support small. All those things that are morally, maybe, the right path to take in general, typically can align with a vegan lifestyle as well.

And again, that sounds, perhaps, elitist and I'm not meaning it too, but—I'm not saying vegans do it the best, vegans are the best—I'm just saying, I think when you have that mindset of veganism, or vegetarianism, or just less harm all around, you kind of naturally come to this place of, okay, well I want better for everything then. Better for myself, better for the environment, better for these animals that hopefully don't have to die in so many masses if I can contribute to an alternative thing.

Shohreh: Yeah, and I think that where people often run into trouble is again, holding themselves up to this perfectionistic standard where, you know, for instance, if we talk about clothes, right. Being like, okay, unless I remove all leather or anything that was made with an animal product from my closet and never buy anything again from that, then I'm not doing it right, so why even try? And it's like, there's so many other options and variations, like you were saying.

You could be like, well, I've already bought these clothes and I can't afford new ones, so these are going to stay here, but maybe in the future I'm going to choose not to purchase leather. Or at least I'm not going to do it without really putting some intentional thought to it, where it's gotta be something that I really love, otherwise I'm not going to get it. There's so

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many gray areas and in-between spaces to work in, that if you try to hold yourself up to this perfect standard, not doing it well enough, that's when people just don't even start at all.

Miranda: There are different categories you can throw yourself into. Like, there are certain ethical vegans who are like, I will thrift my clothes and that's a way to just save on a lot of things morally. I mean, there's that dilemma of, if the leather exists, should you wear it? But it's also like, well if it exists and you already have it, do you get rid of it?

Shohreh: Right.

Miranda: That doesn't really make sense either. So I definitely think doing what you can, like you're saying.

Shohreh: I agree.

Miranda: And if you were ready to dive into the food aspect of things, I think a good place to start is just start small. Don't swap out your favorite meal ever first. You know, start with something that you could supplementally change over. If you already don't really love vegetables, maybe just start exploring vegetables you do like or fruit that you do like. Or think about making an easy version of vegan cookies or a vegan cake and just see how you like it, see if you're good at that. Or maybe go support a business that has those things if you're craving something sweet and you want to swap out something small to start with. Go to a vegan bakery. Things like that.

Shohreh: Yeah, and not looking at it as restricting yourself. I think really kind of trying to look at it as, I am adding things, I'm swapping things, maybe I'm trying out new things, instead of like, I have to take all these things away. Because that alone, by coming into it from this really restrictive point of view, is going to make you dread it and not want to do it.

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Miranda: Yes. It's very important to be gentle with yourself, be easy on yourself. Don't feel like you have to jump into it and start just restricting. I think if you, like you're saying, yeah, look at it with a viewpoint of rather not I'm restricting everything, but rather, I'm opening a door to a lot of other things that I wouldn't have otherwise enjoyed or explored. That's kind of how I like to look at it, at least.

Shohreh: For sure. I mean, I think of all the things that I discovered from the years I was vegan, even not being vegan anymore, that I wouldn't know about now. Like, I freakin' love tofu, and I never would have eaten tofu before that because I was very much like a steak-loving gal back in my meat-eating days. And I never would have guessed that tofu is something that I would find delicious and that I would make constantly in all different ways. But that's what it became.

So, I think some of it is about coming into it with curiosity and just seeing it as like, it's an exploration, right? It's an opportunity to try new things that you didn't before. Because if there's anything I can say about when I was a meat eater, it's that my meals were simpler, but it was also just like, the meat was the main thing most of the time, and then there wasn't a whole lot else going on. And when I went vegan, because I had to do a lot more cooking, that allowed me to discover so many things about food and try all this new stuff that I hadn't before, and it actually made me a much better cook.

So, I think there's some really great skills that can be learned when you're exploring something like vegetarianism or veganism, too, that you don't have to when you are eating meat and that's the main part of your meal. Like, you really have to get creative and start discovering other things. And some people find that really fun. I know that I did.

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Miranda: Yes, definitely. And another thing that goes hand in hand with how can I start, is look toward influencers, or recipe bloggers, or YouTube, or a podcast. Look for a community that has your back. If you want to try something and you're not sure, people will be supportive. And if you slip up, that community can be a sense of support and be like, it's okay, you're not a bad person, you're not a bad vegan or vegetarian, you just wanted that and you gave your body that and you listened to your body, and that's great. And if you feel bad about it, you know, think about what you can do to substitute it next time or whatever.

