

Done with Dieting Podcast #46: Deep Health with  
Krista Scott-Dixon



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Elizabeth Sherman

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You are listening to the Done with Dieting Podcast Episode number 46.

Hi, I'm Elizabeth Sherman, former corporate high tech executive turned life and weight loss coach. But it wasn't that long ago that I was searching for that perfect diet, the one that would finally be the golden ticket to lose the weight that I so desired.

Fast forward past tons of failed diet attempts, exercise fads and painful lessons learned, and although I still have not reached the state of Nirvana, body love, my relationship with food exercise in my body is infinitely better than it was not only when I started this journey, but even as recently as three years ago.

The journey that has allowed me to ditch my scale, stop logging my food and exercise, eat food that I didn't prepare and easily maintain my weight - something that I never thought was possible for me.

I created the Done with Dieting podcast to give you simple, easy to do and sustainable strategies to help you do the same without all of the drama that I went through.

If you're a woman who's looking to create a better relationship with food and her body, get off the diet roller coaster and free up a bunch of headspace spent on calories, how you should look what you should eat and beating yourself up for not doing what you think you should be doing. You are in the right place.

Let's get started.

Oh my God, everyone. I have to tell you; I am so freaking excited to introduce you to today's guest. Krista Scott-Dixon is such a delight to have on today's episode. I have been a fan of Krista's for years. She is the head of curriculum development for one of

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the organizations that if you've ever worked with me, you will recognize because I have certifications with precision nutrition. And I've even worked with them as an assistant coach for a year on their very popular, yearlong online program for women.

Precision nutrition and Krista had a huge influence on, where I am today? Their philosophies of having a client-centered approach was instrumental in how I work with my clients today, as they teach compassion for coaches. Understanding that just because you can do it, doesn't mean that it's available to everyone.

And so, really taking in where a client is today and edging them just so closer to where they want to be instead of where I think the client should be and where they need to go. So, really taking the client-centered approach. In the interview, we talk about coaching practices, but I want you to know that you can use these practices in coaching yourself to better health as well.

It's such a great interview because not only is Krista smart, she's so super smart. But she's funny and just absolutely relatable too. I thoroughly enjoyed this interview and I hope you do too. So, please, without further ado, here's Krista.

**Elizabeth:** All right, everyone, welcome Krista Scott-Dixon to the show. Hi Krista.

**Krista:** Hi.

**Elizabeth:** Thanks for being here. So, I am such a fan girl of Krista Scott-Dixon. And I am so excited that you're here. So, let's start out by introducing yourself and tell people who you are and who you help?

**Krista:** All right. Well, I am the Curriculum Director of a company called Precision Nutrition, which is the world's largest online nutrition health wellness coaching company. I say health wellness, cause we're pushing into that health wellness sleep

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recovery space. But we're most known for our nutrition obviously has already been applies.

And so, that involves coaching clients, people who want to change their bodies, or improve their performance, and health, whatever. It involves coaching coaches. So, teaching people how to coach. And then, it also involves like creating software that helps coaches do that with their clients and connect with their clients. And things like advising on blog articles, doing research, and that sort of thing. So, anything that has like an educational component at Precision Nutrition goes through me.

So, as we've had just to put it in context about 150,000 clients go through our coaching programs and about the same number of coaches going through our certification and education program. So, that's like the scale and the scope of what we're operating on. And it really is a global audience.

So, my job is to create educational materials that are accessible, and intelligible, and interesting to a global audience in a whole variety of topics related to health, wellness, fitness, and nutrition. So, that in a nutshell is what I do obviously, it involves lots of moving parts. And one of the big ones is really understanding, not just the technical aspects of the science, of nutritional science and biology, that kind of stuff. But also, how people change.

So, I used to have as a joke on my bio and my email SIG, I was the director of Headspace adjustment. And then, people who didn't know us start taking it seriously. So, I was like, "okay, that's not really a job," but it is what I do. So, that's me.

**Elizabeth:** Okay, that's awesome. And I am Precision Nutrition Certified, and I use a ton of precision nutrition's information, articles, and forms in my business. So, definitely everyone, if you haven't looked at precision nutrition, for sure check them out. Because what I love about precision nutrition is that everything is very evidence-based and it's

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very researched. But at the same time, it's fun. And the way that you write your articles and the way that you write your curriculum, it's not dry and boring too. Yeah.

**Krista:** Yeah, we try not to be dry and boring. And I think you're right. I think we try to capture the spirit of fun. Like, all of us are nerds and we think this stuff is interesting and we also have fun with it. And most of us who are on the team have been in the business long enough to have a lot of perspective and a lot of humor. And we see trends come and go over the years.

And so, there is an inherent humor and fun about it. And that's something we try to capture, like to keep it light for coaches and say, "listen, coaching is an important job, but it's not serious." It's not serious business. And so, this is something that you can play with and really enjoy. And here's a fun factoid about the body and why do we far? Like, it's just stuff like that, that's what really gets people into science and understanding science and wanting to learn more about science.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. One thing that I'm going to pull out some things from the archives because I've been following you for years.

One of the things that I remember you saying was how fascinated you were once when you looked in the mirror and you saw your first wrinkle. And for most women our age, that's not a fun, cool fact, but yet you were just completely enthralled with how the body works and how that's a response to the aging process.

**Krista:** Yeah, totally. And I think that's true, so many bodily processes. And certainly, as I've aged, I get more and more weird things happening and I'm like, "oh, that's really interesting." It really is like the body is running this program that has nothing to do with me. And I think when I was in my twenties, I had this belief that all you have to do is exercise and eat nutritiously and aging won't happen to you.

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And obviously, that was proved to be false. And so now at 48, I'm actually quite fascinated by the idea of like ourselves, "senescence," which means they age, really without our input. And so, even if we knew what the best diet was and you were on it and absolutely devoted to it, or the best exercise program, or whatever. It doesn't matter because of biology has a program.

And I shouldn't say it doesn't matter, obviously we can significantly improve what we call our health span, or a quality of life, or our longevity, our mobility, our function as we age. But only to a point because the program is going to run, and it doesn't care. And I felt the same way when I had the "I hate to say this," but I had to do it like the crotch eye view of my sister giving birth.

