

# Redefining Health & Wellness

## #85

**Featured this episode:** Shohreh Davoodi & Shira Rosenbluth

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**Shohreh Davoodi:** You are listening to episode #85 of the Redefining Health & Wellness podcast. Today's episode features the oh-so-colorful Shira Rosenbluth who is a body-positive style blogger and a licensed clinical social worker who specializes in the treatment of disordered eating and eating disorders. Shira and I talked about fatphobia in eating disorder treatment, both on the clinician and patient side, how Shira's relationship with clothing has changed throughout her own eating disorder recovery, and more. To access the show notes and a full transcript of this episode, head to [shohrehdavoodi.com/85](http://shohrehdavoodi.com/85). That's [shohrehdavoodi.com/85](http://shohrehdavoodi.com/85).

Additionally, I want to give a trigger warning for this episode for discussion of eating disorders, disordered eating behaviors, and fatphobia.

Before you hear from Shira, I wanted to let y'all know that next week's episode is when the podcast's new name and branding will finally be revealed, so put your party hats on. I've truly enjoyed all 85 episodes I've produced under the Redefining Health & Wellness name, and I'm so excited for what's to come in the future. When the changes go live, everything will roll over automatically. If you're already subscribed to the podcast, then there's nothing you need to do. And if you're not subscribed to the show yet, consider this a 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 limiting misconceptions, delving into aspects of well-being that are often

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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!

Welcome, Shira. Few people on the internet rival me in their love of rainbows and glitter, so it is a delight to finally get to have you on the podcast for a conversation.

**Shira Rosenbluth:** It's great to be here. Yeah, I noticed your love for rainbows too, so that's awesome. [Laughs]

**Shohreh:** Yes, it runs deep. It's been like a lifelong thing and running joke in my family, but I just, I can't help it. I just love color!

**Shira:** Same. I tried to be minimalist and then I realized it's never gonna happen and this is who I am and I'm embracing it.

**Shohreh:** Yep, yep, exactly that. And like, that's great for people who want to run down that route, but not for me. I'm like, I just need explosions of color everywhere, all the time.

**Shira:** Oh my god, okay. We can be friends. [Laughs]

**Shohreh:** Excellent! Well, for those who don't know you, why don't you start by sharing more about who you are, how you identify, and the work that you're doing in the world.

**Shira:** Of course. I'm Shira, she/her, and I am a therapist in New York. Well, I'm actually staying in Washington for a bit, but I see my clients virtually anywhere 'cause of the pandemic. And I also have a body-positive style blog where I talk about not just fashion, but also Health At Every Size, my own eating disorder recovery, and recovery in general.

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**Shohreh:** Amazing. And I know that something you're especially passionate about is eliminating the rampant fatphobia in eating disorder treatment, in part because you've had to navigate fatphobia in your own treatment journey. So, can you share some of what you've experienced and seen in the field?

**Shira:** Yes. It's such a hard piece because I don't want to discourage anyone from seeking help and there is good help out there, you just need to just work a little harder to make sure your help is safe. But yeah, unfortunately, the eating disorder field is steeped in fatphobia and it's not the exception, but it's kind of the rule. Like that is what's happening in higher levels of care, with other providers. So, I think it's just really important to seek out specific Health At Every Size providers because unfortunately fatphobia is everywhere. It's something I experienced the first time I tried to seek help and then unfortunately, it also happened, you know, a few years ago when I was seeking help again as well. And it's just really hard to watch and to experience.

**Shohreh:** I think it's such an unfortunate thing that that is one of the biggest pieces of the eating disorder community. Because I see a lot of these clashes happening on social media between the more HAES-oriented, ED professionals and then the ED professionals who don't have that, and it's just sad to think about what's going on in ED training for clinicians that they're missing this really important piece. And I also think, of course, that the media is part of this because it perpetuates this idea that eating disorders have one look, and it's a very specific and privileged look.

**Shira:** Right, there's only one eating disorder, which is anorexia. And obviously I say that with all the sarcasm. Not only because actually anorexia is one of the least common eating disorders but somehow takes up all the space because somehow we only care about the thin, white woman and forget

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about all the other people struggling, and then, of course, as I know and you know, anorexia isn't just one body type, but that's only what we see. Like the emaciated, thin, white woman.

