

**Melissa:** Thank you so much for, for doing this. I really appreciate it, and for your patience with the technical difficulties.

**Christy:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Melissa:** Yeah. Well, I also wanted to tell you, I just finished your book and I wanted to start off by just thanking you for your work. Your book and your work and podcast are...they're so important and they've been huge in my life. And I just feel like this is like a necessary read for anyone in like Western culture, basically.

**Christy:** Thank you. That's what means a lot to me. I'm so glad it was helpful.

**Melissa:** Yes. Yeah. So, and I haven't like marked up and like all of the patient, it looks so I'm like a perfectionist. So, my book is very, very messy, but it's a good thing.

**Christy:** Yeah, totally.

**Melissa:** So, I just wanted to just start off with that and, um, yeah, just so, so grateful for your work. So, thank you for your bravery in doing that too. Cause I know sometimes there's probably pushback, so thank you.

**Christy:** Yeah. Thank you. I appreciate that.

**Melissa:** Christy, for people who are new to you, I'm wondering if you wouldn't mind kind of just giving a brief overview of what diet culture is, if someone has never heard of diet culture before.

**Christy:** Yeah, thanks so much.

*So, diet culture is really a system of beliefs that is pervasive in Western culture. And it's a system of beliefs that worships thinness and equates it to health, and moral virtue, promotes weight loss as a means of attaining higher status, demonizes some foods while elevating others and oppresses people who don't match up with its supposedly picture of health and wellbeing, which is, you know, overwhelmingly white, thin able bodied, young, cisgender, you know, these sort of identities that so few people actually meet.*

And, so, it's a very exclusionary way of seeing the world and diet culture really is so pervasive in the way that we talk about and think about food and nutrition and health in general.

And the way that, you know, health and wellbeing are made out to be all about what you eat and how you move your body, instead of kind of looking at more holistic aspects of people's lives and considering, especially the social determinants of health, which are far more impactful on people's individual health outcomes than what they eat or how they move their body.

*And so, you know, an anti-diet approach is really helping people to unlearn and divest from diet culture and see all the ways in which it harms us, see all the problematic roots that it has.*

You know, its roots going back to racism and misogyny and homophobia, and you know how we can divest from those beliefs and from what diet culture tells us is the quote unquote perfect body. *You know, its really punishing standards of beauty, getting away from that, so that we can have more space in our life for true connection, for relationships, for, you know, our work and what we want to do to change the world, you know, to really be in our power.*

**Melissa:** So, the piece that I think was especially...I've been listening to Food Psych, your podcast, for some time, and the piece that really stood out to me in this season and in reading your book, *Anti-Diet*, and recently I listened to your interview with Sabrina Strings and, I'm really grateful to be just starting her book, but one thing, if you wouldn't mind, could you say a couple more things about like racism and the glorification of the thin ideal and fatphobia? Cause I'm embarrassed to say that that's something that I hadn't come across before, and not to say that I'm like that well-read or that well-versed, but I'm curious to know how many other people aren't aware of that.

**Christy:** Yeah, I think it's pretty common to not be aware of that because diet culture really tries to obscure those racist roots. You know, it tries to distance itself from that to say, "Oh no, today it's not about racism. It's about health," Right? But actually, you know, Sabrina Strings has done some great research on this.

Her book *Fearing the Black Body* was really powerful resource... is a really powerful resource on that. Actually, when I was writing my book and the history chapter of my book, her book was just like in galleys, in the like pre-production pre-print stage, it wasn't even out yet. And so, I got like a, a galley of the book, a

digital galley and had to like, you know, had most of that chapter written, but sort of quickly read through it to like add more robustness to that race section.

Cause there's definitely other books that have been written about this. Um, a book called *Fat Shame* by Amy Erdman Farrell was really illuminating. But she actually drew on some of Sabrina Strings' previously unpublished research as well, like her, um, PhD thesis and stuff. So, I knew I needed to include some of Sabrina's research in there.