I was there at the birth of my nephew, and I was like right there and to observe the birthing process. There's a point in which the woman just checks out, like the conscious woman checks out, and biology is like, "I got this," right? And there's a sequence of preprogrammed events that just runs.

And witnessing that and having respect for it, I think is actually really powerful because you don't have to rigidly try to control it. You can just witness it and marvel at it. And then, some days wake up and be like, "okay, now what's wrong?" Like, what is broken today? Because that happens too.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. And what I love about that is, since this is the done with dieting podcast, many women are in the idea that we can control our body through diet and exercise. And what I hear you saying is that the body has got its own agenda. And the more that we can relax into that and really observe and become curious about it, the better we'll be with the ultimate result that we want. Right?

**Krista:** Yeah. I think that's a good way to frame it. And I would frame it as something like playing, or dancing, or tangoing with your body. And so, by understanding the

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physiological mechanisms that are at work, you can then understand, "okay, what is the best way to approach it?" So, let's say I do want to change my body shape, size, fitness level, whatever. By understanding how it works and trying to work with those processes and systems rather than against them, the result is much better.

And so, one example of that, which I'm sure you've talked about another in other discussions is that we do have a central regulator of our body weight in our brain, the hypothalamus it's like mission control. And so, if our mission control senses that all of a sudden, we're eating way less energy or calories, it's going to go, "oh, like this is an emergency feminist coming."

Let's change, how appetite feels, how hunger feels, helpfulness feels, someone's desire to eat, someone's thinking about food, someone's desire to move around, hormonal processes. So, if I'm on a crash diet, my hypothalamus is going to be like, eventually not on my watch, we're not doing this. And it's going to respond and compensate with all of these mechanisms.

And so, if you've ever crashed diet, you know it's only a matter of time before the hunger comes raging in, or you feel exhausted, and you don't want to do anything that is your body compensating. So, if we understand that drastically reducing energy intake, all of a sudden is bad news for our hypothalamus.

We can go, "okay, but I want to change my body, so how do I do it?" "Oh, how about I just fiddle with the knobs a little bit in a gentle way?" In a low stress way, so that my hypothalamus doesn't get freaked out and try to lock the system down. So, that's just one example of how we can like dance with it, you know?

**Elizabeth:** Great. And so many of us have been taught that if we want to make progress towards health; let's say that I want to run a marathon, that we have to do it all at the

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same time. And what you're saying is do a little bit lean into it in order to not mess with the body's natural structures. Yeah?

**Krista:** Yeah. I think unfortunately, one of the predominant narratives in the fitness, the commercial fitness industry has been dramatic transformation, right? X number of week challenge, overnight transformation, three weeks to whatever ads, like whatever it is. Right? And something I say in workshops about change is that fast change is what we call trauma a lot of the time. Right?

Too much, too fast, too soon, this is the definition of trauma. So, effectively we are traumatizing ourselves when we leap into these massive kind of Cinderella story, huge changes like, "oh, okay, I'm going to get up every day at 5:30 and do a crazy intense workout for an hour. Like all of a sudden, this is effectively traumatizing ourselves.

On top of that as layered a lot of like thoughts, beliefs, feelings, there's a lot of psychological stress on top of it. So, it's not just that I think that that 5:00 AM workout as a fun thing, most of the time it's like, "all right, damn it. This is it, I suck, I'm going to fix me," like it comes with all of these negative feelings, and thoughts, and beliefs.

So, all we're doing is just taking a dump truck of stress and dumping on all over ourselves in the broader context of an already stressful life. And if we're thinking about women at midlife, "my God, what stressors don't we have, right?" Job, family, aging parents, kids, like everything is flying at us during this period of life.

So, it starts to become clear like, why these dramatic programs don't work and why kind of a gentle, compassionate, nudging, fiddling, adjusting? Almost like erosion, if you think about how erosion works, like just a slow erosion process. Why that is a much, much better approach in this something that's more sustainable.

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If you look into the future and say, do I want to be getting up at 5:00 AM for my horrible, vomit, inspiring workout until I die? Like until I'm 90 or a hundred like, "oh God, no!" Right? But you know what? I enjoy doing something fun, what I enjoy doing something sustainable. What can I live with? What kind of person do I want to be? What kind of life do I want to have? That's really what we're seeking is that beautiful balance.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. And you actually hit the nail on the head right there. Like, when I went through my basically come to Jesus meeting with myself, it was like, "okay, Elizabeth, do you want to be running for an hour every day?" And then, going back to the gym, and lifting heavy for 45 minutes, and logging your food when you're 65 years old? "No!" Like, okay, so we need to figure out how to manage our weight and do it in a sustainable way.

**Krista:** Yeah. And also, to your point, we also need to do it in a way that is the majority from inside ourselves, right? With internal cues and internal motivators. So, not someone on the outside telling me I'm bad, or wrong, or whatever, or some kind of external structure. But really thinking about, how do I get aligned with the person that I want to be, the life that I want to have, the values that I want to manifest in the world?

To me, that's the much more important question because when we outsource control of ourselves to someone else or something else like rules, or standards, or whatever. We effectively relinquish, like our self-determination and we become someone who's like a good little girl for living up to the rules.

Like we live out some weird primary school scenario where it's like, we make the teacher mad or not where we follow the rules, or we don't. And I think that's just such an incredibly disempowering paradigm, especially for women at midlife who should be honestly coming into their own power at this stage in life. Right?

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**Elizabeth:** Yeah. That's so well said. So, you brought up compassion a couple of times, and I know that within PNC coaching, you have something that's called the first five. Can you talk about that a little bit?

**Krista:** Yeah. So, I came up with this idea because it was like, as a coach, often you see different scenarios that don't seem to be related, right? One client is doing this and our clients doing that. And so, a lot of our coaches were like, "okay, I don't know where to start." And these clients feel very different to me. And I can't find the underlying principles that connects them, I can't find a system. And I was like, "well, there is a system," that a lot of us are doing intuitively we've just never really captured it as such.

So, the first five is basically, you have more than five tools in your coaching toolbox. But if you only had five, these are the ones, and they go in order. So, step number one with any client, any situation is you start with **compassion**. You start with understanding that things are difficult, people suffer, we're all in this together. And the goal is to help alleviate suffering. And if I can alleviate suffering as a coach, I wish that I could. Right?

