



INSTITUTE FOR THE
PSYCHOLOGY *of* **EATING**
The World's Leading School in Nutritional Psychology

The Art and Science of Food and Body Coaching Summit Interview
With Sarah Lucille and Meghan O'Hara

Sarah Lucille- Hi everyone, it's Sarah Lucille here, Director of Student Services here at the Institute for the Psychology of Eating, and we are in the Art and Science of Food and Body Coaching Virtual Summit, and I am joined today by someone who's actually a part of our community, has a very strong awareness of what we do here at the Institute, and brings in her own work as well. Meghan, thank you so much for being here with us. We're really grateful that you took the time out of your day to do this, and it would be great to hear from you a little bit about what you do in the health and wellness world, and how you got into this work.

Meghan O'Hara- Yeah, absolutely, I'm grateful to be here and to be a part of the community here. To give you a little bit of my background, I'm also a registered dietitian, and wanna say that's been 12 years since I've been a registered dietitian, and I found very quickly that it felt a little bit unsatisfactory to just look at the plain and simple diet of this is what you need to eat for every medical issue under the sun, and after I'd been training in hospitals, and clinics, and lots of community care centers, I could feel that there was a part missing. Not long after I got my RD, I went to the Institute for Integrated Nutrition in New York City, and I could feel there was this other piece, this bigger picture happening, that I could tap into things like primary food, which looks at not just what's on our plate but looks at what are the other things that nourish and feed us, and then I've been so grateful to go through the Institute of Psychology of Eating to be able to get that coaching piece, which I feel like has really transformed my practice. So, that's been about two years since I've completed that certification program, and I can feel how that has really supplemented and helped my ability to talk about so many of the other factors besides food that really affect what is on an individual's plate. But of course, like everyone, they say you teach what you need to learn, and that has certainly been my journey. I would say, you know, I'm grateful now that I have a very loving and nurturing relationship with my body that feels really good. I have, for the most part, an abundance of energy. I must put a little caveat, I'm actually 15 weeks pregnant right now so sometimes not so much energy in the moment, but, you know, before that was feeling a good amount of energy and a pretty good mindset of positivity. And really, the piece that I think the Institute for the Psychology of Eating gave to me is starting to notice just the deeper messages of what's coming through the body, this intuitive wisdom, this body wisdom piece. And also I'm really grateful to say now that I have a strong digestion and a pain-free gut, which for most of my life was not the case. I'd say it was about nine years old that I started this struggle with food, and my sort of long story, but I'll try and make it brief. My very well-intending mother was trying to support me at nine to address that I was getting some pre-pubescent weight gain as many of us do, we tend to get a little bigger and then we lean out. And as I learned later in life, fat is actually the backbone of hormones, so it makes perfect sense why so many individuals gain some weight and then they grow. Anyhow, so there's this moment that I've been able to come back to where I was nine years old and in a dressing room with my

mom, I think we were in J.C. Penney's, and we were searching for back to school outfits for picture day. And I was getting changed and trying on all these different outfits, and my mom like stopped in the middle and said, "Meghan, you're gaining weight. "I think it's time that we start "cutting out all your junk food." And of course, she was meaning to support me in any way that she knew how, but I could really feel the sense of shame, like oh, oh, my body's not okay with my mom, and this sort of wanting to melt, to no longer just be seen. And there was one other comment that I really remember that of course could've meant a lot of different things, but to a nine year old's mind and psyche we interpret things much differently. I remember one day coming out of dance class, I was a ballerina back in the day, and my mom's a yoga instructor and all sorts of things, and I was walking out and she stopped me and she looked down at my belly and she was like, "You really need to suck your stomach in public." And she very well might have meant, like, posture, and you know, pull your shoulders back, but what I heard at that age was just like, there's something wrong with my stomach, I need to suck it in, I need to make sure that I take up as little space as possible, you know, that my gut's not the right shape, and just started cultivating all these beliefs around what was acceptable in body shape and body form. Not long after, maybe two, three years later, I started developing this really intense gut pain. Had no idea or thought at the time that it could be any way related, but I started to get pretty intense gut pain and just like chronic bloating, low energy, and looking back I would say a pretty low grade depression, but you know, when you're 12 years old that's just life, I had no other frame of reference.

Sarah Lucille- Yeah.

