

Transcript: EP 344 - Diet Culture, Body Image and Eating Disorders with “The Skinny”
Author Sheri Segal Glick

Sheri: Then after the birth of my third child, I had a period of just no hunger. I lost my appetite. And in my illness, the worst times for me have always been where I had no hunger cues. So I just had a lot of trouble eating, lost a bunch of weight without really noticing, and then one day I got on the scale and had this moment of life fear elation.

Dr. Taz: Hi everyone, and welcome to Super Woman Wellness. I'm Dr. Taz. I've made it my mission throughout my career in integrative medicine to support women in restoring their health using a blend of eastern medical wisdom with modern science. In this show, I will guide you through different practices to find your power type and fully embody the healthiest and most passionate version of you. I'm here for you and I can't wait to get started. This is a Soulfire Production.

Welcome back everyone. Welcome back to another episode of Super Woman Wellness, where we're determined to bring you back to your superpowered self. And you know I love patient stories. You know I love to hear your stories, and I'm hoping this next podcast guest will be helpful and inspirational. If you know a family member that is dealing with an eating disorder. I know these are on the rise, they're rampant, and more and more. In fact, we were just talking this morning with some of my team members and it slowly came out that each one of them, there were five of us at the table, all women, each one of them had had struggled from an eating disorder in the past.

So joining me today is Sheri Glick, as she holds a degree in journalism, a JD and a half eaten muffin that one of her kids handed her and made her promise not to throw out. Lawyerly stuff she has done, includes working at the Department of Justice in the House of Commons. Momish stuff she has done, includes wrangling her three kids, finding new and exciting ways to monitor screen time. That's never ending. And chairing the parent council at her kids' school for the past eight years. Writerly stuff, I love the buckets, she has done, includes writing for newspaper, magazines and drafting a great deal of federal legislation, which maybe we might not know about. She does have a book, *The Skinny: My Messy, Hopeful Fight for Full Recovery from Anorexia*. Welcome to the show, Sheri. Thank you for being willing to share your story with us.

Sheri: Thanks for having me.

Dr. Taz: You are welcome. So talk to us, what is going on here? How did this come about? Why did this become the topic that you really wanted to dial into? Give us a little bit of context and background.

Sheri: That's a very broad question. So I guess I'll talk about why I wanted to write the book. I thought that it was important to, there was so much shame and secrecy around eating disorders, and I think that by coming out of the shadows and talking about them, people are more comfortable not only coming forward and getting help, but also seeing other people and understanding and recognizing that their lives can be different and better and that you can recover and that it's not a life sentence.

Dr. Taz: I love that. And then your take on that is not the traditional straightforward take. You've tried to make it humorous as well. Why do you think humor needs to be a part of this story?

Sheri: Yeah, because part of the title actually is a decently comical memoir, and I thought that was actually quite important so that people know what they're getting into. Because it's not a joke book. I think you can say very serious things with humor. I think that for me personally, humor is the way I move in the world, and it would've been really hard for me not only to read a book with no humor, but write a book with no humor. It had to be something, it would've felt very unnatural to me. And I just think that there can be, while I talk about some very serious things and they're very serious moments, you're not going to be running out to try and find my next standup act. I think that-

Dr. Taz: No?

Sheri: But I do think that, I think just life is better when you can laugh at things a little bit. And I think that that's... There's just enough sort of really sad modeling recovery memoirs. I just don't think the world needed another one.

Dr. Taz: Oh my gosh, I could not agree more. Do you feel comfortable sharing your journey and your story with eating disorders with us, how it evolved? And even more importantly, and we were talking about this today actually, how you find your way out of it? Give us a little bit of your perspective on that.