Shohreh: Yeah, it's about finding the influencers who aren't doing all the shitty things that we have talked about in the course of this episode. Which I know that you have with The Vegan Chub Club podcast, like a whole backlog of episodes that can maybe, is a good place for people to start in looking for people who fit into that category. Like, non-fat shaming, non-jerk vegans who are going to be a good source for you where you don't have to be afraid if you go to their page that they're going to throw a bunch of bullshit at you.

Miranda: Yes, totally. That whole, again, inclusivity aspect of it. And it's just important to have support. In life, in your own hobbies, and in whatever endeavors you're trying out, like veganism or vegetarianism. I think it's a good place to look for support online. I like to go to YouTube and look for personalities there who have fun in the kitchen, who have good recipes. And also, on Instagram, there's a lot of people who just make cooking more fun and give you lots of ideas. And not only just for that support, but also just for the incentive. Like, oh yeah, this can be fun, this can be exciting.

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And it can be very daunting to take on a lot of new things and a lot of new cooking and skills, especially if you don't cook that often and you're a very busy person, but there's a lot of other ways to do meal prep for the week without having it be like weight-conscious meal prep or focused meal prep. It can be just like, great, I'm gonna take care of myself this week and that's all that this means. And it can be as simple as that.

Shohreh: Yeah, and I'll give a shout-out to Talia Koren who was just on the podcast. She is the owner of Workweek Lunch, which is the only completely diet culture-free meal prep service out there, and they also have a vegan version of every single recipe that they put out. So, a great place to start if you're looking to see different options out there.

Miranda: Yes, that's amazing!

Shohreh: Yeah, I think another thing that was hard for me when I was in the vegan community and I'm sure it's difficult for you right now as well, is that as we've talked about, there are certainly plenty of people in the vegan community who give it a bad name, right? Who are out there doing shitty things. And unfortunately, what has happened is that now there's this perspective that all vegans are super annoying and dogmatic. Clearly not true, I have you here on the podcast! But how are you navigating that myth that has been going around?

Miranda: Yeah, ways in which the vegan community actually pushes people away instead of inviting them in. I think that's a big one for me, and it's a big one right now in general. I recently spoke with a friend who made a good point that when a person becomes vegan, their eyes open up to all this cruelty and pain, and you just want to speak out to anyone who will listen. And this can definitely come off as invasive or annoying to people who aren't

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expecting to have that conversation. So I think you have to warm people up to the idea of veganism.

And I guess I'm speaking more from the vegan standpoint than the defensive standpoint, but I think it starts with us, right? And so, inviting whoever is confused or a little bit snarky about it, you know, invite them to ask any questions that they have as opposed to just dumping your bucket of knowledge on them for the first five minutes. It's passionate, but it's also overwhelming for people, especially because they can tend to reflect on what makes them feel not good about what they've been doing their whole life. And then they feel personally attacked. And I think coming at it just from a place of calmness, like a slight reservation about it, but still just like, you have this instilled passion in you of this is a lifestyle, it's not just a hobby, it's not just information you're trying to just blast for no reason. There's a purpose behind why you have this lifestyle.

And when I first became vegan, I took all of those cruel treatments that people kind of targeted at me, I took it pretty deep. I ran into those comments like, "Aw, but bacon! Ha-ha-ha," "Meat tastes so good though," "I could never be vegan, that's weird," and I would get pretty offended and I would just completely shut off. And then, not that that's how everyone should react, but when that did happen and people realised they'd offended me on that kind of level, they'd back off a little bit. And I think that's the funny part, is that it wasn't even me coming onto them about my vegan ethics that was annoying for them, it was them realizing they were irritated by the thought that someone was "better than them," even if I never said that to them. Like, I would never say, "Oh, I'm better than you because I do this," but that's just what people might hear.

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So, I think deep down people know there's something really backwards about the cruelty that's involved in the mainstream animal agriculture, and I think that they can get triggered by it. And then they write you off as a nuisance so they don't have to look at themselves. But, how do we counteract that then, right? How do we stop being so annoying, even if we don't realize we're being annoying or if we're not being annoying at all in actuality? Maybe we're just annoying 'cause we exist! [Laughter]

But I think we have to be calm, and comfortable, and open, again. I think I've gotten so much further with people by giving one-answer replies, or just one-at-a-time answers to any questions people have so that they can process those one at a time as opposed to being bombarded with that information. And I just, overall, that big takeaway is meet people where they are, essentially.