But you know what her research shows and, you know, other historical research kind of gets there a little bit, but she really outlines kind of the whole picture in such a clear way is that racism, you know... basically, racist ideas were necessitated and created by capitalism and the desire to enslave black people and other, other people of color. But, you know, predominantly black folks from Africa in order to like enrich the United States. Right?

And, you know, there were efforts at other times to enslave native American people and other groups of people, but, you know, the North Atlantic slave trade was really built upon like enslaving black bodies and enslaving black people and bringing them to the U.S., and other countries as well, or, you know, colonial powers to perform unpaid labor that would build the economy of this country and other countries.

And through that sort of desire for economic domination and the desire to like justify enslaving these people. Because, you know, I think back then there were definitely, as there have always been when, when slaves, as they're always were throughout slavery, there were people who were like, "Hey, wait a minute. These are human beings. Like what are we doing, enslaving them?"

And, so, there had to be the sort of system of ideas and beliefs built up to counter those arguments, so that the system of slavery could be perpetuated. Ibram X. Kendi also talks about this in his book, *How To Be An Anti-Racist*, which I think is really powerful and important to where, you know, he talks about how like the creation of racist ideas was to justify racist practices like enslavement and the creation of those racist ideas further justified and sort of allow the building of racist policies on top of that.

So, it's like this sort of snake eating its tail situation, right? Um, the racist ideas justify more racist policies, racist policies, and necessitate, racist ideas to keep them going, et cetera, et cetera.

So, you know, with sort of that lens on things, we can really see that the like ideas that came out of enslavement, where it was like trying to justify slavery, trying to justify why black people were supposedly inferior and deserved slavery, or didn't deserve regular human rights that everyone else, you know, that white people deserved. This idea of body size started to get wrapped up in that.

And it was really with, you know, sort of early, um, Evolution, I guess you could call them, you know, biologists. Some, you know, in the 19th century it became evolutionary biologists early, like anthropologists who were studying different groups of people around the world, looking at different characteristics that they held.

*And one characteristic that got assigned to black people was that they were larger bodied. And, also, women were considered, you know, in that same sort of anthropological analysis, women from cultures around the world and other people of color as well were considered to be larger bodied. And women and people of color, and especially black people were also considered to be quote unquote inferior.*

*And there was actually this bogus evolutionary hierarchy that was created saying that, you know, white, Northern European men are at the top of the evolutionary chain, white, Northern European women are a step down from them. And then, you know, sort of, going down this supposed ladder until you get to sub Saharan African black folks at the bottom.*

Right? And so that was just another way of justifying enslavement justifying this institution that was enriching white people at the expense of black people.

*And you know, this idea that your body size made you supposedly evolutionarily inferior, started to become more and more au courant. You know, these ideas that thinness was, was better, was more evolved, was closer to whiteness, closer to aristocracy, closer to maleness and power started to gain traction in the 18th and 19th centuries.*

And really by like the mid 1800s this was a pretty commonly accepted idea. This was like a belief that was held largely in the culture. And it was clashing with ideas at the time of Victorian beauty that said, you know, voluptuousness and larger bodies were desirable among women. Although, interestingly, that was still a pretty racist point of view because it was like white, upper class, you know,

women whose husbands didn't like they didn't have, you know, the women didn't have to work.

And, so, plumpness was assigned that their husbands were rich and could afford to keep them. They didn't have to perform manual labor. They're all supposed to. Also supposed to be very pale. That was a beauty standard at the time was, you know, alabaster skin. And again, that's very racist and also classist because it means, you know, it's not white women who are out working manual jobs and in the sun all the time that have that beauty standard, it's only the sort of, you know, rich, kept women, right, that that could afford to sort of be sitting around all day, not exerting themselves, not, um, in the sun.

And so, you know, this idea, this sort of beauty, ideal of larger bodies was definitely not coming from a feminist perspective. It was not liberatory really, but it was it's, you know... Actually having a larger bodied, beauty, ideal, really squares with centuries and millennia of beauty ideals around the world that do tend to prefer vastly prefer larger bodied women.