Sheri: Sure. Yeah, I mean, I developed an eating disorder when I was about 12. I started restricting food and then I turned into a full-blown anorexia somewhere. It's sort of a morphous, you don't know the exact moment, but by the time I was in grade seven or eight, I think it had turned into full blown anorexia. And I was in and out of the hospital for all of my teen years. And then somewhere between sort of high school and undergrad, I considered myself better. And then for many years stayed in this place of quasi recovery, which is sort of this in-between place between wellness or health and illness, I guess. And it's a misnomer because you're not actually halfway better. The eating disorder noise is just as loud, but people are less likely to notice it because all of a sudden you're not necessarily in an

emaciated body and people are admiring your exercise habits and your eating habits even because that's just diet culture. So I went on like that for quite a long time. And then after the birth of my third child-

Dr. Taz: You had a habit through this whole journey of having children and every-

Sheri: Yeah.

Dr. Taz: Okay.

Sheri: Yeah. And again, because there's this thing called anosognosia, which is a symptom of mental illness, which prevents your ability to see your mental illness, which is obviously amazing. So I actually was in a very deep state of denial. And again, because I've been so very ill, I looked at myself and was like, "Well, no, this is, and the things I do to stay thin are normal. This is what normal people do. This is fine. I eat things. I am not exercising as much as I used to and I eat more things than I used to, so obviously I'm fine." And then after the birth of my third child, I had a period of just no hunger. I lost my appetite. And in my illness, the worst times for me have always been where I had no hunger cues. So I just had a lot of trouble eating, lost a bunch of weight without really noticing.

And then one day I got on the scale and had this moment of fear elation and not really knowing... Or knowing that the elation part was probably bad news. I made an appointment with a psychologist and I went to see her. It was a very long wait list. It was like nine months by the time I actually, and it took me a long time to actually make the appointment. So by the time I went to see her, I had hunger cues again. And so I went to see her and she's like, "Why are you here?" And I was like, "Well, I had this period where I had no hunger cues and I made this appointment, but now I'm better. Things are fine. I can eat again. But I thought I might tweak a few things from when I used to have anorexia."

And she's like, "Okay, well, what are the things you want to tweak?" And then I started listing things like, "Well, I have to exercise this many hours a day. I count every calorie obsessively. I have to weigh and measure everything I eat. I can't eat at people's houses. I can't eat when I'm not hungry." And she's just like, "That's because you still have anorexia." And I was just like, "What?" I'm like, "I've had anorexia. I know what that looks like. This is not that. Do people with anorexia eat carbs? Because I eat carbs." And she was just like, "Yeah, they do." And I didn't initially believe her. It took some time before I even was willing to sort of accept that I was still ill and struggling. And then I had this. I don't know. It sort of moment of epiphany, I guess, where I realized that I was still unwell and that's when I embarked in this recovery effort.

Dr. Taz: All right, super woman, I know the drill, right? We all live the same lifestyle. We're running around, we're juggling. We don't have time for 20 different products, 20 different bottles, trying to find information and put it all together. We want solutions and we want answers. That's why I developed the Eastwest Way. It's my product and lifestyle line full of formulas that I personally curated to really get us the answers we need. I couldn't find anything on the market that adequately merged Eastern and Western medicine together and formulas that work and gave us the answers that we were all so desperate for. I'm right there with you guys losing hair, having acne, hormones all over the place. I needed something that worked but also worked efficiently. I didn't have time to take an herb over here and a supplement over there and a medication maybe somewhere else.

The Eastwest Way is the answer for all of us, and I couldn't be prouder of the formulas that I've developed. If you aren't familiar with some of the products, I want to share some of them with you. I've been super excited about them and have taken a lot of time and energy to put them all together. Collaglow is one of the newer products is Collaglow C. It has collagen, Amla, and Goji Berry. So now we're merging together Ayurvedic and Eastern medicine concepts there for beautiful skin and hair, getting that glow and that circulation we need, and also a massive antioxidant burst and maybe repairing the gut a little bit along the way with the collagen. The Defender was born out of my anger around the pandemic. It's a combination of Astragalus, vitamin C and zinc, and I use that every single day, especially when I'm traveling or worried that I might be exposed to more germs.