So, I offer this kind of wise, honest, loving, kindness to you as the client, right? That's acknowledgement of, " yeah, you know what things suck for you right now? It's hard. You're struggling. You're feeling distressed. I see that. So, that's piece number one.

Piece number two is a **growth mindset**. So, recognizing that almost anything can be improved with a targeted effort and not just working hard. Because I know a lot of them work really hard. But they just work hard and like this, like a hamster in a wheel, right?

Going nowhere, or doing things that don't help, or feeling bad, or worrying about productivity, or whatever. It's about doing the right things in a targeted, helpful, adaptive, useful way. Right? So, it's like, if you're learning to play the piano, you don't just go to the piano, start bashing on it. It's like, there's a series of progressive things that you can do to learn the piano.

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And I think most of us intuitively understand if I practice the piano for an hour a day, I'm probably going to get better at the piano, whether I have quote-unquote talent or I don't. Right? So, the second piece is a growth mindset. Just that kind of core belief that if I work on this in the right way, that I can probably get better at it, I may never be the best in the world, but that doesn't matter. I can just be better than where I am now.

And then, the third piece is what we call a **solution focus**. So, once you have a growth mindset, like you start to naturally think, how do I solve this problem? How can I move away from being fixated on the problem and towards finding creative, innovative solutions? How could I solve this? What could I do? How could I put the crowbar here and lever this thing open?

So, you start focusing on solutions. What can you do? What do you already know? What are you already good at? What's already going well? How have you already tried to solve the problem? What did you learn?

In the way you start to effectively ignore problems, unless they're actively causing damage. And when I say this to in coaching workshops, everyone's just like, "ah, how can you ignore problems?" And I'm like, "just try it." Go and try a solution focus for a week and totally ignore all problems unless they're causing active damage. And see, how it goes?

And by the end of the week, they're like, "oh my God, this was so easy," because I've started to look for where things are already going well. "Oh, you know, I argue with my husband all the time." But when don't you argue? "Oh, well, when we're walking the dog." Cool, what's happening in that scenario? And how can we just amplify and do more of that? Right?

So then, the fourth step is what we call the **GSPA framework**. You take your goals; you break them into skills. Skills are made up of practices. Practices are made up of daily

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actions. So, a lot of us set goals and don't really think about how we're going to get there. Right? Or we set goals like I'm just going to eat healthier, "I guess, kind of a vague nebulous non-specific thing."

But really in order to move towards goals, we need some kind of process, and we need skills. It's like saying, "oh, my goal is to sink a ball in the basket, basketball." Well, I need some skills in order to do that. I can't just like fling the ball at the basket and hope that it gets there one day. Right?

But then of course skills, like athletic skills have to be built out of these little daily actions. And so, our goal as coaches is to say, how can we distill your goal down to a very tiny daily action that you can do today, immediately, 5 minutes, 10 minutes, whatever it is. And every day or almost every day consistently, no matter what. Not unlike some imaginary perfect scenario where you suddenly have time and space like that does not exist. How can we do this tiny daily action in the real world in life, as it is crazy, messy, imperfect, whatever?

And then, over time of course, actions start to coalesce into practices, which start to coalesce into skills, and you get better at things. And then, you start to move in the direction of your goal.

Now, step five is what happens in the inevitable moment. When at some point in your skill building, you come up against resistance and ambivalence. Whether that's in yourself, in the situation, you may have competing commitments like, I want to take time for myself, at the same time I need to take care of my family. Or I want to do this, but at the same time that, right? I have a job, I have this, it feels like all of these things are competing. I feel like I should go to bed early, but this is the only time I see my partner. So, I want to stay up, watch our favorite TV show together, whatever. Right?

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So, the final five is a technique called **motivational interviewing**. Which helps us navigate and work through this resistance and ambivalence in a way that's very helpful and not just like, "well, what's wrong with you?" You're making excuses, you must not want it enough. Motivational interviewing, I think recognizes that, to be humanist, to be ambivalent in a way. And that resistance and ambivalence naturally emerge in the process of change. So, it's not something weird, it doesn't show that you don't want it enough, it is just how things are as we try to change.

So, that gives you a tool for kind of processing a lot of that stuff that it comes up as you try to learn the skills and repeat the actions day to day. And really those first five will give you almost a complete suite of coaching approaches. That will get you started on almost any kind of project and what that's you're coaching someone else, or you're coaching yourself, or some kind of self-leadership project. It's all good, it all works.

**Elizabeth:** Well, and what I love about what you just said is you're talking to folks who are coaches. Helping them to coach their clients, but this also really 100% applies to clients or people who just want to be healthier. And so, I'd actually like to go through each one of them again, and talk about them a little bit more in depth in terms of how the women who are listening right now, listening to us, how they can apply each of those different areas?

And the first one, I think is so incredibly important because we just are not compassionate with ourselves. And so, what that looks like is us having that inner critic in our heads and listening to the inner critic, believing that the inner critic is correct. And so, what can you offer in terms of changing that inner critic to something that's a little bit more compassionate?

**Krista:** Yeah. I think this is such a critical point. And when I talk about compassion with clients, a lot of them are like, " yeah, but that just means taking it easy on myself," being

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soft, making excuses. And what I say is two things. One, our brains are wired for threats. Like, we see threats before we see opportunities. Like that makes total evolutionary sense. Stay safe before you take a risk and go out and explore and create and try something.

And it's only when the biological drive gets so great that your brain will take a risk. Like, I'm so thirsty, I'm so hungry, I'm so whatever. I will take this risk, but I'm still very threat oriented. So, when we critique ourselves, when we are a perfectionist and really just mean with ourselves abuse. Honestly abusive, like things that we would never take from the people in our lives, we are willing to give to ourselves.

And so, I always say like, don't be the asshole in your own head. Don't be the abuser in your own head. So, when we critique ourselves in our head, our brain treats it like a threat. And when we're under threat, we cannot be creative, we cannot change, we cannot find innovative solutions to problems. We can't even solve problems half the time, because think of the time you've been super anxious or scared like, you are not coming with anything creative in that moment. You are regressing, you are shutting down, you're going back to child brain. Like, all of us become either moody teenagers, or screaming toddlers, or whatever when we are stressed. Right?