And it was only, you know, a small, it's only a small percentage of kind of recorded history and recorded cultures that have any sort of preference for thinner bodied women.

***And a lot of that was built on these ideas about, you know, these anti-black ideas, that fatness was in proximity to blackness and therefore undesirable.***

***And, so, to be a good, you know, middle class, white woman or upper-class white woman, you were supposed to be thin and you were supposed to be striving to be thin. And so that's really, you know, a huge part of what entrenched diet culture in the mid to late 1800s.***

There were definitely other, other factors as well. But interestingly, you know, and Sabrina Strings makes this point too in her book that the thin ideal pre-dated any medical ideas about weight being, you know, higher weight, being bad for your health by a lot, you know.

***In her research she finds that by like a hundred years that, you know, there were these ideas about thinness circulating in the culture for about a century before the medical establishment decided, and it very much was a decision, decided that "Oh, higher weight equals poor health, higher weight is bad."***

And that was really from pressure from the culture or from, you know, patients coming in the door and seeking weight loss, that eventually...And also from the insurance industry, the burgeoning insurance industry, that finally kind of pushed medicine in that fat phobic direction.

**Melissa: Thank you for sharing all of that and weaving all of those pieces together. [It's] super helpful to have it like sequentially laid out and then like how, how that progressed into today. It's also interesting because before I was just thinking about like capitalism and how basically companies are making money off of shaming women into trying to make their bodies smaller, but then adding that layer of racism makes me want to fight it even more.**

**The other piece of that I was wondering if you could speak to...cause I think the creepy part about diet culture is that it is so sneaky and how it, how it changes its face. And you talked a lot in your book and on your podcast as well, you talk about the wellness diet. And, so, I think I bring that up because I think maybe some people, I don't know if these ideas are new to them or maybe they've heard a bit about them before...And so, I think it can be easy to be like, "Oh, you know" Um, just to hear, like, maybe someone's thinking, "Oh, I'm not on a diet or I'm not racist."**

**But I think the trickiness or the tricky part about diet culture is that it does kind of shapeshift. And, so, could you maybe speak a little bit about like how maybe diet culture is presenting itself in the wellness diet these days?**

**Christy: Yeah, such a good question.**

***And it really is so sneaky, and I think it has to be sneaky because that is how it perpetuates itself.***

And actually, you know, similar, similar to racism in that sense, right? The whole idea of like "I'm not a racist" is a really sneaky way for white supremacy and racism to perpetuate itself by making people think that, you know, quote unquote, a racist means a terrible person instead of like that, you know, everyone who's socialized in white supremacy can have some inherited racist beliefs and ideas that sometimes come out.

And when we're called out on them, that's an opportunity to do better. That's an opportunity to examine them critically and unlearn them and say, "Hey, yeah, like, let me not do that because that's a part of the system that I'm trying to just, you

know divest myself from.” Right? I'm an anti-racist I'm committed to anti-racism. So yeah, I think that, again, Ibram X Kendi's book, *How To Be An Anti-Racist*, I think is a great resource on that piece, but, you know, that's sort of a sidebar.

***But you know, in terms of diet culture, it really does shapeshift and, you know, try to keep itself afloat by denying its very existence.***

And we really see this today because you know, basically throughout the early history of diet culture from the research that I did, it really seemed like it was pretty above board for decades, you know, from the. Early 1900s when it sort of crystallized into kind of what we know today with, you know, different diets being sold and pedaled all the time, different exercise regimes and products being sold and things like that.

You know, it just, that was sort of the beginning of the diet industry that exists today and, you know, only grows by billions of dollars now every year. Right. It's like it was, you know, \$74 billion operation last I checked. And so, it's a, you know, it's big business and really up until the 1990s or so it was pretty above board and kind of saying, yeah, this is about looks and maybe there are some, you know, there were some health arguments there, but it wasn't seen as this like national scourge or public health emergency that it is now. You know, the invention of the idea of a quote unquote obesity epidemic didn't happen until the late 1990s.