Boost is the hero, the hero product that started it all. The line started because I couldn't find a methylated formula that really answered all our needs around hormones, mood, memory, and so much more. Today, Boost continues to be the product that so many people say they can't live without. Belly Fix, again, so much around gut health, I know my patients and even I, we were tired of having a bottle here, a bottle there, mixing things together, remembering to take four or five different things. Belly Fix is the gut kitchen sink. Has collagen, spirulina, prebiotics, probiotics, and so much more. I love this formula. It has been a game changer for so many people. Hormone Helper again hits close to home. I'm someone who has PCOS, as many of you know. A combination of Maca, Inositol, Saw Palmetto and choline supporting the liver, lowering androgens. It's our answer for really balancing hormones.

Sleep Savior, another favorite. Has magnesium, melatonin and magnolia bark because oftentimes falling asleep or staying asleep or both. So we needed something to answer all of that. That combination is a triple punch, works beautifully. Lush Locks I take every day. Lush Locks has Ayurvedic and Chinese

herbs that are known for regrowth and regeneration of hair and improving blood flow to the scalp along with micronutrients that research tells us we should be focused on. This month I'm offering an exclusive discount for Super Woman Wellness listeners. Just go to theeastwestway.com and enter SWW 30 to get 30% off at checkout. Don't forget, if you rate and review any of my episodes, you'll get a free bottle of Boost. Just email me, it's hello@drtaz.com and I'll make sure it gets to you. All right, I can't wait for you guys to try these products. Let me know which one's your favorite. And take advantage of the code, SWW 30 at theeastwestway.com.

So what brought you to recovery? And I think you have a term called quasi recovery. What is quasi recovery and how did you kind of journey towards recovery? And I'm assuming you have full recovery now, or are we still in a different state of recovery? Maybe help us with that.

Sheri: So quasi recovery, as I kind of alluded to it earlier, I was trying to get at this whole story without rambling for too long. In the book I just describe it as the second cousin once removed of diet culture. She's not quite as pretty and popular as diet culture, but she's invited to all the parties. And so again, it's like people now, yeah, you exercise a lot, but people now want to know about your exercise habits. And you have a very strict eating schedule, but people want to know about it and people admire it.

And so in the meantime, you know in your heart that things... With me, it was an affliction of ignorance for many years, but then once I knew it was still very hard to change. And I think because it's also an affliction of fear. You come and it's very, very, very common for people who are in recovery from restrictive eating disorders because you get to a place where you're recovered enough, you can do all of these things you used to be able to not do and you look okay, and so you're like, this is good enough, but it's actually not, you're not halfway better. And the eating disorder noise is still just as loud and just as prominent, but it's just not raising the red flags that it used to.

Dr. Taz: Wow. Okay. So what got you, I still want to know how you healed because so many times, I mean, even again, going back to the conversations today, no one really has a clear answer. How did you heal? How did you get yourself better?

Sheri: Yeah, I mean, I think that... Well, eating disorders are bio-psychosocial and so, which I think that also a lot of people don't understand, so they're not a choice. And you also, they're caused by an energy deficit. If you have the genetics for an eating disorder and you go on or you start restricting food for whatever reason, you are going to, in all likelihood, develop an eating disorder. And so in order to get yourself out of an eating disorder, not only do you have to do the work, but

you also have to get out of a caloric deficit because the noise is so much louder and it really does change the amount of noise and the way you see things when you get out of that sort of deficit. But just getting there is really tough, and I think that just kind of pushing through the scary stuff.

Dr. Taz: Got you. So did you have support? Did you have community? Did you go on medications? Did you do acupuncture? Is there something that kind of pushed you through and gave you-

Sheri: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I tried a bunch of things which I talk about in the book. I did a day hospital program twice, which didn't feel like a good fit for me. And for me it was recovery coaching. Different people have different things that work for them. I think really what it is in terms of your support is just finding somebody that you like and respect. You can't just respect them and you can't just like them. It has to be sort of-

Dr. Taz: Both. Yeah. And they act as a mentor and a guide and a coach to help you, I'm assuming?