Meghan O'Hara- And not too long after, I was then diagnosed with celiac disease, and it's an auto-immune reaction where the lining of the gut actually breaks itself down. So it was at the time a really grateful diagnosis of like, thank you, I'll finally start feeling better. And interestingly enough, the next decade after the celiac diagnosis where I went gluten free, I also was developing all these other food allergies, and went to doctors to find out I had parasites, and candida, and small intestinal bacterial overgrowth, and more food allergies, so there was just like, wait a minute. Like all this physical sort of like tornado, of I thought I'd find one answer, and then there'd be some more pain, some more bloating, some more intense, you know, like gut issues, and I'm like, when am I gonna get to the bottom of this? And then finally there was a turning point, and one day I was in an emotional processing workshop, and we had an opportunity to look at our relationship with our mother, and I was sitting on the carpet of this big home in the foothills of the Sierras in California here, and I was doing this self inquiry exercise, when all of a sudden I had this flood of awareness and tears, and I realized that I had been carrying so much hate towards my body and towards my gut, and I really had hated my belly, and for a long time I didn't even realize it, I didn't know it, it was so unconscious and so normal that it was just the way that I knew to be. And I got to see at that instance that I was really at war with my body, and for so many years, you know, I could see sort of the symbology in the physical realm that this auto-immune disease had taken over the body fighting itself, literally killing itself, and I really decided in that moment that it's time to connect with my gut and start to nurture it, and to really own that this gut was mine, this body was mine, and I can learn and

honor what's happening. Beyond a medical model perspective, beyond just focusing on the physical food, and I can't tell you how many cleanses and food elimination diets I had gone through, it just hit me that it wasn't about the physical, this was not something that was gonna be shifted by another diet or another cleanse. So--

Sarah Lucille- Wow.

Meghan O'Hara- Yeah, it was a big moment, and I'm so grateful for that experience 'cause I got to see that, you know, the inside of my psyche was really the key to what was happening in my body. I got to see almost like the operating system of my own limiting beliefs, and that I was trying to stay small, like physically, energetically constrained, and tiny, and depressed and small. You think about energetically when we get small we, you know, really get constricted. So I got to release a lot of these memories and my symptoms really started to disappear. I could feel what was happening in my body, and I had an amazing support team of different healers and therapists to help me start to shift my relationship with my body. And meanwhile, I was a practicing dietitian at this point, and I started to see such clear parallels with individuals whom I was coaching and educating with their weight loss struggles, that if we just looked at nutrition education intervention and just looked at diet, and, you know, they could go through fill in the blank any type of diet for a certain period of time they would shift their habits, they would lose weight, but inevitably they would gain it back. When they weren't getting the deeper messages of what weight was trying to show them in the same way that I just hadn't gotten the deeper message of what my body was trying to show me, that it wasn't necessarily about the physical, that my relationship with my body was really an issue. So anyhow, over these past, you know, maybe six years or so, I have developed a weight loss system called Body, Mind, and Spirit Weight Loss and get to address these nutrition education components, but also go into any other limiting belief or messages, some of those deeper pieces that might also be there for us. So, I'd say that's my brief history of where I'm at today.

Sarah Lucille- Yeah, it's a journey. That's an amazing story, for one, and to see, it's like a full on picture of the incredible insights that eating psychology can provide in mind, body nutrition, like saying, you know, you have this diagnosis, and I was there with very severe respiratory conditions, and I remember that relationship with the diagnosis, like, well this is just what it's going to be. And then you just keep getting other things and you , like, okay, something more has to be happening, and I love the full on picture of connecting that moment, that memory with your mom and her way of speaking about the body and about your body, whatever the intention was, and that's just the reality of adults being human. But seeing that, it's interesting that that's where you developed those symptoms was in the belly.

Meghan O'Hara- Yeah.

Sarah Lucille- When you discovered that, and then when you as a dietitian started bringing in more of that eating psychology perspective, what was the response from your clients to that, especially if they had thought they were mostly gonna focus on food?