And it's, that's a whole interesting history that I go into in my book as well, really sort of fomented by pharmaceutical industry and weight loss industry influence like diet drug companies were largely behind the invention of the so-called epidemic and of changing body mass index levels to, you know to quote, unquote, diagnose more people as being quote unquote too big, right? The “o” words on the BMI scale. And so, you know, that all happened basically in response, I think in some ways in response to a growing public awareness that diets don't work, that they actively cause harm.

You know, starting in the late 1950s, there was research looking at the effectiveness of diets and the effectiveness of intentional weight loss programs, finding really abysmal rates of quote unquote success. You know, the first kind of landmark study in this area was in 1959 by Albert Strunk and Mavis McLaren Hume.

They did this research paper. He was sort of leading the charge on like the literature review, part of it, reviewing basically all the published research that

existed to date scientific research on weight loss and, you know, weeding out the studies that didn't meet rigorous scientific criteria. And when he looked at what was left, it was only like a small number of studies that were even rigorous enough to meet those standards.

And they all showed really abysmal quote unquote success rates and rates of weight regain that were, you know, upwards of 90%. And he and Mavis McLaren Hume did a study of their own with patients participants at this New York hospital looking at, you know, their rates of quote unquote success and found that 98% of people in their study regained all the weight all or most, you know, had significant regain all or most of what they had lost within I think it was a year was there follow up period, maybe two years, I'm forgetting now, but you know, within a short period of time.

And ever since then, we've seen study after study looking at the supposed success rate of weight loss, other weight loss studies, right? These meta-analyses, looking at the effectiveness of weight loss trials, showing that, you know, yeah, somewhere in the realm of 95 to 98% of weight loss attempts and in weight regain within five years, if not more. Actually, a 2007 study found that up to two thirds of people who lose weight intentionally ended up regaining more weight than they lost. And so, people actually do, you know, diet their way up the scale.

So, all of this research was building up and, you know, more and more people and journalists and doctors were kind of getting hip to the fact that diets really don't work, that intentional weight loss doesn't last.

***And so that's when in the late 1990s, the sort of concoction of this idea of a quote unquote obesity epidemic really came to be, and that, that kind of stopped a lot of the anti-diet movement in its tracks for a little while that stopped the, you know, the people who are speaking out against diets not working and this sort of growing awareness in the medical field, because suddenly it was like, "Oh, this is a big deal. This is a public health emergency. We have to do something about it."***

And you know, within a few years, the concept of this quote unquote obesity epidemic, which was not again, not invented until the late 1990s. Within a few years, that spread like wildfire. There were hundreds and thousands of scientific journal articles and newspaper articles and other media outlets calling it an epidemic and speaking about it in very urgent terms.



***And that's really when you saw the sort of shapeshifting of diet culture from, you know, it's about looking good and maybe some health benefits to like, this is about your health. It's all about wellness. It's all about wellbeing. This is not mere vanity. This is like a matter of life and death.***

You know, it sort of raised the stakes on the argument and that's where you see now, you know, 20 years later there's companies like Weight Watchers rebranding themselves as, you know, WW wellness that works, right? Because they're not wanting to be associated with the term weight watching anymore, because that is seen as uncool. Now it's like, this is about wellness. It's not just about your weight. It's about your health, right?

You know, companies like I, you know, Weight Watchers is so generic that I feel like it's fine to mention them. I won't mention any of the more like obscure companies that people might not have heard about because I don't want them to look them up and fall prey to them, but there's this one company that sort of targets itself at millennials that you might see commercials for all the time. And, and, you know, if you Google the term “anti-diet,” their ads populate that search term, like they come up, they present themselves as an anti-diet and is like the diet for millennials.