So, when you're stressed, you suck in terms of solving problems. And so, self-critique activates that threat brain. So, we effectively shut ourselves down. What happens then when we're stressed? We do all the quote unquote, bad habits, that we don't want to be doing because those habits help us cope with stress. So, it's like I eat when I'm stressed, and now I critique myself for eating, and now I'm more stressed, and now I eat to relieve that stress. So, it's like this crazy cycle. So, that's piece number one.

But piece number two, I say, "listen," anything I'm saying you can test. So, with my clients, I'll say, listen, take a day and be super self-critical. Like just double down the

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meanest person you can imagine, just write it all down and say the meanest things to yourself you can possibly imagine.

Then, the next day be incredibly self-compassionate. Imagine a wise kind, older, wiser, loving friend, family member, whoever that is to you and think of what they would say to you and write all that down.

Now compare, how did each day go? Right? How well did you solve problems during those days? How effectively did you stick to whatever routine you wanted to stick to? Like how much energy did you have? How good did you feel? The answer starts to be pretty clear, right? It's almost and I noticed when I give compassion to clients, should they give it to themselves? It's like the flood gates open. It's like, all of the stuff comes out of them like, "oh man, I did not realize how much I just needed that caring presence."

For some people it's like incredibly profound. It's like, they just start crying as soon as they get that ounce of compassion. So, all of you listening, feel free to try a self-criticism day, and a self-compassion day, and see what happens. And that's what we call science. You get the results of your experiments, and you can just decide.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. So, it's so funny today on Facebook, I saw someone in one of the groups I belong to, she said something like I've been practicing self-kindness for the past few months, and I cannot see one downside from that.

**Krista:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth:** It's so awesome.

**Krista:** Yeah. And I think to be really clear, we're not talking about, you're awesome, you're a goddess, you're amazing. Like that's not compassion. Compassion, I feel like an

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intrinsic part of compassion has to be honesty. Like we are seeing the situation clearly, but with kindness and a way to practice this on yourself is just think about someone in your life.

Someone or something like a pet an animal that you only want the best for, that you love it's your child, and if it's your dog, maybe it's your beloved grandmother, whoever it is. And then, just imagine this person's suffering and the feeling that will come out of you spontaneously is the feeling that you want to give to yourself.

**Elizabeth:** Right. Yeah, I think that the argument that most people have is that if I'm compassionate with myself, then I'm going to believe my excuses. And that's not what we're talking.

**Krista:** No. And that really doesn't occur, what's fair. It's very interesting that that really doesn't occur. You see yourself clearly. It's like another analogy I use is if you have a kid, or a dog, or pet that you love, like you adore them, but they're funny looking like they have a weird ear, or they have little Tuft of hair, or something like that. And you look at that kid and you love that kid. Right?

And you're like, "Aw, I love you." But you see that, you don't not notice all of that. You see it all completely and clearly and you still choose to take the most loving path towards that. And you don't let your kid run wild just because you love them. Right? You offer them structure, you understand that offering structure guidance and limits is kindness, is loving. You don't just let your kid eat everything in the candy aisle. Right? Just let your dog eat whatever it finds in the park.

So, I think when we use that analogy, we can start to see, "yeah, of course," that doesn't mean just because I love my kid and I see them in all their imperfection, and I adore that. It doesn't mean I let them do whatever they want. I still have a preferred path for them.

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**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Okay, that's awesome. And then, the second step is growth mindset. And so, there's a really good book called "mindset," by Carol Dweck. And she talks about the difference between growth mindset and fixed mindset. That a fixed mindset is that we believe that we are inherently gifted, or a growth mindset is that we can learn the new behavior.

And what I think a lot of folks listening right now, identify as perfectionist. And so, as perfectionists, we don't like being beginners because when we're beginners, that means that we're going to make mistakes. It's not going to be perfect. And so, it goes back to step number one, which is compassion, right? Because when we make mistakes, we have to keep going and keep practicing, right?

**Krista:** Yes. And I think there's lots of layers to what you're saying. So, I think of perfectionism as not good enoughitis. And it's the feeling that no matter what we do, we'll never be good enough. And then, people go different ways on it. Right? Some people are like, I'm just going to keep trying harder, and harder, and harder to be perfect. And other people are like, "well, it's never going to work out, so screw it. I'm just going to shut down and never try." Right.

So, there's a fork in the road here. But ultimately what underlies it is this idea, at least say, "I cannot tolerate." The feeling, the experience of not knowing everything, doing everything. I cannot tolerate the idea that someone else might see me being less than ideal.

So, fundamentally it's about not being able to tolerate feelings of shame. That you think are occurring whether that's from yourself or someone else. And having taken martial arts for many years, I'll tell you there's certain sports where you never get over feeling like a dumb ass. And if you don't relinquish your perfectionism, you actually can't go anywhere.

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And so, I think a lot of people are very proud in a way secretly of their perfectionism. Like, this makes me devoted to quality, I think people believe that. Like, being a perfectionist makes me devoted to quality or there's something I call ninja crapping. Which is I'm going to crap on myself first, like a ninja. I'm going to get in there, like a ninja, "boom!" And crap on myself before anyone else can.

And thus, I will demonstrate my commitment to quality by letting everyone know that I've already critiqued myself sufficiently. So, that I show that I believe in goodness. And this is a very dysfunctional thought pattern. And so, but it felt that what it does is it immobilizes you from actually learning.

The great irony of being a perfectionist is it makes you suck like this just, it's one of these horrible ironies of life. The more perfectionist you are, the worse you are, and whether that's athletic performance. Whether that's being a parent, whether that's being a partner, whatever it is that you do, that inability to tolerate errors and frustration and mistakes actually makes you worse.

So, a growth mindset says, listen, like I said, not everyone is going to be the best in the world that stuff, right? If you want to be an elite world-class performer, you probably want to be a little talented or you want to have a little bit of talent. But all of us can improve something with targeted and focused effort.

And just like I said before, it can't just be effort for the sake of effort. This is where it really-really helps to work with a coach or a teacher who can say, put your attention here. If you do this, if you practice the piano this way, this is what will help you improve. So, I think this is a great opportunity to, rather than just effort-ing, which I think a lot of women do tasking, effort-ing to engage in targeted effort, to have someone guide you.