And I think about our organizations, like last year, one of the major eating disorder organizations had a talk at their conference about bingeing disorder and how you should use abstinence as a way to treat it and talking about weight loss. And if this is happening at our eating disorder organizations, how do we have a chance? Like this is what we're learning in school.

**Shohreh:** Right, this idea that intentional weight loss would be compatible with eating disorder treatment just seems bananas to me.

**Shira:** Right, because we're prescribing eating disorder behaviors for people in larger bodies, and then the thin people who are experiencing those exact behaviors we get so concerned about, we throw them in the hospital immediately for that. But when it's somebody in a larger body, that's somehow okay.

**Shohreh:** And it makes recovery so difficult for folks who are in larger bodies because they're constantly being inundated by people who are, you know, complimenting them every time that their body gets smaller. Who are saying, "Oh yeah, you need to be restricting, you need to be doing more exercise," and all of these things. And it just makes for such a hostile environment for trying to recover in.

**Shira:** It really does and I think a lot about how much shame I experienced in trying to get help and then feeling like something's wrong with me, why am I not getting better. Like I obviously just don't want this enough, I'm a failure, I'm not trying hard enough. And only in hindsight was I able to

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realize, like, I never had a chance. I was literally being prescribed eating disorder behaviors in the hospital, in treatment. I was never given a meal plan that was appropriate for restoration and for my brain to function properly. I didn't have a chance. And I think it's really hard when you're in that moment to even realize that those things are happening until later.

I think the interesting thing for me is when I went back to get help as a professional a few years ago when I struggled, I knew the things and I still didn't realize in the moment how problematic what was happening to me was until later on, like a few months down the road.

**Shohreh:** That conditioning runs so deep that there are people out there who think that everyone should be within this similar size range no matter what the circumstances. And so, it's this like disbelief factor, I think, almost, where I've definitely heard people in the past say things like, "Oh, well my client must be lying to me."

**Shira:** Oh my god, yes!

**Shohreh:** Which is just ridiculous.

**Shira:** Well, it's actually heartbreaking to see my clients in larger bodies go through similar things and just to know that it's still happening on a regular basis. And it's really hard to know that this is what's happening and not enough people are talking about it, I don't think. I remember when I first went to residential and my nurse kind of like looked me up and down and she's like, "How much weight did you lose?" And I told her and she was like, "And you couldn't do that in a healthy way?" I'm just like, oh my god [laughs]. Like, this is my first day of residential treatment. Like, this is the conversation I had with the head nurse of the program.

**Shohreh:** Wow, that is a "what the fuck" moment for sure.

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- Shira:** For a lot of us and particularly for me, there is no healthy way to lose weight. That is my eating disorder. Like, it's just ridiculous.
- Shohreh:** Well, and of course fatphobia isn't only perpetuated by clinicians, it's also often perpetuated by folks who are in recovery. Like I've seen you and other clinicians in the eating disorder field, Nic McDermid in particular is coming to mind—
- Shira:** Yeah.
- Shohreh:** —speaking out about how having an eating disorder doesn't give you a pass to be openly fatphobic, but why do you think there's so much resistance to that concept?
- Shira:** I don't know. I wonder if it's just people feeling like they're not allowed to talk about their struggles? And it's like, no, your struggles are valid, we just don't need to hurt other people in the process of talking about your pain. Even when people talk about how bad they feel in their own bodies, if you walk around being like, I'm fat, I'm disgusting, I'm repulsive, how does that impact every fat person in this world, like, knowing that your worst nightmare is to look like them?
- And that doesn't mean that your body image struggles aren't valid, it just means that there are other ways to talk about it. Maybe it's about saying, I'm struggling with my body today or I'm struggling with body image, or maybe it's asking permission from the people around you, like, hey, I'm having a really bad body image day, do you have the capacity to talk about it? Like, there are ways to go about it without shitting on all the fat people in your life and in this world.
- Shohreh:** Right and I think too, being mindful of the space that you're in. Because I hear about this happening a lot of times, for instance, in groups, for eating

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disorder recovery where it's like, there's a variety of people with different bodies and experiences, and so, if you're not able to read the room and say, well, maybe this is a conversation I need to have with my therapist to work out some of these feelings, but not here amongst these people where it could hurt them.