And they present themselves as, you know, it's all about psychology. It's this, you know, really smart diet for smart people. It's not even a diet, it's a lifestyle change. When in fact it's the exact same thing. It's based on the same research that has existed for 20-30 years, that is about demonizing specific foods and elevating others. That's about, you know, skipping on portion sizes and very similar to Weight Watchers and its approach. And yet, you know, it's, it's touting itself as this permanent weight loss solution. When in fact they have no such data to show that it's anywhere near permanent. They have people who've been on it for several months, talking about the weight they've lost in several months.

But what we know from the research is that, you know, people end up regaining all the weight they lost usually within about a year and the rate of...or most of the weight they lost, I should say. And then, you know, for those who don't regain it all within a year, the rate of weight regain speeds up over time over the subsequent years. And within five years, really, you know, 98% of the time people gain all the way back or more.

And so, you know, it's no different for this, you know, diet that's touting itself as this magical millennial solution than it is for Weight Watchers or for, you know,

any of the millions of other diets out there that have come and gone and been, you know, the fads that they are because they can't actually produce sustainable results.

*And, so, I think we all have to be really aware that this is happening, that, you know, things are positioning themselves as being about wellness.*

They use terms like “lifestyle change,” “plan,” “program,” “protocol,” “template,” “reset,” “reboot.” You know, it's all kinds of different terms, right? For what is essentially a diet, it's the same principles, you know, the principles of diet culture, the tenants of diet culture that I outlined earlier, where, you know, it's worshiping thinness and equating it to health and moral virtue, promoting weight loss as a means of attaining higher status, demonizing some foods while elevating others and oppressing people who don't match up with its supposed picture of health.

*All of these diets that say they're not diets are fitting in perfectly with those principles, are resting on that same foundation of diet culture. They're really no different than the diets of decades past.*

They're just trying to pass themselves off as being different so that people will buy them and not be, you know, suspicious, as they rightfully should be.

**Melissa: Hmm. Yeah, thank you for explaining that. And this is maybe dangerous for me to do, but I'm gonna try to call something out. And I don't know if this is correct, but this is just my own perspective on this.**

**So, I'm coming from circles like Christian circles and I don't know the number of people listening to this who maybe subscribe to the Christian faith, but just something, um, an interesting, possibly dangerous idea that I'm seeing too is, um, this idea of clean eating and the versions of like clean eating that I've seen oftentimes fit that criteria you just laid out that is set out by diet culture.**

**And what I've seen in some Christian circles is a tendency to, you know, talk about how our bodies are a temple of the Holy spirit, which I, in my personal belief system, I think that's true. But, oftentimes that type of verse is used to back up this agenda of clean eating, which actually, like I said, aligns more with diet culture, then maybe the original intention of that verse.**

**So I just think, I don't mean to out anyone who, I mean, I would just say I'm, saying that because I've noticed that in my own life, um, looking back at my**

**own story and things that went south in my own experience. So, um, yeah. Yeah, just wanting to name that in my own, the culture that I might be speaking to at this moment.**

**Christy:** Yeah, thank you for naming that. And it's so important I think to call out clean eating specifically, no matter what background you're coming from. Cause I think it has really taken over a lot of, a lot of the landscape around diet culture, and it's not always called clean eating. You know, it might have other names, it might be a wellness plan. It might be, you know, an aspect of Whole 30 or keto or whatever it might be. Right?

But it's this idea that there's some foods that are clean and others that are by extension dirty, that you're poisoning your body and hurting yourself if you eat quote unquote processed foods, that you should only be eating so-called whole foods and plant-based foods, and you know that anything else is really going to kill you.

And, you know, in that, in that sort of religious thinking too, there's this idea, right, that it's like, you're not taking care of yourself the way God would want you to. You're not, you know, you're, you're being sinful, right, in the most sort of, um, the furthest extensions of that.

And you know, I'm not religious myself, but I've heard a number of people and guests on my podcast talk about their religious communities and how they, you know, use the sort of diet culture or, or twist, you know, twist Biblical verses, or, you know, other religious ideas to the service of diet culture. Right. And it's not that the verse itself is problematic, it's that the interpretation and the way that diet culture has infiltrated the community is problematic. Right?