And also, to give you a feedback loop. If you're playing the piano, the sound should sound like this. Here's what the song should sound like. So now, you know if you play a

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wrong note. If we talk about eating, this is how things should feel in your body. If you have eaten things that work for you. If you haven't or you've eaten too much, this is how it feels.

So, you get that like real time feedback. And I think there's a lot of myths about things like metabolism, right? Metabolism is the equivalent of talent or giftedness in nutrition. So, a lot of people will say, "oh, my metabolism changed after such and such a time," or it seems like everyone else can eat properly, but I can't cause there's something wrong with me.

And these statements, unless you have some really weird obscure genetic disorder that you probably knew about since birth, they're not true. Like, most of what occurs, most of what occurs in terms of bodies, aside from the basic facts of physiology is behavioral. So, it seems because our brains hide things from us. So, we're not aware of our behaviors and we're like, "this must be my metabolism."

It's actually behaviors. But again, we don't see them for our self, which is another reason why a coach is great because a coach can be like, "well, you're doing X, Y, and Zed that are giving you this outcome." And sometimes that sucks to hear, but it can be very useful cause it's like, "oh, you can change X, Y, and Z through this particular pathway."

So, another example of that is we teach people to eat, "I'm not crazy about the word intuitively," but we teach people to eat and abide by their hunger and fullness skills, and that's a skill. That's a skill that anyone can improve and get better at. And so, you can feel the difference.

And I think it's very liberating for people to feel like, "oh, I can learn this." I can learn to self-regulate my food intake. It is possible. And it's so exciting for people when they get their first success. Like, "oh my God, yay, I thought I was broken." Right. I had this

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fixed mindset. I thought it was broken and now discovering that I can do it with practice. It's incredibly liberating. Yeah.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, I love that. Okay, so number three is solution-focused. And I think that again, solution focus is perfect right here because we're talking about compassion, we're talking about growth mindset. And when we combine those two together, when we make a mistake, so you brought up the hunger scale.

So, learning how to listen to your body when it comes to eating just enough. When we don't do that, let's say that we revert back to old habits and we accidentally get caught up in the conversation at dinner, or we're at a party, maybe we're nervous eating, or whatever. When we break that habit that we're trying to establish, it's so easy for us with a lack of compassion to beat ourselves up because we know that we're going to be making mistakes.

And so, when we get into judgment, what judgment does is it stops curiosity. And the curiosity is what's actually going to fuel the solution focus, right?

**Krista:** Yeah, absolutely. And I think there's some great solution focused questions. So, one is people will often come to you and say, "well, I don't want to be this." I don't want to be this size, this shape, this fitness level, I don't want to have these habits. "Okay, cool." The solution focus question is what do you want? If you could imagine your hopeful future, what does that look like?

And it's interesting. A lot of people have never stopped to consider, what do I want? What do I value? What would I love to see as a hopeful future for myself? Like, they've been so in mashed in the problem focus and the don't want. So, one of the first things we do is like, "okay, what is your do want?" What would you like to move towards? And that language is very deliberate too.

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I'm not a huge fan of talking about goals exactly, because I don't think that's how most people think. They're the goal oriented people in the world that like just love goals and they like to knock them down and smash them. But most people, it makes more sense to talk about something that you're moving towards. Right?

So, rather than achieving a goal it's like, what's the direction that you want to move in. And that's a very solution focused way of thinking about it. Because it helps you think on a continuum rather than I achieved the goal or I didn't. I'm moving along the continuum.

So, to use your example, let's say we go to a family event and there's several of these family events through the year. And the first time we do it, it's just a total disaster. We eat too much, we drink too much, we make ourselves sick, we engage in kinds of dysfunctional family behaviors, whatever happens. Right? And we're like, "oh, that was terrible." That's my baseline, that's my bottom, that's the worst case scenario I got into a screaming fight with my mom. I ate too much cheese, I got into jazz, whatever.

So then, we can say, "okay, at the next family event, I'm going to try to be a little bit better using this specific tactic, X, Y, Z, whatever that is." And over time, the next family event is probably not going to be a spectacular success, but can you make it just a little bit better, and a little bit better, and a little bit better, and a little bit better.

So, a solution focus is always looking for where does the problem not happen? Where does the problem happen less? Where were you a little bit more able to get along with your family to eat well at this event, to stick with the veggie tray, stick at the cheese tray, whatever. Right?

So, it looks for progress over time and like movement along a continuum. And so, we're always circling back to this question of like, what is already going well? What resources

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do you already have? What supports you already have? What skills do you already have and how can we just leverage those or do more of that?

And a lot of women, I think were amazed to find that there are highly functioning adults and the rest of their lives. They have jobs, and families, they have whatever they're doing. Like they're functioning adults in the world and all we have to do sometimes, and say, "listen, you're a lawyer." Why don't we just take all of those organizational professional skills and port them over to this situation? And why don't you just apply? Like, all of the skills you use, all of them all day long and to this.

And a lot of women are just shocked, they're like, "oh, I never thought of that." Right? And it's so obvious when you say it and they're just immediately able to flip in to, "oh, well now, I'll solve the problem this way." It's so obvious and we tend to be domain specific in how we look at problems. And this goes back to the fixed mindset. Right?

I have a diet problem because my metabolism "yada-yada-yada." But we would never say in our job as lawyers, "oh, I guess I'm just not a law person." It just doesn't make sense. So, that is what the solution focused mindset is, it's really just prioritizing "solution, solution, solution, solution" in a very neutral kind of like non-judging way. Like, how do we fix this using the tools that we have?

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. And it seems like that then dovetails really well into number four, and I just have the acronym, which is GSPA. So, that's goals, and?

**Krista:** Skills, and practices, and actions. So, you can imagine the flowchart, right? It's like the goal is at the top of the flow chart. And then, the skill is like the big umbrella piece of, what is the thing you have to get better at to move towards this goal? And then, how do you practice these skills? Just like, any athletic skill. And then, what are the daily actions that you will do to build these practices?

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So, actions are like the most granular component of this at the bottom. But all of these are behaviors, right? They're not things that you have, they're behaviors that you do.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. And what's so amazing about that is when it comes to losing weight, when it comes to our health, we really can't set outcome goals. We can't say I am going to lose 25 pounds over the next year because we don't know what's definitely happening in this body. But what we can do is we can say, I'm going to do these behaviors. And we have a kind of idea that those behaviors will bring us to our goal, right?