Meghan O'Hara- Yeah, you know, I'd say most people love to get to see the bigger picture and the connections, and I have a story of a client that really stands out. There was a man I was working with a few years ago who was in his 50s, has six kids, came to me, and I still have a lot of medical doctors that refer patients to me, and oftentimes, you know, especially from a medical doctor's office it's pretty westernized healthcare, and we don't, at least some of the doctors that I work with, don't necessarily go deep into any emotional or psychological pieces. So in some ways I think it's surprising when people show up in my office and I start digging a little deeper, and they're like, "Oh, I thought you were just gonna give me a diet and be on my way." And I could say that there's sort of been my own internal struggle of how to bridge that gap, that yes, we're gonna talk about nutrition, we're gonna talk about education, but we've gotta dig deep and see how has this weight been serving? So anyhow. This man that I was working with was in his 50s, probably 55 or so, has six kids, he was a factory worker, very hard worker, very dedicated to his family, and he came in at about 280 some pounds and said, like, with a very sort of masculine, like, "Just give me the diet and I can do it. I can do anything I put my mind to." And he was very endearing, and I was like, all right, well if you're really ready to just jump into, you know, I did a version of an anti-inflammatory sort of food framework with him, and he's like, "I'm so ready." And so I started him on that program, and he came back a month later and was like, "Well, I've lost 10 pounds, and I'm really starting to notice," and this is where we got to delve in just a little bit deeper, like, "I'm really starting to notice how this affecting other areas of my life." So this is where I get to ask some more questions of like, "Well, what are you noticing?" And pull out some of these pieces, and some of the pieces that I have so enjoyed, and other people, clients have enjoyed as well, is getting to see how we use food and how we use our body to sort of meet other needs, emotional needs, psychological needs, and one of the biggest takeaways this client had, we worked together for six months, but he talked about how his relationship with his wife significantly changed when he noticed that food wasn't satiating this relaxation response in his body. That he was noticing that, like, normally he would eat so much that his belly would sort of stretch out and he'd be like, "Ah, I'm done my day, I can relax now." And when he was eating just sort of a normal amount of food it wasn't hitting that super full button, and it wasn't foods that were full of sugar and other things that sort of numb the body. Anyhow, so he's noticing to me, he's like, "Well, there's one thing that I noticed is that I really wanna hold my wife, like I wanna hug her. And she's very pleasantly surprised, we've been married 20 years, but I didn't expect that this would be tied to food." And we talked about how, yeah, what happens when some of these other needs, these emotional needs for connection and closeness, that they're not masked by food. He's like, "Ah, I never would've thought that." That was one of his really big takeaways. There was a few other ones around just like how else he can, and over the next six months he really did find other ways to nourish himself, and find other ways to relax in his life, and he ended up losing, which is not necessarily a typical thing, but he ended up losing 50 pounds in that six months and was just really dedicated because he embraced this new relationship with food and his body. Most of my clients I would say really enjoy being able to see the big picture and being able to get the deeper messages so they don't go right back to their old habits when we might finish up--

Sarah Lucille- Yeah.

Meghan O'Hara- [Meghan] Together.

- Yeah, that's, man, like most if I were to think back 10 years ago when I didn't know anything about incorporating different fields like dietetics with eating psychology, that that was, you know, if I went to a dietitian and I was having these things come up like your client was, I would not have felt safe to go tell my dietitian about it, because, yeah, like the fear of being laughed at or just, like, sounds like something you should talk to your therapist about, I don't know. So the fact that you have that training and background is such a gift to your clients, because I also have seen, and I'm sure you have as well, that kind of revolving door effect that happens with nutritionists and dietitians who see the client having a period of success, and then they fall back into whatever was going on before, and it sounds like because you were able to hold space for his realization and his insight it's almost preventative of going back into that revolving door effect, of connecting that, like this is what was happening when you sought out sugary foods, when you sought to feed yourself 'til you could barely move, and now it's spilling into your relationship and resulting in a more connected relationship.

Meghan O'Hara- Mhm.

Sarah Lucille- That's amazing, and I imagine people don't have that in mind when they come in the door. When you start working with a client at this point in your career, now that you have these different trainings under your belt what are the main concerns, what are they describing that they wanna change, and what have they been trying before they meet you?