That part is what's really causing harm. Because, you know, when you think about the body as a temple, right? You could also think about that as needing to feed yourself enough, needing to make sure that you get your needs met, right. Needing to make sure that you're not starving yourself and swinging back and forth on this restrict, binge cycle that's really harmful to your mental and physical health and taking care of yourself by healing from disordered eating, by healing from fatphobia, looking at all bodies as equal, right? All bodies as deserving of care and respect and compassion. You know, I think that really fits in with a lot of moral teachings from a lot of religious traditions, right.

That, you know, looking at people as equals and as all, you know, equal under the eyes of God or, or whatever your, you know, your higher power is. And so, you know, I think it's, it's sort of this selective interpretation of these ideas about taking care of your body. And I see that so many places, you know, not just religion, but, you know, in various like health organizations, you know, doctors who don't really know a lot about nutrition, but sort of are, are interpreting this idea of caring for your body to mean just being about weight loss and eating a certain way and moving your body in a certain way and not about all the other myriad aspects that exist to self-care; like getting enough sleep, like having social connections and, you know, feeling, um, feeling like you have people to talk to about your mental health and having strong mental health support, being free from discrimination, right? Being free from poverty and, you know, having equal access to rights and resources.

Those things are all so important for self-care too. And, really, I would say community care, you know, because a lot of those things, aren't things that we can individually, um, make happen. Like, you know, making sure that nobody's in poverty, that's not an individual decision. That's a collective action, right? That's something we need to take collective action to address.

We need to take collective action to address racism and stop the discrimination against people of color and black and indigenous people. And also stop the discrimination against larger bodied people. Right.

***And in my book and podcast, I talk a lot about weight stigma and the harmful effects that it has and the effects of weight stigma, or actually, you know, in the scientific literature have been shown to be pretty similar to the physiological effects of racism, too; that racism and weight, stigma, and other forms of discrimination really have a similar stressing effect on the body.***

They increase people's cortisol levels. They increase people's levels of stress and chronic inflammation. And, you know, put them at risk for all kinds of diseases that they shouldn't have to be at risk for. This is, you know, these are things that as a society we can address and work to undo. Albeit, you know, racism is such a long, entrenched... has such a long-entrenched history and we're seeing, you know, so much grappling with that now in this current moment.

And it's going to be, you know, decades, if not centuries-long process to, to undo, to untangle the roots of racism, but still we have to try still, we have to work at it because that is what gives everyone equal opportunity, equal access to health care,

equal access to wellbeing of, you know, in the holistic sense of the word. Right. A good life.

**Melissa: Yeah. Thank you. It's also good. I'm noticing our time and so I do want to make sure that I give some time to shift the conversation cause I know, so you've done a very good job of kind showing how unhelpful some of these cultural trends around like diet culture and unhelpful...I mean so many unhelpful things about it. But I do want to shift our attention toward the end of our time here to this idea of true beauty.**

**Cause, on this podcast, I'm trying to call into question our ideals around beauty and trying to paint a new, uh, more helpful view and, um, narrative around authentic beauty.**

**So, one of the questions I like to ask is just, um, how do you find, or how do you define true beauty, Christy?**

**Christy:** Such a good question.

I think it really has, I mean, this is probably going to sound so cheesy, but *I think it has so much more to do with inner beauty and, you know, values and what you can put out into the world, the love you give the, you know, equity that you try to create, the world changing work that you try to do.*

*The relationships that you have, the ways that you show up for yourself, you know, the ways that you take care of yourself and work to heal from past traumas, you've had, you know; all of that stuff I think is representative of beauty, is really beautiful and, you know, has so much more to do with true beauty than what we see on the surface.*

Right. I mean, of course there's, you know, pretty colors and shapes and textures and things that, you know, I can find aesthetically pleasing in the world, like in home design or in nature or things like that. But, um, you know, I think true beauty also has a depth to it, right. That, you know, I think nature has so much true beauty to offer because it has that depth too, because it's something, you know, mysterious and beyond us and vast and complicated and, you know, sort of incomprehensible in ways. Right.