**Krista:** Yes. That's exactly right. And I used to work with a lot of mixed martial arts and wrestling athletes, helping them cut weight. And so, that's a sport where you have to be a certain body weight to compete. And I would always say before we get started like, I cannot promise you that you will be weighing in at this weight because we cannot control that.

But I can show you actions that if done consistently, and that's the important word consistently, will dramatically increase the probability of you getting to that outcome piece. Now, weight class sports are a little different, cause it's like any means necessary, right? We're not really concerned with the quality of that body weight loss necessarily. It's a bit dysfunctional just for the record, I do not endorse it.

But when it comes to changing our body shape and size, there are like you say so many unknowns. Like what if I commit very diligently to an exercise routine and I change my body composition. Right? My body starts to gain lean mass, which includes bone, which is great. You want bone? I call it like the engine, we want lots of engine.

Maybe at the end of that year of eating nutritiously and working at diligently, maybe my body weight has hardly changed at all. But my body composition and my level of fitness, my athletic performance, and my sense of vitality has completely transformed. Do I get

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disappointed and mad because I couldn't get to my goal? No! I see how behaviors created a particular outcome.

So, there's embedded in, this is like an ongoing revision of your goal too. But it's really, really important to detach from the outcome goal and not mistake the metric, the indicators of progress for the goal. Because like your goal is not to weigh whatever pounds. Your goal is to enjoy your life, right? Or to feel more confident.

So, a lot of people get mixed up, maybe a certain body weight will tell you that you're moving closer to the feeling you want to feel, or the experience you want to have, or the performance you want to have. But that is not the goal, it is a way to measure movement in the right direction.

So, I think I try to clarify that really strongly for people like, your goal in life is not to be 150 pounds. It's to be healthy, it's to have vitality, it's to perform well, like whatever it is you want to do. It's to do something else, it's like your goal is not to bench press 200 pounds. Your goal is to feel strong. It's a completely different animal. So, part of what's embedded in here is not mixing up indicators of progress with the goal.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. And what's so interesting, and I don't know if you experienced this with your clients. But I know that for mine, that once we get all of these other things in place, the weight loss really, although it was the original goal becomes like the cherry on top.

Once we get rid of all of the other mindset chatter, and I can't, and you sucks, and all of that stuff, then the goal becomes the bonus.

**Krista:** Well, yeah, and sometimes the goal is even necessary. We have a lot of clients in our precision nutrition coaching programs that don't lose weight. But they feel so much better and there's so much happier. They're like, "oh, I came in thinking I wanted to do

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this and now I've got this other result and I feel a million times better. I don't even care about the original piece."

And so, it's important to recognize that really ultimately what all of us are seeking is a feeling, right? And so, it's like, "oh, I feel like if I weigh 150 pounds, I'm going to be more confident."

First of all, those two things are not connected at all. Like you will not necessarily if you never work on having confidence. When that scale says 150, you will not feel more confident. In fact, it will be worse because now you've gotten to 150 and you're like, "Hey man, where's my confidence?" And when it doesn't show up, it's like doubly annoying.

But if the goal is ultimately the feeling, we can get you working on more confident right now and detach that contingency, right? Because even circling back to the compassion, what we're really talking about is a non-contingent good feeling about ourselves, right? So, a feeling about ourselves, a valuing of ourselves that is not dependent on something external.

And I think this is a lot of that root of perfectionism. Somehow, we got the message, you're only good if you do this. You're only valuable if you do that or look like that. And like, how messed up is that? That our self-worth is contingent. Like imagine saying to your partner, "I will only love you if you wear that green shirt. Otherwise, no!" Like that's ridiculous!

But that is what occurs. I will only be confident if I'm 150 pounds, I will only be happy if I have apps. That's a crappy bargain, man. Those things can and will go away.

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**Elizabeth:** Yeah. And as you said. I just want to reiterate for the people in the back that if you don't practice confidence now, then you won't feel confident when you get on the scale. And the scale says, whatever the number is.

**Krista:** It will never happen. It's not going to happen by accident. Right? You have to go at it, it circles right back around to skills. If you want confidence, build the skill of confidence. And it's not going to happen right away. I think a lot of people hear this stuff and they're like, "so, I'm just supposed to start telling myself that I'm awesome? No, no, no! It's like any continuous, like playing the piano, right? You're going to start with playing the C note, "ding, ding, ding, ding," like it's exactly the same thing. You're going to have a microgram of confidence on day one.

It's maybe will never be a kilogram of confidence, but we can make you better than you are. But you have to start practicing the feeling that you want right now. Don't wait.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Oh, singing my own song. Okay, so let's talk about, deep health. You say that you are interested in helping folks with deep health. So, talk a little bit about that, what it is,

**Krista:** Yeah. I'll give you some of the context first and then I'll define what it is so people can get a better sense of it.

So, one of the things that if you're in the fitness and nutrition world, you often see, is there are people who have quote unquote, putting this in heavy finger quotations amazing physiques? They are jacked, ripped, swole, lean, whatever you consider a great body. And so, you might look at that person and be like, "oh wow! I want to look like them, they look so amazing, their container looks so amazing."

But inside, these people are so unhappy, or their lives are so disconnected, and empty, or they're not even actually physically all that capable because it's like, they've whittled

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their body down, but now it's to get those abs, it's like they had to sacrifice so much physical wellbeing.

And I started looking at this scenario and I was like; this is not the output that I want to create. I do not want to create people that have these physiques but are so unhealthy and every other domain of life. So, that was the Genesis of this idea. And after much discussion at precision nutrition, we settled on six dimensions of deep health.

You could come up with any of your own, it doesn't really matter. This is what we settled on. So, physical health? Pretty obvious, how does your body work? How does it function? Are you sick? Are you thriving that kind of thing? Do you have energy?

Then, there's mental health. Now, a lot of people think like anxiety, depression. I actually define mental health is more like cognitive health. Like, how does your brain work? How do you think? How do you process information? How do you remember? How do you learn that kind of stuff?

Then, we have emotional health. Which is, are you able to feel a wide range of emotions in a healthy way? Are you able to regulate your emotions? Can you feel the full spectrum of emotions? Can you name your emotions?