**Shira:** Right, exactly. That's a great conversation to have one-on-one with your therapist. That's a place where you shouldn't be censoring yourself and you should be able to talk about what you need to talk about. But maybe in a group where there's all different-sized bodies. it's important to consider other people's feelings and just think about that.

**Shohreh:** For the people out there who are struggling with this, do you have any other ideas for how they can honor their own feelings in recovery while still working to try to dismantle fatphobia?

**Shira:** I think it's like being compassionate with yourself. Like, of course you're having fatphobic feelings. This is what you've been taught since the day you were born, that it's not okay to be fat, that fatness is inferior or something to be afraid of. So, it makes sense that you feel that way. And, the same way you learned it, you can unlearn it.

So. I think a lot of times you're like, no, no, no, I'm not fatphobic. Like, I'm not. I only hate myself. And it's like, hmm, I think it's really important to acknowledge that we all experience fatphobia. It's really unrealistic to think that we wouldn't based on the entire world we live in and everything we've been taught. So, I think it's just acknowledging and being open to the idea that there's a lot to work on and unlearn, and then being compassionate with yourself in the process.

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**Shohreh:** Right, every single one of us has that bias, just like we have all kinds of other biases, like racial biases, because that's what we were taught. And I think people sometimes think that admitting that is like admitting that they're a bad person. But the reality is that you're just admitting that you didn't grow up in a world that was focused on justice, and now you have to work to undo that. So I agree, this whole trying to deny that it is happening isn't going to help the situation 'cause that's going to allow you to turn your eyes away from the harm that you're causing.

**Shira:** Right, and it's not helping you. And it's also, the people that say, "I'm not fatphobic, I'm not fatphobic," are the people that I trust the least because it's just not realistic. Yeah.

**Shohreh:** Yeah. And I think this is true for everybody, not just people with eating disorders. Just because you struggle with a mental health disorder doesn't mean that you're immune from accountability for harm that you cause as a result of that disorder, right?

**Shohreh:** Like, I have ADHD for instance, so there are things that I am more prone to doing, like for instance, being super late to things than maybe other people because of my executive dysfunction. But that doesn't mean that that doesn't actually cause harm to people and that I don't need to be accountable, right? If I—thankfully I'm never this late—but if I was like an hour late to something, right? I wouldn't just be like, oh sorry, that was my ADHD, it's not my fault. It's like, well I still caused harm to somebody by messing with their plans and being an hour late, so I need to apologize and I need to have a plan to not do that in the future.

So for all of us, I think recognizing that yes, mental health and mental illness can really affect who you are and the things that you do, but we still have to take accountability and have agency for our actions.



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**Shira:** Right, and it doesn't make you a horrible person, it just makes you human. It's okay that you make mistakes, that's totally okay. I think it's just acknowledging that you are making them and like you said, having a plan to be able to make better choices going forward.

**Shohreh:** Yeah and like, drawing that line between explanation versus excuse where it's like, yeah, this explains the behavior but it doesn't necessarily excuse it.

**Shira:** Yes, exactly. Because I also think even with this whole conversation, thin people make up a very small percentage of people with eating disorders and that's okay, but we are completely erasing and ignoring the experiences that fat people's eating disorders have in all these conversations.

**Shohreh:** Yes, which is a huge problem. And part of this is this image of there's only thin people who have eating disorders because a lot of folks in larger bodies don't even know that what they have, that they could call that an eating disorder. That it's something that they could get treatment for. Or when they go to try to get treatment, they experience that same discrimination and things that you experienced where maybe that just makes them say, "Alright, well I guess I don't need treatment," or, "I'm not going to get treatment." So I think our numbers are very skewed in terms of what we really know about who has eating disorders.

**Shira:** Absolutely. I mean, I think even when I sought help, I started struggling when I was 10, but it was ignored because I didn't look like somebody with an eating disorder. And then I went to therapy because my parents had gotten divorced a couple of years before, so I eventually told the therapist that I was struggling and she kind of like looked me up and down and was like, no, no, no. And it took another two years before I got help, and my

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eating disorder had gotten so severe and entrenched at that point and it never had to get there. So it took four years for me to even get any help for my eating disorder because I didn't look like somebody "with an eating disorder." Which I think about the fact that I'm honestly lucky to be alive. And other people are not as fortunate and that's not okay.