Meghan O'Hara- Yeah. So I'd say, pretty much everybody that I work with, maybe a few exceptions, have weight loss as one of their main concerns. Some individuals will say that they also have food allergies similar to my own journey, or celiac, I work with quite a few individuals that also have celiac. I'm really impressed with the level of self-awareness that oftentimes people come to me with now, that sometimes people will come in and say, "Look, I really wanna lose weight, but I'm not interested in doing another fad diet, and I'm not interested in doing some, you know, really restrictive crash, sort of framework that I know isn't sustainable." And oftentimes at this stage people will also tell me, this wasn't always the case, but this is where I'm at right now, where some individuals will say, "You know, I wanna lose weight, but more importantly I wanna feel good in my body. I wanna have the confidence to enjoy my life and not feel ashamed and wanna hide." So I'm noticing more and more clients wanting to come to me for some of the, like, psychological and mental reasons that certainly I've been through in my own journey, that I wanna feel good in my skin, I wanna feel sort of like liberated and free in my experience, and my current group program, I work with eight women who, it's one of the, I'd say, weight loss and healthy relationship with body and food are all sort of the top priorities, and some individuals will find they lose weight pretty quickly, other individuals we're working more through why is it, like, what are the messages of this extra weight, how has it been serving you? And that I'll find that weight doesn't really shift until we get those deeper messages. The

journeys look a little different.

Sarah Lucille- Yeah. That self-awareness people have, I've talked to some of our new coaches and I'll mentor a lot of our new coaches through the first year of working with people, because there's a lot, like there's the training and then there's the implementation part, and they're often receiving messages especially from marketers that if they don't promise weight loss they'll never get a client, because all anyone wants is weight loss, and many of 'em don't actually even wanna touch weight. They want a weight neutral approach and want to focus on what you were saying, around more of that relationship to body. I mean, if you were to never have to, like if someone was not someone who necessarily was going to lose weight, especially, Marc talks about your five pound clients, the ones who are like, "I need to lose five pounds. It has to be five pounds, it cannot be anything but five pounds." And then that's often the biggest challenge, because as a practitioner you know there's more to the story than the five pounds. Do you have, through your experience, different ways that you've learned to have that conversation with someone when you notice that the weight probably isn't going to shift, or probably isn't meant to shift? Is there ever resistance, or are people at that point pretty open to the other experiences that they're starting to have?

Meghan O'Hara- That's a good question. Hmm, how do I approach that? Honestly I feel like I look for the open door within what they're sharing or saying and start to sort of question and push back in some gentle ways. So, one of the tools, I'd say lot of just, I'll ask self inquiry questions, and at the start of every session I ask around, "What's one celebration that you can come to me with?" Sometimes people's celebrations, most of the time, are not related to their weight loss, you know, that they're related to, "I'm really proud of myself because I am going for a walk every day," or, "I've been meditating," or, "I'm remembering to take my deep breaths before eating." And one of the tools that I will guide them as well after that is looking at those celebrations and really asking and questioning, and I know Marc talks about this as well, but what does it feel like, like what do you think you're gonna get out of losing those last five pounds, or what will shift for you, what would be the best part of losing that five pounds, and opening that conversation and asking, "So is there any reason you can't start that now?" Or like, "What's holding you back from experiencing that now?" And oftentimes it is around, their answer might be something around "I would just feel so much better about myself," or, "I'd let myself go swimming," or, "I would," you know, fill in the blank, around giving themselves the freedom to enjoy their body. So we'll talk about, well what's holding you back from that? And really dig more into the self-awareness pieces there.

Sarah Lucille- Mhm. I like that. I love the celebration focus, too, and encouraging your clients to have a celebration to begin with. I used to work with a coach, she would always start the call with, "What are you celebrating right now?" And there were times when I was like, "Ah, dang it, like, nothing." But I love that, because the brain starts to make new connections, and the rephrasing, we were talking about, you know, what can change when, I had to ask this question, when sometimes you'll ask a client, you know, "What is it about losing weight that's really important to you?" And I learned over time I was getting answers that they felt I wanted to hear,

that were more things that would be approved of, like, "Well I don't want my body to hurt." So then I would ask, "If your body didn't hurt "and you still had the weight you have now, would you still be wanting to lose weight?" And then what's driving the desire to lose weight, given that the pain's not a factor? And that's where you get into some vulnerable places where people are afraid to say what they really want, and I'm curious if that comes up with you, and how, especially if you're meeting a new client and really encouraging them to be as truthful as possible, even if it's uncomfortable, how do you create that space for them and kind of help them come into the session knowing it's a safe space to share at that level with you?