Then, we have social health. Social and relational health like, do you have healthy, strong, supportive, secure, thriving relationships? That can be with people, that can be with animals, it can be with whatever. But do you feel connected in some way to others in your life?

Then, we have existential health. Some people think of it as spiritual health, philosophical health. Is there meaning in your life? Do you have a reason, a purpose? Now, this is not the big P purpose. Right? People get stressed out by this like, "oh my God, what is my

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calling from the university?" It's like, not at all. Do you just feel like there's some point to you being here? Are you taking care of a pet?

There's studies that show that people can find meaning in taking care of a plant. And they can actually live longer and be healthier just by getting a plant to take care of. So, that's the level that we're describing. It could be your work, your kids, some kind of project you're interested in saving the whales. I don't know, whatever it is, some kind of purpose, some kind of meaning.

And then, the final one is environmental health. So, is what's around you contributing to your health. And that can be literal environments. We've seen literally the world catch fire over the last year or so. Like, I'm in British Columbia, probably 70% of British Columbia was on fire this summer. And certainly, elsewhere in the world, there's lots of environmental concerns.

But the social, like the metaphorical environment, right? The people, the things, the vibe around you. Are you a member of a marginalized group? Is there racism? Is there sexism or homophobia? Is there all the other "isms" and phobias? Do you live in a low-income area? Is it safe? So, all of these things make up your environment. So, those are the six dimensions of deep health.

**Elizabeth:** So then would you consider the six dimensions of health kind of like being a wheel of life? Would you put that in there? Okay.

**Krista:** Yeah, we represented as a wheel, and you can think of it as like a pie cut into wedges. And one of the easiest ways to show this is to color in the pie wedges, right? So, if each cut it in the six wedges and then color in the wedges, with how healthy you feel in every dimension. And the bigger the wedge, the healthier you feel. So, you could look at this very easily and go, "oh my gosh, my existential wedge is like tiny, but my social wedge is good." Good for me. Right?

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So, there's lots of ways to spin that and you can decide to amplify the dimensions that are really working. There's that solution focus again like, "Hey, you know what? My social health is really strong, I wonder if I could leverage that to do something else in some of these other dimensions.

If I have a great bunch of friends, but my physical health is not so great. Could I use my friend group to help me get healthier? Like, how can I leverage this right? Or another way to look at it is to say, listen, this dimension of health is not doing so great. I've prioritized maybe physical health over emotional health, let's see if I can bring that emotional health up a little bit. Like, maybe I'm an athlete that's focused on a sport and I haven't had a lot of social connections, or I've been really focused on training and haven't nourished that emotional part of me. There's lots of scenarios, so you can spin it lots of different ways.

**Elizabeth:** So, let's go back to something that you were finishing up with when you were talking about the six dimensions, which was environmental health and the marginalized groups. So, what is it that you notice? And when it comes to marginalized groups and health, and how was that impacted?

Yeah, that's a great question. And I think it's a question that started to become much more salient in recent years. And it's not that marginalization hasn't existed, that's really been a constant of humanity. But I think that it's now coming into the collective consciousness of like, "oh, this is a thing, and it has very tangible effects on people."

And we are no longer prepared to tolerate this as a society. So, we know that social marginalization and inequality leads to poor health. And we've known this for years and years, and one of the most famous studies on this it's called the "white hall study." And this was a study done in British civil servants, it's still ongoing. I can't remember when it started, but there's been several decades of it.

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And because British civil servants, it's a very class-based society, it's very stratified. So, it's like, you know who's at the bottom and the middle and the top, like it's very clear and there's a lot of like, poop flows downhill thing.

So, what they started to notice is that people who were in the bottom tiers had worse health and the people in the top tiers. And so, this becomes a really interesting question, what is it about this? And so, we started to be able to see with new diagnostic techniques, exactly what's happening. So now, we can see, "oh, people who are marginalized, systemically have higher rates of inflammation."

Their bodies show markers of physiological stress and distress, that is chronic. It's not just like having a bad day at work. Right? It is something that is chronic and like grinding. It's like, having a fan on in your room with a really annoying noise, but you can't turn it off, right? Over time, it just grinds you down.

And so, this explains a lot of the health outcomes we see in marginalized groups. And there's things like access to services like, who can get to healthcare? Who lives in a healthy community? We know that lower income communities, communities of color are much more likely to be polluted, have all kinds of nasty things in them, landfills, mines, whatever.

But the experience of marginalization itself can be a health risk. And to circle back around to folks in your audience, I think we tend to take on a lot of stuff on ourselves. This is happening because of me as an individual and some intrinsic quality that I have. This isn't working because I'm not motivated enough, because I haven't done something.

I think we need to pull the camera out and look a little bit more broadly about what are the social dynamics that are happening around you? And are you someone who is confronted in everyday life with big, and small, and micro stressors that accumulate, and

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accumulate, and accumulate causing stress on your body, and your mind, and your spirit? I think that really explains a lot about the health outcomes that we see for marginalized group.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. So, a few weeks ago I had on my podcast, a woman talking about patriarchy as it applies to our body image. And so, what I hear you saying is that the women who are in this audience who are currently listening, understanding that when we're looking at how we're treated from a patriarchal standpoint, as well as from a classes standpoint. That if we're not in the top tier, then that means that we inherently don't feel good enough.

And when we don't feel good enough, then our likelihood of taking care of ourselves isn't going to be as it would be for someone in the top tier. Is that what I'm hearing you say?

**Krista:** I think that's part of it. I don't know if I would give it even that much individual agency, like individual control. I think an example would be something like let's say, I'm a recent immigrant to Canada or the US and I'm a woman of color.

And because of the way the immigration system works, I have to take a lower wage job. And maybe I have to take multiple jobs because the minimum wage is so low that I cannot make enough money. I can't make ends meet just with one job. So, I might have to take two jobs, three jobs, maybe I'm working shift work.

Maybe I have to live in an area of town that I have to commute to. Right? Maybe they don't have a car, but maybe I have to take three buses to get where I'm going. And maybe the area that I'm living in is not very safe, it's not very walkable. There's not a lot of fresh foods, grocery stores. Right?