**Shohreh:** Especially for folks who are in larger bodies who have maybe had these doubts about like, is it bad enough, should I get treatment, do you have any thoughts about maybe what some of the signs are for them of like, hey, yes, this is serious and it's time to go get treatment?

**Shira:** Honestly, if you are struggling with food and your body in any way, it doesn't have to be diagnosable. If you're struggling and it's taking over your life and just making things harder for you, you deserve to get help, period. Like I think about the book, Sick Enough by Dr. Gaudiani, and the title is "Sick Enough" because no matter how much somebody struggles, it's such a common experience for people with eating disorders to be like, it's not that bad, or it's not that intense, or I don't actually need help. That's not true. If things are hard right now, you deserve help, period.

**Shohreh:** And I think this idea that if you're struggling with food and your body in general, again, even if it's not diagnosable, that that's something you can get help with. There's all kinds of different clinicians and counselors and coaches who help people to take back that part of their life. And it's just sad because of course we live in a culture that has taught all of us that it's normal to have really fucked up feelings around food and why would you get help for that? This is just what it's like to be, especially women I think get this message too, everybody does, but a lot of women are just like, oh well, just having a fucked up relationship with food, my mom had it, my grandma it, so this is just how it is.

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- Shira:** Right. We've gotten used to it. And then, of course, a lot of people with eating disorders are using those behaviors that we just throw out to people as like a great diet solution, you know?
- Shohreh:** Right, exactly. And then it's socially acceptable to do so because it's like, but everyone is doing keto, so this is fine. I can do it too.
- Shira:** Right. It's totally normal to cut out entire food groups and eat in windows and whatever trash diet comes. It's so funny, well, it's not funny, it's kind of sad and telling how pervasive diet culture is because every time another diet comes out, a lot of us can see clearly how this is just another fad. But in that moment, it's like, this makes so much sense. Like intermittent fasting, I feel like became, no, no, this is the real one. Okay, but keto was also the real one, and so was Optavia, and so was every other diet that came out [laughter] in the last 100 years.
- Shohreh:** And keto was like basically just Atkins, which all the adults were doing when I was a kid. Like, all of these things are cyclical.
- Shira:** Right. Oh, and now we have Noom and CBT and it's psychological and it's, no, it's basically starving yourself in disguise, in psychological disguise. It makes no sense. I mean, it also is just so telling, like, how intense diet culture is that we still kind of, and I still get roped into it sometimes where I'm like, oh, maybe this is what I need to be doing, even when we know all of the things.
- Shohreh:** What was the name of that second account you and Sam created? Because it used to make me laugh [laughter].
- Shira:** Oh my god, we haven't done it in so long. It's Diet Culture Inc. We were just talking about it yesterday, actually. We were not afraid to go anywhere. And this is obviously mostly Sam, but just making fun of every

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single diet and how intense diet culture is. And we did talk yesterday [laughs] about maybe adding some new posts because there's a lot of content considering the pandemic and yeah, this entire year.

**Shohreh:** Yes, I love all the posts that are on that account. I'll definitely link to it in the show notes for those who haven't seen it. Because sometimes I think it just really helps to laugh about this shit. Because it's simultaneously horrifying, but it's also, like you have to laugh. Especially, like, y'all do such a good job of just putting it in very plain terms about how ridiculous it is. And when you read it like that, you're just like, oh yeah, this is, wow. I can't believe we're all falling for this.

**Shira:** Yeah, every time.

**Shohreh:** [Laughs] Yes, please post more! [Laughter]

**Shira:** I'll let Sam know.

**Shohreh:** My personal plea.

So you mentioned that you have a style blog and you do tend to post a lot about fashion and outfits, which of course is where all the fun rainbows and color and everything comes in.

**Shira:** Yes.

**Shohreh:** So, I'm curious, as your own body has changed in recovery, how has that altered the way you personally feel about fashion and how you feel toward the fashion industry?

**Shira:** This is like a tricky one for me. I think because when I was a kid and a teenager, I was in a larger body and I had no access to anything cute and I had to dress like I was 70 when I was 14 and 15 and 16, which was a

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terrible feeling. Not that fashion is the most important thing, but everyone else is able to dress in way that reflects who they are and I never had that opportunity.