Meghan O'Hara- Yeah, that's a great question. I can say that I've definitely had experiences like that, and, whew, it feels like it is this specific skillset of partially just being present and can feel what's happening in them and learning ways to speak directly and very gently about it, but one of the tools that I bring in sometimes is just deep breaths, and I'll ask in the moment, "Okay, are you willing to take a deep breath "into your body right now?" We'll take a deep breath into the body, and I'll ask, "What are you noticing, what are you feeling in your body right now?" And sometimes we can work with sensations directly, like they might be noticing a clenching in their belly or they might be noticing some sensations in their throat or whatever else, and getting out of the mental mind and just tap into the body, what's really happening right now, can sometimes bring some insights. Sometimes there's a very direct correlation, other times we have to go a little bit further down the rabbit hole. One of the tools that I've learned and been using and I find really helpful, and I can certainly relate to this myself, but when we're trying to access these sort of deeper truths that we hold, and some places that, my experience is most times people don't know that like, they don't know what they don't know. When it's unconscious, they don't realize they're just saying things to please me, it's not a purposeful, like, I desire to manipulate you at all. It's just, this is how I feel safe in the world, and this is so vulnerable, I don't know how to access this oftentimes in myself. So, trying to be really gentle and asking if they're willing to slow down and take a breath and feel what's happening in their body. One of the other tools I've been trained in and learning is internal family systems. What I found to be really helpful about that is it's another way to just access what's happening in the body without needing to make it a mental concept, and oftentimes they'll feel something in their body and it can be a very sweet and gentle approach that I'll ask "Well, if you're willing to play with me here for a moment, let's ask if there's a constriction in the stomach, let's breathe into that together, let's ask, does that constriction, does that part need anything? Can we offer, is there anything we could do to help that part relax?" And I'll tell them that this is a place where it all goes, you can't have a wrong answer, and sort of guide them gently through. It could be anything, it could be a glass of water, it could be a blankie. You might notice a memory comes up, and just create this very soft and compassionate and safe container to let it unfold, and to let them know that they are absolutely in charge if there's some resistance or some fear, like, "I don't really wanna go here." Just let them know, "You don't have to go here, this is just an invitation if you feel safe." Or if it feels compelling, or whatever wording I can tell might resonate with them. But most of the time, I'd say like 95% of the time, after the stage is set and they're starting to feel into their body and they're like, "Oh yeah, there's a lot here," and they'll be willing.

Sarah Lucille- Awesome, I love that. That's like a more somatic approach, too. Yeah, you don't get it as much in nutrition spaces, which I think is such a gift that you really notice that, and bring people into their bodies, considering you're helping them nourish their body, and how do we know if we're nourished without noticing the body?

Meghan O'Hara- Totally, if we can't feel our hunger and fullness how are we ever gonna know?

Sarah Lucille- Right? What have been some of the challenges you've faced as a practitioner, how did you push through those challenges, and kind of imagine you're talking to someone who's at the beginning of their career as a coach and there's no way to completely avoid the challenges, but what would you say to them as they confront the things that will come up for them?

Meghan O'Hara- Yeah, hmm. I feel like most of my challenges have been sort of internal challenges, that part of my internal world that's like I don't know if I can do this, or I feel really afraid. Just to speak to a few that I feel like have been present particularly lately in my journey is charging more money, and what I would say is just claiming my value and my worth. Of course there are moments, just big picture here for a second, of course there's moments where I might feel like I'm not really sure what to do with this client, but most of all I feel my internal doubt be the one that I struggle with the most. So, I'd say for the claiming my value and my worth piece what's helped a lot is actually having other people to talk to about it, and not, you know, doesn't need to be anybody by any means professional, but talking to other colleagues, that has been super helpful, that I can have a conversation about, like, very honest conversation, well what do you charge, and feeling in my body again this sort of somatic experience of like, what do I feel comfortable charging? And allow myself to sort of step up to that rate that feels, like, that feels true, it feels like I do feel worth this amount of money, and I deserve a comfortable living, and, you know, I also am providing a service that's transforming people's lives. That's, it sounds really silly, but I think that's been the hardest part of my journey is sometimes just owning the successes that my clients are having, and really saying that I had a part in this, and not in an egotistical sort of way but in a way that would allow me to help more people. Whether that's sharing those stories with marketing or advertising, or whatever else, just letting myself own that, like yeah, that's my gift, that's my value. I'll have some clear awarenesses at moments where I'll meet with a client and, you know, big light bulbs go off and they're like, "Oh my gosh," I don't know, what's a typical? Some of the things people might say is, "I've noticed my joint pain has gone away and I have so much more energy, and I'm sleeping better." And maybe they lost a few pounds, and the piece that goes off in my head is like, if there was any pill that someone could pay for that would let them do all of these things, decrease joint pain, sleep better, and lose weight, how much money would someone pay for this pill to do this? And, anyhow, I have that thought sometimes, like why is it so scary for me to ask for what feels like a good rate, when this is life transforming work?