Shohreh:

Not overwhelming people and dumping information on them is a good rule of thumb for pretty much anything. Like, honestly, if there's anything that I've learned from the years that I have been coaching is that you cannot force people to change. You just can't do it. And so, evangelizing anything to people tends to make them shut down very quickly.

'Cause I see this as well with people who start developing their interest in intuitive eating, for example. One of the things that I help people do is to get out of diet culture and learn to eat in a more intuitive way. And when people learn about the shittiness that is diet culture, they get very passionate about telling other people that. And they're like, oh my god, I can't believe I've been sucked into this for long, it's so horrible, it's based on all of this awful stuff. And they wanna tell everyone and do the thing.

And I'm like, I get it, I love your passion, and that is a very fast way to turn people off from this before they've even had a chance to really understand

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it. And I always think, honestly, that just living it and being an example of it is the best way to get other people interested, and then when they're ready to learn more, they will come to you. They will come and seek out the information because they want to know more about it. And they will let you know. There will be change talk, which is something we talk about in motivational interviewing, where there are indicators in their speech of like, ooh, I'm interested in this, I'd like to learn more. And that's the opening to start talking about it because they've given you an opening, versus trying to shove it down someone's throat, again, whether it's veganism, intuitive eating, or anything else in life, when they haven't indicated that they're ready for that yet.

Miranda: Yes, you have to take your cues from other people. 100%. And again, that's meeting people where they are and inviting them to participate in that. And if they're not ready, then you can't push it and it won't end well for anybody if you do. I like that whole way of it, that you've gotta have people be ready for it.

Shohreh: For sure.

Miranda: And that being said, I mean, a little more history on my family and my life with veganism, so my younger sister actually went vegetarian when she was nine, and we just kind of knew she didn't eat meat and that was pretty much it. And so she's actually been, probably the longest running in my family, and then my older sister in college, I believe, went vegetarian and was kind of back and forth between vegetarian and vegan. And then later on I became vegan. And eventually my mom just went to vegan, to vegetarian, and now she's settled in pescatarianism.

And it's just nice that we all kind of came to that in our own and didn't really push each other for it. And I just think that it's cool when that can

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happen in a family and it's cool when that can just happen in your friends circles. That may never happen for some people and that's okay too. But it's just interesting to see that if you don't push the narrative, you know, people can eventually come around to whatever is best for them and it can work out for everybody.

Shohreh: And to be clear, I learned this lesson the hard way [laughs] because when I first went vegan, I was exactly the person who was truly being annoying. Again, I got unnecessarily obsessed with Dr. Greger and How Not to Die, which again, this is not a book that I would recommend to anybody today and I just find him to be a very dogmatic person who cherry picks a lot of science, and like, it's a whole thing. But, I like, bought that book for a bunch of people in my life and just sent it to them. I was like, you need to read this book! Like I basically made it my new bible. And maybe not the best way to get people interested in veganism [laughs] is to be like, this book is amazing, you need to read it and then become vegan.

So, we have all done this. We have all gotten very excited about things and kind of made the mistake of throwing it at other people. So don't feel bad if this is you, because I've been there, I know you've been there, Miranda. But we learn!

Miranda: Oh yeah!

Shohreh: We learn from this.

Miranda: And I'm only sharing some of the good parts, I feel like, you know. I guess I'm just trying to veer towards, it can be easy or fun or whatever. But no, that's true. We've all either been there or we know someone who's been very, maybe obsessed with the whole concept or just a certain aspect of it

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that's like, this did it for me and it can do it for you and I'm so passionate about it.

I mean, I've definitely had my share, though, of things where I was just like, I'm never gonna date someone who's not vegan. But that's not realistic. And now my partner is not vegan and that's totally fine and I'm never gonna push him. And he may never go vegan and I don't hold out for that or something, but I would be lying if I said I didn't used to hold out for that.

But again, with family members and people, it's like, I found I got a lot more questions about it that were pretty aggressive from either boyfriends, family members, or just friends, or friends of friends. I would get aggressively questioned about it when I didn't come in guns ablazing for anything. And I think that that's common as well, and you have to be ready for that.