And so, I was dressing in a way that I just did not feel good about it and it added like an extra layer of shame. And not only that, but going into a clothing store and seeing nothing for you, it just, you just have this feeling of like, what's wrong with me? What's wrong with my body? I'm broken, I'm wrong, I'm bad. It's so much more. It's just another place where you don't have access.

Then I started struggling with anorexia for the second half of my eating disorder and I lost weight, and all of a sudden, I had access to all these clothes and I became completely obsessed with fashion because I never had the opportunity before to have that. And then I started to gain weight because that's where my body is when I eat food. And this time there were a few more options for fashion, like it has gotten better in the last few years, but I also want to be clear that it's nowhere at all where it needs to be. Like, I am someone that in my recovery I'm on the small fat spectrum and so that gives me a lot of privilege, and with all that being said, I can walk down the street of a place with a lot of stores and maybe find my size in one out of, I don't know, 20 or 30? Which is still really upsetting and not okay. And a lot of the stores that do make my size, it's only online. And I think that's just another place of like, well, you shouldn't be seen, right? You need to hide yourself. And fat people, you can have clothes, but only online when people in smaller bodies don't have that experience.

So, with my blog, I feel like obviously I can always do better, but it's a place where I don't want anyone to ever have the same feeling that I felt of not being okay, or your body is wrong, or your body is bad. So it's really

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important to me to make my blog as inclusive as possible, regardless of where I am in recovery, regardless of what size I am at that point because my weight has fluctuated and does fluctuate in my recovery. But I think just inclusive fashion's really important to me. And it's definitely harder the larger I get to experience not having access to what I really want to have access to.

**Shohreh:** And I'm sure there's been so much grief with that because this was a part of your life that was really important to you, you know, to be able to have these outfits and this fashion and build a following around this idea, and then to literally, just because your body is changing, to have so many of those options taken from you. I mean, it just really puts a spotlight on how fucked up that is that we really clothe a minority of people in this country.

**Shira:** Yeah.

**Shohreh:** And the majority of people have far, far less options. And you're even in New York. There's so much fashion and clothing stores in New York. So if you can walk up a whole street of that in New York and you can barely find anything, like, I'm thinking of people who live in rural areas or other places that wouldn't have anywhere near as many options and they're going to be even more limited.

**Shira:** Right. And I'm also on a much smaller spectrum of fatness, and so, someone that's mid or super fat, they have like 10 stores total in the entire world. Like, that's not okay at all.

I'm definitely still in that grieving process. This year I got rid of nine huge garbage bags of clothes, like really closing the door to that eating disorder and being like, that's not an option. It's not an option to go back to restricting. It has been really scary and really hard, but also really

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important. And I probably still can throw out even more clothes. Every so often I just keep going through my wardrobe.

I'm definitely still in the process of grieving. It's really hard to have a changing body, especially in a world that, you know, when someone's in a smaller body and is in recovery, everyone's like, oh my god, that's amazing, congratulations, you're doing such a good job, keep it up. And then I'm trying to recover and then people start looking at you and are like, are you sure you're not swinging the other way? And like, maybe you're doing things wrong and maybe you're eating too much, and there's no such thing as congratulations and praise. It's like, I have to recover in a world that's telling me my body is wrong for existing, which adds a whole other layer of pain and grief.

**Shohreh:** Yeah. Well, I did see that there was a plan to set some things on fire, which I wholeheartedly approve of.

**Shira:** Yes. I have a bag waiting for that. wW're gonna light some clothes on fire. And just to be clear, they're not clothes that can be donated, obviously, because I wouldn't just do that. But these are like, some bras and some jeans that one of them has a hole in it, so it's okay. But they don't fit me, they're too small, and I'm going to light them the fuck on fire.

**Shohreh:** I think it's good to have that like, symbolic catharsis moment with some of this stuff.

**Shira:** Yes [laughter], I agree.

**Shohreh:** As the scale is becoming less of a thing that people are into, right—I think there's been a lot more speaking out against the scale—I have still seen people saying things like, oh, well, I don't use the scale anymore, but I use this pair of pants, or I use this shirt to figure out that I'm okay or whatever.