Sheri: Yeah, absolutely. It's kind of like a psychologist, but not because, or a therapist, because it's more goal oriented. You're not looking at your deep dark past, you're talking about why this was hard, what we can do, and then it's just challenging and repeating the same things over and over and over again until they're not scary and not hard anymore. In the book, I talk about how the commitment and sitting with discomfort are the two most important things in recovery. You have to be committed to recovery because there are times that you're not going to want to keep going. And you have to remember that the version of you, you made that decision in your right mind, so you have to remember that you have committed to it, even if it doesn't feel like the right thing to do and it feels too hard. And then sitting with discomfort because it feels comfortable in the moment and it's just repeating and repeating and repeating, and then these things get more comfortable.

Dr. Taz: Gotcha. Well, I think the biggest challenge, you were 12 years old when this started. We know that eating disorders, especially with the rise of social media, are on the rise. What are we supposed to do as parents? What should parents be doing? How do we cultivate a healthy relationship? I will tell you personally, having a young daughter who I'm a little bit concerned about and also having in the same hand all this knowledge about nutrition and healthy eating and all this other stuff, how do we cultivate a healthy environment around food, around body image, around communicating some of our desires around nutrition? What should parents be doing and what should parents be looking out for?

Sheri: Yeah, I mean, again, I'm not a professional, but just based on my knowledge and experience, I think that in terms of body image, just really, I hear a lot of my... And I think because I've been through this, I'm so much more alert to these things. But you hear people talking, criticizing their own bodies in front of their kids or being like, "Oh, I can have this ice cream because I'm going to go for a run later or because I went for this big walk, or I'm being naughty." All of these little things that people say without even thinking twice about them. Or I have my mother's thighs, things like that. But also not just these negative things that you might be saying, but also the positive. It's such a common thing to constantly compliment people, including little girls when you have nothing else to say, it fills the space, you're so pretty, you're so cute. You're so this, you're so that. But then it gives this impression that this is all we care about.

And so that we're noticing that our children... That we're noticing their bodies, that their appearance above everything else. And it's also, it's hard to never compliment your children. I have girls too, but I think that doing it less is the better way to go. And with food, not labeling things as good food and bad food or sometimes food and always everyday foods because then people, you develop these sort of obsessions with them or fear of them or you fetishize them, try to make all food sort of neutral. And our children follow their own instincts around food.

Dr. Taz: Gotcha. Yeah. Are there signs we should look for in our children, things that us should make us suspicious if someone's suffering from an eating disorder?

Sheri: Yeah, I think a sudden obsession with wanting to be healthier, wanting to eat healthier, wanting to prepare meals for everybody. Sometimes it's just like you want to be cooking, but sometimes it's like you want to prepare food for everybody and you're not eating it. Wanting to look healthier, wanting to get healthier, wanting to... Anything that just comes on kind of suddenly and suspiciously you might really want to pay a lot of attention to. Because the longer you have... And I talk about this a lot in the book also is sort of all these neural pathways. And I describe it in the book as there's this arboretum near my house and I talk about how when you're in recovery in the winter, there's always a path that you can walk through. And when you're in recovery, you're trying to... It's like walking through the snow that nobody has walked in and it's deep. And it is much harder.

And these neural pathways, so you're trying to develop new ones. And so when you're ill, these neural pathways become entrenched. And so the sooner we can sort of get in there and start getting help for our children or treatment, I think just the easier it's to recover. Also, just remembering a healthy version of yourself. For

me it was very confusing because I was like, I don't remember a healthy version of myself. I don't remember what foods I used to like. I don't remember what exercise I used to enjoy, things I used to just do for joy. So I think the sooner you can get in there, just the easier it is to recover. Not to say that you can't recover after 30 years, of course you can, but I just think why suffer longer than you have to.