Sarah Lucille- Yeah. That's expressing a struggle that so many people go through, especially in this field of work, and I think, I love that you named it, because a lot of people will avoid naming

it, too. And actually saying, like, I wanna charge more money. The reality, really challenging a lot of those perceptions that if I'm driven to help people who am I to, you know, charge a higher rate? Until you as the coach are burning out, you're feeling resentment brewing and you don't know where all this resentment's coming from, you're not as excited about your sessions as you used to be, and one of, I actually reached out to our public community in one of our free Facebook groups and said, "If you could ask one of our certified coaches, who've been doing this work for years, any questions, what would you wanna know?" And people wanted to know what you do as a coach and practitioner to take care of yourself, especially around mindset, but also your own self care, and how did you learn how to structure your business in a way that allows for that self care and not burn out.

Meghan O'Hara- That is a very good question. I do feel like it's an ever-evolving process. But, I feel like that financial piece is a big part of it for exactly what you spoke of. I was like, I feel like I'm putting so much time, and energy, and love, and care, and concern into my clients, and if I don't feel like I'm being compensated, or if I still can't pay my bills, that's a really hard, you know, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, that's a really hard place to be. I'm not taking care of myself if I'm not charging enough. Anyhow, that aside. Hmm. I have come up with a structure for my business that is interesting, 'cause in some ways it sort of countered what advice I was given, but what I found to be true for me is that I love to go deep and get deeper messages and be able to hold space for people to really allow things to come up, and if I am having a 30 minute, or I've even found in my practice a 60 minute session, it doesn't necessarily allow for the questions about the food piece and the deeper awarenesses to emerge, so one of the things that I've done that has served me really well has been to create the framework for all of my sessions to be 90 minutes, and I have not found any issue with filling that 90 minutes with support, and there's plenty of things we can talk about. So anyhow, I've found that has been actually a really helpful way to structure my business, that there's 90 minute sessions, and of course when they're longer sessions we can charge what a longer session would be worth. And it's, like it's a structure that I can see four or five clients or patients a day and know that that is my capacity, and structuring time blocks has also been a really helpful way for me. I rent an office space and I see clients Tuesdays and Thursdays, and I do also do some virtual coaching, so maybe on a Wednesday I'll do virtual coaching. But for the most part that's super, it's been super helpful to say Tuesdays and Thursdays and occasionally Wednesday afternoons I will be with clients and then the rest of the time I get to work, there's a difference between working in your business and working on your business, so like in business with my clients, as opposed to needing to do all of the other things. So, that boundary and structure piece I've found to be really, really helpful, that I've got two, basically two and a half days that I'll see clients, and then outside of that I have time to do other things, and what those other self care things for me look like, movement is a really important piece for me, that I've got to find some time for physical activity, and to be totally honest and transparent, I don't do super great with schedules. I'm a very spontaneous, like I create the time and then I choose what I wanna fill it with in the moment.

Sarah Lucille- Yeah.

Meghan O'Hara- So, that piece of just having that time for me has been really helpful, that I structure my clients enough that I have, and there was a time that I didn't, this was a hard learned lesson that if I'm seeing clients or taking clients any day of the week, that I'm so scattered, and it's hard to find time to do other things.

Sarah Lucille- Yes. That's such a great lesson. I like the, you have to figure it out, so there is periods of discomfort because you're figuring it out, and so it's not a like, it's not that you are doing it wrong, it's you're still finding, it's almost like what you do with clients with food.

Meghan O'Hara- Totally.

Sarah Lucille- It's not you don't have the right diet, you're just learning what your body responds to. And business-wise, oh my goodness. And it changes, that's the part that'll throw you off sometimes. Like, this flow that used to work for me, my body is in total resistance to. I talked to someone who would also, she would schedule based on this 28 day cycle knowing that one week of the month she was not at her best, so she was like, "That's not a client week," and just the permission to do that, because I think there's this perception that you have to see clients every single day in order to make it work, and so your whole day is gonna be back to back sessions if you wanna be successful

Meghan O'Hara- Totally, yeah. Yeah, I can relate to that belief initially that I have to be available all the time, and it's interesting how that has evolved, 'cause yeah, it's just not sustainable, that's not gonna work. And we learn those things, at least I did, the hard way. This isn't gonna work.