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That just makes me sad that people have these clothes in their closet that they're using to judge themselves all the time.

**Shira:** It's just another form of body checking. If it's not your weight, the pair of jeans are doing the exact same thing. And it's like, whether or not you fit in those jeans, you're still okay and you're still worthy.

**Shohreh:** Yeah, and when I was younger I remember doing this too, like I had a couple of dresses that I would just like, oh well, those will be the dresses when I'm thin enough to wear them. And it's like, one, I could have just worn them, right, there's no thin enough, but it just was this thing that, it haunted me. And that's something I talk with clients about 'cause a lot of them will admit, they're like, oh yeah, I don't know, I'm afraid to let go.

And there's a lot of valid reasons for that, right? There's cost associated with clothing, and there can be memories of certain items of clothing, and then I think there's this piece where a lot of people as their bodies change, we hold onto hope that well, maybe they'll go back and we want those to still be waiting for us. So I think it's this tough balance for people of like, when do you let go?

**Shira:** Yeah, I think it's so hard also because I never want to push clients to get rid of things before they're ready, whether it's a scale or it's clothing. And at the same time, I really do feel like it does leave the door open to the eating disorder, open to going back to dieting in some way. And when my clients are ready, I really encourage them to get rid of those pieces because they really are not serving us in any way.

**Shohreh:** Well, and I think there can be an interim too, right? Like, I have, in the past, encouraged my clients to be like, alright, well if you're not ready to get rid of it yet, let's not have it in your closet staring at you. We can box it up and



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put it away and you know that it's there and safe if you need it, but it's not there every day to remind you you can't wear it.

**Shira:** I literally just did that with a client last week where we got rid of the stuff from her immediate closet, put it in garbage bags, and now it's in her storage. And when she's ready to get rid of it we will, but right now it's at least not in her face every single day. So yeah, that's a good point.

**Shohreh:** Yeah, one of my friends is like a dress collector, and so she loves to have all these different dresses from different collections and things like that. So one of the things she and I talked about once when her body was changing was, well, is there another way you can use those dresses to honor them, right? Like, whether that means giving them to somebody else who can enjoy it, or putting it on a dress form, or using the fabric. I think there are ways we can honor clothes that we loved without keeping them in the closet waiting to wear them again.

**Shira:** Yeah, I love that. I remember I gave my sister some of my clothes and it's kind of nice to see her being able to enjoy the things that I loved. So just finding a new way to use them.

**Shohreh:** So, I really enjoyed the Donut a Day Challenge that you did for yourself for Hanukkah as a way of reclaiming the Jewish holidays that your eating disorder stole from you. What made you really want to go for that this year?

**Shira:** Thank you. I think when I just look back at the last 22 years of my life and how every decision that I made was an eating disorder decision and it really took me away from being in the moment, being able to engage in holidays, being able to engage in any present moment, I don't want my recovery to be this half-assed, quasi recovery where I'm recovered just

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enough. Because just enough is not enough. Just enough still keeps you stuck in the eating disorder's grasp, still keeps you from being flexible. And I want to be fully free.

So, it's funny because a couple of people were like, why would you eat a donut a day if you don't even want it? And it's like, I need to figure out if I don't want it or if my eating disorder doesn't want it before I even make decisions. And plus, like the other piece is, I think about how literally my entire life of not being able to eat a single donut on Hanukkah. Like, being terrified for weeks up leading to it and that's not what I want. That's not my values, it's not who I am. I don't want a donut to have any power over me. And so, this is kind of a way of reclaiming my voice. And it's so much more than the donut; it's just really about wanting to be fully free.

**Shohreh:**

And I feel like there's this really beautiful element of experimentation in that, right? Like you said, you're still figuring things out of what's the ED voice and what's your voice, and so, this is a way of doing that and then afterwards being able to assess like, okay, how did I feel about that? How did it go? I think a lot of times people tend to be really rigid about, well, it has to be this way and you have to do this thing. And I think being able to open ourselves to that exploration is where we can find out a lot of amazing information about ourselves and what we want.

**Shira:**

Exactly. Because I've gotten to a really solid place in my recovery, and with that, I'm still dealing with erasing, like...well not erasing because this is my journey, but of 22 years of a pretty severe eating disorder. So there's of course going to be little ways that kind of creep up in you that you don't even notice. I have to create a whole lot of new neural pathways, and this is just one way that I thought would be a fun and kind of cool and empowering way to do it.