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So, my ability like actual disability to take care of myself has almost nothing to do with individual choice. But rather the structural constraints that are imposed on me. And really, if you talk to people who are marginalized, whether that's economically, socially, politically, whatever. Most of them will say, "yes, I would love to take care of myself."

I would love to engage in these healthy behaviors. Ask anyone standing in a food bank line, "hey, would you like to eat healthy?" They'd be like, "hell yeah." Like, I would love that, but I am up against this structural constraint. And one of the exercises I used to make my students do back in the day when I used to teach university was, "okay, here's a monthly budget for a family on welfare." Go and figure out how to buy your food, pay your rent, get to work, all pay for trans, to pay for the clothes, whatever on this amount of money. And people are like, "but miss, we can't," I'm like, that's the point, right?

I think we want to be really careful in talking about individual choice, cause I think one of the most dangerous narratives. So, on the one hand we have growth mindset. Yes, effort matters. Yes, individual behaviors matter. Absolutely, you can act on your own behalf. But we want to be really careful to look at the whole picture, the whole context. To what extent, can you act on your own behalf? What are your structural constraints? And especially in the United States, I'm Canadian.

So, we have universal health care. But in the U S because healthcare is tied to your employer, you may put off visiting the doctor, until it's super serious. And now, you have a major health problem that requires serious intervention. So, you might not do that kind of quote unquote self-care because you simply can't afford it. Right?

So, you might not go to the dentist. You might not get your eyes checked. You might not get your annual physical or whatever until you're in really big trouble, like health wise. All of these factors that intersect. So, it's almost like we're constantly going back

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between the individual perspective and the systems perspective without saying that one or the other one is like the most important.

**Elizabeth:** Right. And yeah, I think that one of the things that precision nutrition really impacted on me was, being a white woman, understanding that there are so many other cultural out there and how culture impacts, what's available to us and what we can choose? It was really impactful for me going through the program and realizing that other people do not have the privilege that I have when it comes to access, really.

**Krista:** Yeah. And honestly, the rabbit hole goes real deep. Once you start looking into systems of marginalization and how so many things are like, even stuff like, what's the ideal body, right? What do we define as an ideal? What do we define as a healthy body? What do we define as a healthy meal?

I used to give folks heck, at PN years ago, when I first came in. I was like, "what are these suggested meals? Three ounces of Turkey like, who eats like this? This is weird, middle-class health conscious white people, food. No one eats this. And so, are we eliminating like 80, 90% of the populations foods and way of eating and cultural heritage by saying, "oh, only this way of eating is healthy or only this shape of body is healthy."

It's so funny because I've been in the fitness industry a long time. I started being interested in the eighties, right? When it was just like no information about it for women, there was no weightlifting. And everyone wanted a skinny, young, white lady bomb, which is to say, "no, bum," you want to know bum, you want to know thighs, right? Like you just want them to be invisible sticks.

And now, the fact that booty is in is just like hilarious to me and wonderful. And there's such a push now for body diversity, which I think is just, "oh my God," refreshing and tremendous. But it makes me laugh thinking about where we came from.

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And if I tried to explain 2021 to someone in 1995, they would just be like, what? But if you like joking aside, if you look at what's underneath this, it's like, "oh my God, this paradigm is so sexist, ageist, classist, racist, like homophobic. It's just, it's so yucky in so many ways the rigidity of the ideals and the behaviors that we said were healthy.

So, my hope, if I go back to the solution focus is that we smash open the paradigm of what it means to be healthy? What it means to be fit? What it means to nourish yourself? Who gets access to that and how? That's the work ahead of us, right? To really question, what are we doing here?

And to not take it on ourselves. If you feel bad about your body, ask yourself if that's something that you should be carrying. Did someone give that to you? Right? Where does that come from? So, I'll just have you stuff to noodle on, I realized, "oh my God, I just want to learn, should I eat vegetables? And now, I'm like thinking about how to smash the attire system.

**Elizabeth:** No, that's fantastic. Okay, so thank you so much for being on the episode today. So, how do you work with people if people want to work with you? What would they do?

**Krista:** Yeah, so my practice is turning more towards, I still love women at midlife, that's where I am. I think it's a really fascinating transition time. I'm very interested in people who are undergoing a change. A lot of people who are undergoing gender transition are finding me, which is very interesting. Or some kind of like big existential change, something happened in my life and a huge transition occurred and I'm sitting here in the wreckage and have no idea what to do with myself. And thinking about how to map those onto health.

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So, I typically work with people who are trying to figure out how to self-care and engage in healthy habits while also being in some kind of change, messy change process. So, those are the folks I work with. So, you can find me on Instagram, @stumptuous, you can find me on Facebook, Krista Scott-Dixon. I'm the only one of me, as far as I know folks can reach out.

And then also too, if you're interested in precision nutrition, precisionnutrition.com. I have a book up there; I have two books. I have lots of books unrelated to this.

**Elizabeth:** I think I have your book.

**Krista:** Yeah, if you're on Amazon, you can look it up. It's called, "Why Me Want Eat." It's like a workbook for people who are exploring eating issues. So, there's lots of pathways if you want to coach with me, great. If you want to be on your own journey, that's cool too. If you think you might want to be coach yourself, you're interested in this, awesome. Those are the places where you can find me. And I'm assuming you'll put some of this in the show notes too.

**Elizabeth:** I will. Absolutely, all of them.

All right. Well, thank you for being on the show. I really appreciate that you've spent your time with me, and spend your time with us, and just shared all of that really great information because yeah, it's been so great. Thank you.

**Krista:** Oh, my pleasure.

**Elizabeth:** Wow! That was some really amazing information. I really wish that we had more time to talk about those environmental challenges that many of us face when it comes to our ability to take care of ourselves because it's really a thing. Nevertheless, I'm

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glad we were able to touch on it and give you insight into the complexity that really isn't as simple as we're unhealthy because of the food that we eat.

So, when we talk about general health, it's so much more complicated than we really than a sound bite can really give it. There are so many challenges that we face as a nation when it comes to optimal health.

In any event, what Krista points out is that we think about health as one dimensional. That we think about health as eating, or exercising, or body shape. But clearly, there are so many different facets that we don't even think about when it comes to general health.

So, I hope you enjoyed the interview. I hope that it gave you some things to think about. Thank you for listening and I'll see you next week. Bye-bye.

Hey, thanks for listening!

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See you next week.