It's, I think, you know, nature and aspects of nature have a real true beauty to them. Um, but I think, you know, in terms of like what we're sold as an idea of beauty,

right? How bodies are supposed to quote unquote, supposed to look and beauty products and, you know, clothes and appliances and things to like change your body or shape your body. All of that I think is so problematic and harmful that I really can't see any of that as beautiful anymore.

And even, you know, I think in my own recovery from diet culture and disordered eating, which was, you know, a years long process for me too. And as I'm now in, you know, eight years into really solid recovery, but it's still kind of uncovering layers of, of these things.

I think that earlier in my recovery, I felt like, you know, I knew for myself that extreme thinness was not healthy for me was not something I wanted to pursue anymore because I knew it harmed my wellbeing, but there was still a part of me that was like, "Oh, but I would look so much better. I still find that beautiful."

"I still wish..." you know, I still sort of like. Um, gravitate towards it, even though I'm not pursuing it. Right. Um, but then, you know, a shift happened, I think in my recovery, you know, after several more years where I was starting to look into Health At Every Size and fat positivity and, you know, the fat liberation movement. Starting to fill my social media feeds with larger body people and diverse people, people with disabilities, people, you know, of all different ethnicities, people of all different ages, really trying to, um, expose myself to different kinds of beauty and different ideas of what beauty is.

And something kind of cracked at that point where I was just like, I just suddenly couldn't see that. You know, ultra-thin ideal, the sort of, you know, poreless, uh, like Photoshopped, um, you know, look as beautiful anymore. That, I mean, of course still sometimes I'll find myself thinking, "Oh, that looks cool" or "that looks pretty" or whatever, but there's this also like disgust that I feel towards that, like that I know it's not a disgust towards the people that want to be clear about that, but it's discussed towards what that style of beauty represents.

Right. And it's also like, you know, the people who appear in those images often that's not even them. They've been so digitally, digitally manipulated that it's not really a human face or body or seeing it's a digital, uh, digitally altered product.

***So, yeah, I think, I think it's interesting to kind of pursue, you know, changing your ideas of beauty to the point where you can see like the, the gross-ness and the sort of pain that comes with this one form of beauty that we're sold.***

**Melissa:** Yeah. I mean, it almost sounds like it's like literally in-human, like it's not human. Another question I'd like to ask is just, if there has been anything that has transformed your ideas around beauty, and it sounds like for you, like you said, kind of shifting some of your influences in terms of like literally what you were seeing, like having following different people on your Instagram feed.

**Were there any other things that were helpful in transforming your ideas around beauty?**

**Christy:** I think that's really the main thing, is just this constant effort of transforming those ideas and, you know, giving myself exposure to, excuse me, lots of different kinds of people.

You know, one sort of random thing that happened for me that was not something that can be like replicated necessarily for other people was that, you know, years ago, probably seven years ago at this point, I think I went through a breakup and like many people going through grief, I lost my appetite. That kind of was always a thing that happened when I broke up with someone would I would be, I would just lose my appetite feel really crappy for a while. And so, as a result temporarily, I want to emphasize temporarily here, I lost some weight, right?

Because usually with those things, you know, the quote unquote breakup diet is just like any other diet, it doesn't have long-term effects, right? It's just like you temporarily lose your appetite, your body temporarily changes because of that. And then, you know, your body swings back usually unless you have a disordered eating history that can kind of pull you back into disordered eating, but, you know, oftentimes people will just kind of, their bodies will readjust, their appetite will come back. Their weight will go back to its set range of what it wants to be and, you know, that's the end of it. Right?