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**Shohreh:** There's so much that gets wrapped up in food culturally as well. So, like, I'm Iranian. In our culture, there's very much this food as love aspect of the culture where first of all, Iranians will have these parties where they serve like a whole table full of what would be hors d'oeuvres, but you would think it was dinner, and then the actual dinner comes at 9:00 or 10:00pm. There was always the, you need to eat more, right? And here's the extra plate because this concept of this is the host and this is how we show love.

And so, I think when we add these cultural elements into food too, that's when it gets even trickier because you're just trying to navigate that piece, which is often very different from other cultures, you know, more common white cultures in the U.S. And then doing what's best for you while also being like, but I don't want to offend anybody. I think it just gets so tricky.

**Shira:** It really does. We have like Shabbat dinners, it kind of reminds me, where we have three or four courses and it's like hours long, and when you have somebody with an eating disorder trying to navigate that every single weekend, it can feel pretty intense and really, really hard. I think it's also just like an experience of everyone's like laughing and talking around you and then of course making their diet talk, like, I should be good today, or I should be better, all of the conversation in that meal. And you're sitting there with your eating disorder voice inside your head, like trying to fight it for hours like every single weekend. It's a lot.

**Shohreh:** Yeah. Well, and it's that double standard again. We have this with Iranians too where it's like, their expectation is you eat more, but while everyone's eating, everyone's lamenting that they're eating and being like, oh, I need to lose weight. And it's like, why are we doing this? This isn't fun for anybody.

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**Shira:** I think there's also like, some people it's okay for them to eat more, and then for some people, depending on their body size, we kind of start looking at them and do you really want that dessert? So I feel like the standards are different depending on your size.

**Shohreh:** That's very true too. For folks who are maybe in the depths of their eating disorder still, or even who are further along in recovery but still have those bad days, do you have any advice or anything that's helped you for continuing to put one foot in front of the other in your recovery?

**Shira:** For me, the biggest thing is I noticed that my go-to is to isolate and withdraw when I'm struggling and kind of like really afraid of having needs. And when you're in your eating disorder you're used to just taking care of yourself and shutting down and repressing and suppressing all of your needs. And so for me, it was really, really important to continue to seek out connection and reach out to my friends when I'm struggling, acknowledge and let myself have my needs, and just really seek out community of people that I really feel safe with in my body. That has been one of the most healing and important things for me.

And also, like, I think sometimes when it's really, really hard to be in my body, in my changing body, it's really helpful to think about the friends that I love more than anything in the world who I would never want them to change a thing about their bodies. And seeing how they're living full, happy, meaningful lives and how that's not out of the realm of possibility for me either.

**Shohreh:** Yeah, I like that. Having that possibility model in front of you with the people you love. And I think also knowing, something that's been important for me and that I talk to clients a lot about is that the people who

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really love us in our lives, our bodies aren't the thing that they love about us, right?

**Shira:** Not at all.

**Shohreh:** Like if we die, they're not gonna be at our funeral giving a eulogy about, ah well, Shira's body, you know, that was the thing that really made me want to be her friend.

**Shira:** Right.

**Shohreh:** It's like, no, they see the real inner us. And so, when we have that desire to turn inward and get away from people, it's like we really have to push back against that because it's being around those people who truly see us that can be so affirming and help us out.

**Shira:** Exactly. Being seen is like the most important and most powerful thing, I think.

**Shohreh:** Well, thank you so much for being here, Shira. Where can people find you and support the work you're doing in the world?

**Shira:** Yeah, so if you want to hear more about my therapy practice, you can find that on [www.shirarosenbluthlcsw.com](http://www.shirarosenbluthlcsw.com), and then for all the fashion and social media piece, you can find me @theshirarose on Instagram, theshirarose.com, everything just @theshirarose. [Laughter]

**Shohreh:** Perfect. All of that will go into the show notes so everybody can access it easily, and thank you again for taking time out of your busy schedule to be here today.

**Shira:** Of course, my pleasure.

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**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](https://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](https://shohrehdavoodi.com). Hope to see you for the next episode.