I've had family members start out being like, hey, why don't you eat honey? Hey, why don't you do this? And I explain to them and then they tell me their reasoning why I'm wrong or whatever. And then later on, you know, a few years later they're like, they're making chocolate cake that's vegan for all of us. And it's just like, they just did one thing, you know, but it's one thing that can help somebody kind of like come in and be invited in and make it work for everyone. And again, these are like fantasy stories sometimes. They may never exist, you know. But I guess I'm just sayin', if you're gentle with people, people might surprise you.

Shohreh:

Right, and there's a big difference between coming to a place where you understand that other people are their own people and they have their own needs and wants and whatever is gonna work for them in a dietary and ethical way, and letting people treat you like shit, right? Those are two

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different things. And I think sometimes people think, well, that's automatically the same.

And I'm like, we have to let people be themselves and come to their own decisions. And like you said, it'd be great if your partner eventually became vegan. I'm sure that would be awesome for you. But it doesn't have to be the end-all, be-all of your relationship. And for some people it is, right? You know, I'm not going to tell somebody that they're wrong because they will only date vegans, but there are a lot of people who are like, well, I wanna be open to other people who are out in the world and it doesn't have to be that we are exactly the same on this.

Miranda:

Yes, I'm not that pusher who's just like, no meat allowed in the house. But I'm like, hey, I'd prefer, now that we live together that we don't have meat in the house, like, to cook, or whatever. If you want to get takeout and we all get takeout and you bring it home, that's fine, but I'd rather not cook with it and clean it up and stuff like that. And luckily he's respectful of that and that works for us. And that is just like, along the lines of setting your own expectations and setting your own boundaries, and yeah, there's a line between being neurotic with it, or being more, hey, I'd prefer this, this is my boundary.

Shohreh:

Exactly. Thank you so much for making time to be here. I really appreciate it. How can people find you and all the great stuff that you're up to?

Miranda:

Yes, thank you. Again, I run The Vegan Chub Club podcast, and since this will probably air once this happens, The Vegan Chub Club podcast will be ending after season five, but everything will stay up and it will live on forever. All of the episodes will be available to listen to, so please go take a listen. Those ads will still be running live on there and continuing to support me and the original team who created The Vegan Chub Club. So

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we all would appreciate any listens that you want to give to any of those episodes that speak to you because it will help support us and continue to support the work that we put into that and continue to perpetuate the social media club that will still exist and go on.

And then, as far as my personal end, again, I run Uprooted Foodie on Instagram and Facebook, and I do have a couple of YouTube channels and that's where my focus is going to be. Right now, I have a travel channel with my partner, it's called Kyle and Miranda. You can search for us on YouTube. And right now, we're working on getting up some archived footage from 2018 where we moved from California to Colorado. So that has been a fun throwback with a lot of California footage and cool stops along the way. And my personal foodie YouTube is just Uprooted Foodie where my chubby self just chats informally and I make videos about bisexual pride, traveling, living in Colorado, and of course, lots of vegan food. So please come by, subscribe if you want, and say hi. I would love to hear from you all.

Shohreh: Fabulous. I will put all of that in the show notes so it's very easy to access. I am, of course, sad to hear that the podcast is ending, but as someone who knows how dang hard it is to produce a podcast, I get it! And I'm very excited to see what comes next for you.

Miranda: Thank you. And I do have to say, like, your system is so great. Your system of organization and how you reach out and bring everyone on board, it's just so inviting, it's so accommodating, and it's very well organized, and you're doing an amazing thing here. So thank you again for having me on, I really enjoyed it.

Shohreh: Thank you! This speaks to my former lawyer organizational heart, so I appreciate hearing that!

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Miranda: Amazing!

Shohreh: And that's our show for today! If this podcast has taught you anything or helped you in any way, I hope you'll consider supporting me in my effort to keep it going. You can join my Patreon community and receive members-only perks by going to shohrehdavoodi.com/Patreon, or you can tip me for my work through the payment links located at the bottom of the show notes for each episode. I would also encourage you to subscribe and submit a rating and review through your podcast provider of choice. I love hearing from listeners, so feel free to screenshot from your podcast player, post on social media, and tag me. Finally, if you're looking for more information on what I'm all about and how to work with me directly, head over to shohrehdavoodi.com. Hope to see you for the next episode.