Dr. Taz: Hi there, superstars. I have an exciting announcement. My new book, *The Hormone Shift: Balance Your Body Through Midlife and Menopause* is out this October and is available for pre-order right now wherever books are sold. Most women, let's be honest, have been led to believe that entering midlife means existing at the complete mercy of our mysterious hormones for the next decade. When we take our concerns to our doctors, we're told that our debilitating symptoms are normal or we're fine or it's in our head. I'm here to tell you that fine is not good enough. I want women to thrive through every life stage. So I've devised a hormone reset plan that blends the best of eastern and western medicine together to bring your body back into balance, minimize unwanted symptoms and have you feeling like yourself again. It's not you, it's your hormones. Are you ready to thrive? Go to prh.com/thehormoneshift to pre-order your copy right now.

So if you're suspicious, someone you love or someone you know or even you, yourself is suffering from an eating disorder, what's a good first step? Is it telling somebody? Is it finding a coach like you're saying? Where should someone begin? Because we want to make this actionable in terms of where should a parent begin? Where should a spouse begin? What's a good starting point?

Sheri: Yeah, I mean, I think it's worth talking to your family doctor. And we haven't really touched on misconceptions around eating, this really important is just knowing that only... I think I read this statistic, I've read it many times, a bunch of sources. It wasn't tweeted by Donald Trump. It's information I believe. Only 13% of people with restrictive eating disorders present in underweight bodies. So I think it's really important. I think that people have a lot of trouble coming forward if they don't look typically like what your image is of the stereotypical person with anorexia or a restrictive eating disorder. So I think that your first step is to talk to your doctor, but sometimes doctors are also might not understand or might not believe you. And so then your second step is to find somebody who does believe you. If your doctor isn't taking you as seriously as you need to be taken, find somebody who will listen and who will believe you.

And if it's your child, it's the same thing. Would you have to be their advocate. And having a treatment team, again, who you trust. I don't think there's necessarily therapists or better than coaches or a day hospital program, is better

than... You have to figure out what fits for your life and what makes you feel the most comfortable. And I think it's really trial and error. And it's also, I think that a lot of the treatment, especially in previous years, certainly when I was growing up, a lot of it was just like talk, talk, talk, talk, talk therapy. But talking about your eating disorder constantly and not actually challenging your eating disorders is just going to keep you in your eating disorder.

Dr. Taz: Yeah, I agree too. So instead of talk therapy, you recommend what specifically?

Sheri: I mean, I think you can have talk therapy in conjunction with a plan that's challenging your eating disorder. I think that you can be... It's fine if you're going to talk about it, but you also have to be doing things to make changes. You can't talk yourself out of an eating disorder. And people in eating disorders often think, I'm going to talk about this until I feel ready to recover, but you will never feel ready to recover. You have to just jump in. Otherwise the years blend together and then it's being 10 or 20 or 30 years and you're still in it. There's never a moment where you're going to talk to your therapist and one day be like, "Okay, today's the day." No, that's just not how it works.

Dr. Taz: This is a tough one. I've definitely, definitely seen the struggle. Well, how is your book going to help so many people who want more information on this, and what are you hoping to see from people who are reading your book?

Sheri: Something very positive that's come out of it so far has been just people coming to me either by email through my website or on my Instagram, or some people actually that I know through Facebook Messenger saying, "This is something I've been struggling with and I haven't been able to talk about it." And again, I think so much of it is just being able to talk about this thing and seeing that things can be different and things can be better, and just opening a dialogue. I think that that is really important and meaningful.

Dr. Taz: I love that. So if anyone listening today wants more information around eating disorders or wants to connect with you, what's the best way for them to do so?

Sheri: Well, if they want to connect with me, I have a website. It's sherisegallick.com, and I also have an Instagram account, a recovery account. It's [repair.not.despair](https://www.instagram.com/repair.not.despair) on Instagram or read my book.

Dr. Taz: I love that. All right. The book is *The Skinny: My Messy, Hopeful Fight for Full Recovery from Anorexia*. This is an increasing problem probably in your home, and you may be unaware of it. So I encourage you guys to reach out, grab the book. And like Sheri says, it's serious, but we can still use a little humor along the way to help see ourselves out of this. Thank you again, Sheri, for taking time to

join us today and for everybody else, thank you for listening and watching this episode of Super Woman and Wellness. We will see you next time.