Sarah Lucille- Yes. How do things look between sessions, are clients able to reach out to you between sessions, and how did you figure out your boundaries around that?

Meghan O'Hara- Yeah. Well, right now this has been a continually evolving process but the model that I use right now is that we have one 90 minute session, and then two weeks later we have a check-in, just a phone call for 30 minutes, to ask, "how is this going, are you having any challenges?" It's a really great sort of accountability point where it's like a touch in of, like, "How's it goin', what's comin' up?" And then they do have access to email me questions if other things come up throughout the month. But for the most part, I've not found that anybody has abused that, or it's gotten to a point where I'm like, I can't handle this, and the reality is, if there is a question, I had a question actually just this week. Some patient emailed me and asked, like, "Can you tell me what supplements to take?" And my response was, "Let's cover this in your next session. Let's talk about what your goals and intention is and what you may need. There is an endless possibility of supplements you could take, but you know, we'll talk about this in your next session." So, just refer them if need be to the next session.

Sarah Lucille- Yeah, that's the, we have so many coaches in our community who all, I'll do

some readings with them to figure out your personality type and different things about you and why you might respond in certain ways, and almost everyone has some kind of helper archetype when they do those assessments that I give them. And being the helper, or being the mediator, it makes you feel as though you have to answer every notification right away, or you have to give all ways to access you, like email, Facebook Message. That part, just giving yourself permission to have boundaries, is part of the work of becoming a coach. That I had to learn, I learned the hard way, 'cause I am for sure someone that's like, "I wanna help you solve this," and then I also learned every time I jump in and do that, I'm taking away a learning moment. I'm taking away something from the experience that you're supposed to be having, instead of coming back with a question, or like you said, when we meet we'll dive deeper into this. Are there things about your coaching style that you have learned, oh that doesn't work well for me, or I actually don't think that works well when I do that, that you've learned to shift? Like maybe giving advice too soon, or asking certain types of questions. What did you figure out, and how did you start to make that shift?

Meghan O'Hara- Hmm, yeah. I'm sure the answer is yes, a lot of things. The one thing that's popping into my mind right now is, like, being on, like one, to be really direct and honest and help hold people accountable, and usually it's in my personality to be on the softer side, the more feminine of like, yeah, well, I know you tried, you know, like that's sort of my go to, and I could see that in myself and can see that I think it's time to sorta toughen up. Finding that balance for me is something I'm still working through, but I like what Marc says about the masculine energy, that oftentimes men can take more direct, and straight, and honest feedback. I had been working with a man for quite a while who, and I tend to have these types of people that come find me and types of people that I work well with, and I work mostly with women, but the men that I work with tend to be the ones that have this very hard exterior but inside they're so soft and gushy and have never found a safe place to let their sensitive side out, and this was one of those men who, very, like, sensitive and soft on the inside, and I love that men find an entry point, because they're talking about food, and weight loss, and their diet, and yet what they're really doing is learning about themselves and giving themselves permission to have feelings, and feelings in their body. It's sort of like they're getting, like, unintended support, that they think they're just coming for food and diet, and really what they're getting is to know themselves. But anyhow, I'm thinking of this particular incident where I was speaking with a client and I think I was just a little harsh with him, and he hasn't come back since. And I've tried to reach out, but essentially what I was seeing was sort of this pattern where he and his wife had an interesting dynamic around food where she was more like the food police, and he would sort of give in to it, and really trying to empower him, like you get to decide what feels good to you. You don't have to listen to your wife, you can do your grocery shopping, you can, et cetera, et cetera, and I think I just said something in a way that rubbed him the wrong way that was around, like, you know, it's time for you to really take responsibility for your food or your life, or something, in a way that was pretty direct, and I think it stung a little. It depends the individual and how they receive it, but that's one of those moments where I was like, hmm, maybe that was a little harsh. Yeah, I'm not totally sure.