So that is what happened to me is that I had this sort of momentary blip and I guess was far enough into my recovery from disordered eating that it didn't drag me back. And I actually was able to see like, "Oh, I don't like how my body looks at this place. I actually feel like I look unwell" and you know, that was the first time that had ever happened to me, that my sort of eyes had changed in terms of how I saw my body, not from like, "Ooh, I want this." But like, "Ooh, I don't look well."

And I think it was, you know, a result of all this learning and work I had done around my own values and what I wanted for myself and what I knew to be true of

how my body looks when I'm taking care of it and the work around accepting that, right. Accepting that that was larger than I thought it should be. Even though let's be clear, I've always had. What's known as thin privilege or straight sized privilege, which is like, I've never been discriminated against for my weight. I've never been told by a doctor. I need to lose weight or a parent or a peer.

I have all of these unearned advantages that come from having been born into a relatively small body and I still thought I needed to shrink it. And I still thought it wasn't good enough because of this unattainable ideal that we're all sold. Right. But, you know, being able to, to shift my view, to see, "Oh, I actually don't think this is good for my body. I actually don't think this looks good because of what I know it means," I think was really profound.

And I think that came not from like, just, you know, and at that point, I don't think I had even really, I didn't wasn't on Instagram. No, I wasn't. I wasn't really on social media, looking at bodies so much. I was, I was just doing the work, the sort of mental work and the work in therapy of, you know, clarifying what my values were and what I wanted for my life and what, and learning how to take care of myself. You know, learning about self-care and the importance of nourishing myself. And I think that's what allowed me to see that, you know, that weight loss in a different light.

**Melissa: Yeah, that's so helpful. So the last thing I'd like to ask is if there is one thing that you wish people knew about beauty, what would it be?**

**Christy:** Hmm, good question. I think, you know, it's similar to kind of what we've been talking about.

*I just wish that people knew that the standard of beauty that's sold to us in Western culture is built on a foundation of racism, misogyny, fatphobia, weight stigma. You know, that it's, that it's a harmful standard of beauty and that it's harmed millions of people. And that so many people are being made to feel less happy, less love, less connected than they deserve to be because of this horrible standard of beauty.*

And so, you know, I wish that I wish for everyone listening to be able to start to look deeper and to start to maybe unlearn some of those unhelpful beliefs that we've been, you know, inculcated into about beauty and start to see the beauty that you inherently have and the beauty that all human beings and all living creatures



inherently have. You know, that there's, there's so much natural beauty in all of us and the false ideal of beauty that is foisted upon us.

And that's unfortunately reinforced in so many different ways by healthcare professionals, by, you know, churches, as you said, by other kind of spiritual authorities or moral authority figures. And by, you know, like just the culture in general, right, by media, by you know, everything that we're sort of everything that's in our milieu; children's TV, even parents' beliefs about body size.

*All of that stuff is oppressive. And that we need to be able to unlearn that in order to uncover the true beauty that we have and can bring to the world and the true beauty that we can see in others.*

**Melissa: Hmm. That's so good. Thank you so much, Christy. In our last couple minutes, I just want to make sure that people know where to find you to learn more.**

**And also, just to name again, Christy's book is *Anti-Diet: Reclaim Your Time, Money, Wellbeing, and Happiness, Through Intuitive Eating*. And then your podcast is Food Psych and any other places or things that you'd like people to know about?**

**Christy: Yeah, thank you so much. So, I think a great place to just find out more about my work and kind of get everything in one place is my website, which is [christyharrison.com](http://christyharrison.com). There you'll find info about the podcast, the book, my blog, email newsletter, all the stuff I do, my coach intuitive eating coaching courses too. So, it's all there.**

**Melissa: Yeah, so I would just encourage anyone if this is new or intrigues you...I just have found it to be so incredibly freeing if you've ever struggled or are struggling with your relationship with food or your body.**

**I think Christy's resources are incredible, so I would highly recommend them. So, thank you so much, Christy, for your time and all that you shared today. It's so good.**

**Christy: Thank you, Melissa. It's so good to talk with you.**

**Melissa: Thanks.**