Sarah Lucille- Yeah, yeah. Those are such tough cases, and then sometimes I've been the person that was like, I'm not going back, usually because someone's trying to make me feel emotions, and then I'll become really stubborn. But, they planted a really important seed, and I remember the first time a client stopped answering my follow ups and I was like, oh, man, what did I do? I messed up, and I have no idea what I messed up on, and I was a new coach, and it was such a moment of remembering that we are not supposed to be having our client's experience for them, nor directing it. And what you may have done was give him what he needed to hear, or not, who knows, but who knows how it lands with him later on.

Meghan O'Hara- Yeah.

Sarah Lucille- Yeah, and--

Meghan O'Hara- I feel that.

Sarah Lucille- Yeah.

Meghan O'Hara- And I think it also sort of, there's that question mark for me of like, was that too harsh? But knowing that it came from a place of love and kindness, and that it was honestly what I was seeing, and possibly, you know this was probably after we had worked together for six or seven months, and he trusted me, I know he trusted me, and my sense is that whatever he's done with that or whatever he's doing with that, uncomfortable, yes, but it was just, it was coming from a place of honesty. So there's a part of me that questions, like, oh, maybe I shouldn't have said that, but there's this other part of me that just really trusts that, like, that's his journey right now and I can certainly relate to, like, you know, the message versus the messenger, that sometimes in my life I really wanna shoot the messenger but the reality is I needed the message.

Sarah Lucille- Yeah. Yes, I like that perspective. If you, you know, could change something about the world of wellness and health through your work and see it change, and envision it changing, what are you on a mission to see shift in this whole space of weight and diet?

Meghan O'Hara- Yeah. So, I would say, the thing that I feel really fuel me and my work is that there's no morality in eating, and this idea that so often, and we see it in marketing and advertisement, like guilt-free eating, and the first thing that comes up for me, I'm like, do you feel guilty for sleeping and drinking water, too? Like, why should you feel guilty for eating? So really, taking the shame out of our food choices, out of our body, like just giving permission that it's okay to be where we're at, and to want the foods that we want, and eating a food, whatever that might be, whether that's ice cream, or dairy free, low sugar coconut ice cream, that there's no morality there, there's no, like, you're a bad person if you eat this, you're a good person if you eat this, and you're better if you, you know, you eat all organic, then you're a superior person. I just see how it's so prevalent in our culture, and you know, to some extent I think it's just easy to take on as practitioners that, like, this is a better way of being in the world. And, you know,

there's parts of myself that I can see sometimes I guess just judge, be judgmental.

Sarah Lucille- Yeah, yes. I love that message, I agree. I'm all for having zero guilt associated with food, or worth, or value, or morality. I always ask at the end what would you say to a new coach? And I also, because you also have a background, or you are a dietitian, which we have a lot of individuals who come into this Institute for the Psychology of Eating's Coach Certification who are dietitians, or they're nutritionists, if you could give a message to dietitians who want to incorporate eating psychology coaching into their work, what do you think would be really important for them to know about that?

Meghan O'Hara- Hmm, that's a good question. The first thing that comes up for me is just like doing their own work first, and getting really clear around whatever sort of toxic beliefs that we're holding, and to some extent I feel like there's sort of a lot that can be carried or passed down following and being trained in any type of rigid model, that, at least for me, it's so important to see what I've carried and so important to see what it is that I'm sort of projecting out, and to be able to be like this clear reflection and to hold space where there isn't any shame or guilt, we first have to get to that place ourselves. So I feel like that, really the first tip would be to get really clear and do the inner work to figure out what are we carrying in our own psyches and our own mind around, you know, our relationship with food and our relationship with our body.

Sarah Lucille- Yeah, that's so good. I love that. I think we always have to check our own biases, and assumptions, and projections constantly as they come up, toward ourself and especially toward our clients. But yes, thank you so much for that. For people who want to be in touch or see what you're up to in your work, where would be the best place for them to go?

Meghan O'Hara- Good question. I would say probably the best place would be either Instagram or Facebook, or my website, which you could find on Google. Truenourishment.me is my website, or .org, I have both of those. So truenourishment.me, .org, and then you can find, my handle is true_nourishment, and the full name of my business is True Nourishment, Fuel Your Body, Feed Your Soul. So that's on Facebook.

Sarah Lucille- Awesome. Well thank you so much Meghan, this was really good. Amazing information, and we appreciate you sharing so generously.

Meghan O'Hara- [Meghan] Absolutely, thanks for having me.

Sarah Lucille- Yeah, and thank you everyone who tuned into the video, we appreciate you taking the time as well, and we'll see ya next time.