



Episode 59:

Heal Your Hunger: How to End Emotional Eating Now with Tricia Nelson and Evan H. Hirsch, MD

[00:00:08] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Hey, everybody. Welcome back to the energy MD podcast. So excited that you're here with me today. As you know, we're always looking at all of the causes of low energy, and today we're gonna be talking about two of them with my good friend, Tricia Nelson. We're gonna be talking about food as a cause of low energy, we're also going to be talking about negative emotional patterns or more specifically emotional eating.

So let's learn a little bit about Tricia. So Tricia is an emotional eating expert and author of the number one best selling book, *Heal Your Hunger: Seven Simple Steps to End Emotional Eating Now*. Tricia Nelson lost 50 pounds by identifying and healing the underlying causes of her emotional eating. She has spent over 30 years researching the hidden causes of the

addictive personality. She is the host of the popular podcast, the heal your hunger show, and she is a well respected speaker has a popular Ted talk with now 500,000 views and has been featured on numerous media outlets, such as NBC, CBS, KTLA Fox and discovery health. Tricia, thanks so much for hanging out with me today.

[00:01:19] **Tricia Nelson:** It's awesome to be here. Thanks for having me.

[00:01:22] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** So let's start off first with your story. What brought you to this point? How did you become an emotional eating expert?

[00:01:30] **Tricia Nelson:** Yeah, so it came with a very intimate knowledge of emotional eating . I was really good at it. So, um, I, I think I started, you know, overeating from the get go.

I mean, as far back as I can remember, I was obsessed with food, I loved to eat, I loved to cook, I loved to serve food to other people, go out to restaurants. I was just a foody, you know, and that wouldn't have been bad except I also gained weight really easily. So like you mentioned, I, by age 21, actually I was 50 pounds overweight and that was a miserable experience for me because I, you know, obviously in our culture, it's not really acceptable and I just felt bad about my body.

I, I, I had a lot of self hatred at a deeper level. I had this role in my tummy that I would scrunch up and try to, you know, imagine cutting it off. Like you cut fat off the side of a steak and federal. Maybe I'll get some disease where I'll automatically lose weight. I mean, crazy stuff, but that was all really indicative of indicative of the fact that I couldn't diet, you know, I, I could, I could do diets maybe for like two weeks so I could lose weight and then at

some like when you first diet, it's like, I'm I got the new diet syndrome, like I'm doing it all excited. And then after two weeks, that's about all I could last. I'm like, I need chocolate now. like, I just can't go another step without chocolate. You know? And so that was obviously what happened is I would yoyo, I was yoyo dieter, so I go, but like, 30 down 20 up de-, 10 down 30.

And I had like five different sizes of pants in my closet, cuz I never knew what size I would be. And I was always, you know, hoping for the, the skinny jeans, but I rarely made it there because of that yo-yo cycle. So, so that was my life um, basically, and you know, I felt a lot of despair Evan because you know, I, I was

putting a really good effort into it. So exercising, trying to eat healthy. Um, I was even doing psychological stuff on eating disorders therapist. I went to 12 step programs, so I was doing everything. I was turning over every rock and still same cycle over and over. And. I'd do good for time and then break out and binge, and then I'd go down the rabbit hole.

So I was despairing of ever getting help and I was very blessed thankfully, um, to meet somebody who kind of set me straight and said, look, your problem is not food per se, your problem is deeper than that, and, um, you gotta look at your emotional life, you know, what's going on? What are you burying with all those carbs?

You know? And so I started looking at emotional eating, you know, when I first heard the term emotional eating, I just thought that's a dumb term. and I thought, I just like food, like I'm not an emotional eater. So I had. You know, denial, but then I started observing my habits and I'm like, you know what? I'm not normal around food.

Like, I'll go out to a restaurant with friends. You go out to Denny's or this I was younger, but, um, I wouldn't be caught dead now at Denny's but, um, but I, I shouldn't say that, but, but anyway, I would go to, like, I lived in Northeast, it was Friendlys back then, but I go out, my point is I went out to lunch with friends and like they'd order a sandwich and it would come with fries and they'd like, eat their sandwich and pick up their fries and I'd be like

looking at 'em like I was a Martian. I'd be like, how do those earth people just leave fries on their plate? Like, that's, that's the best part, you know? so I'd wanna clear everybody's plate, you know, or, or they'd offer order a hot fudged Sunday after. They'd take a couple bites, you know, with a big, long spoon and then they'd, they'd push the whole thing away.

They'd be like, Ugh, I'm stuffed. I'm like stuffed, what does that have to do with anything? You know, so I, I was starting to think, you know, I'm not the same as my friends. Like, there's something about my relationship with food that's a little more codependent than other people's relationship with food. So

that kind of, I mean, that sums it up and, and, and thankfully it's when I finally realized that it wasn't about the food and started taking a, you know, a different journey, then it's like, I have never diet again. And that was several decades ago. Like I just diets don't work and I don't have to do them if I'm willing to be, you know, addressing the emotional, eating on a daily basis.

And what I mean by that is really addressing my emotions, being more emotionally connected to myself. Um, having really good boundaries in my time and, you know, stress management, all that kind of stuff will help totally, you know, play a part in having more sanity around food.

[00:06:23] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** I love that, so it sounds like you have a practice.

Are they, are these things that you do every day as like a, a ritual or are they

[00:06:31] **Tricia Nelson:** yes.

[00:06:32] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Yeah. Tell, can you tell us a little bit more about that?

[00:06:33] **Tricia Nelson:** Yeah, you totally picked up on it. Yeah. So it's what I teach. So in my book, you know, *Heal Your Hunger: Seven Simple Steps to End Emotional Eating Now*, those steps, one of the steps, um, is what I call centeredness.

Um, and so getting centered is vital because, you know, as emotional eaters, we tend to be, first of all, what is emotional eating? Emotional eating is stuffing our emotions. Like not wanting to feel uncomfortable and therefore just kind of numbing out with food. And that's true. It's like we just sort of, I made a decision at a young age, like feeling.

Feelings were for the birds. Like I want nothing to do with that. I want just happy, happy high notes. Like don't gimme any low notes, you know? And so food enabled me to kind of stay on that, even keel and that happy place. Nevermind the fact that it made me very unhappy to gain weight, not fit in my jeans and, you know, uh, feel bloated and

lethargic. Right? It's like, that's what I, where I always ended up after binging, but in the moment it was my happy place. So, um, Y you know, because we're sort of trained, we've trained ourselves over years to just numb out with food and to deal with all life's problems with food, you know, it's like, oh, I'm feeling uncomfortable.

Let's go eat. Oh, I have a phone call and make that don't wanna make, let's go see what's in the kitchen, you know, or we're at, at work, let's go to the, you know, office, office kitchen and see what leftovers were brought in today and see what we can get. So, so it's just such a habit to eat instead of feel.

And so this centeredness, um, uh, routine, if you will, it, it has to start first thing in the morning and, and my experiences, we wanna just jump outta bed, look at our phone, you know, answer the phone, go be with our kids, whatever. But, you know, then we're kind of like a pinball in a pinball machine. We're just ricocheting off of all the different stressors around us.

And, you know, pretty soon we're using food to kind of quell that sense of stress. But if we start first thing in the morning with, you know, I call it putting money in your spiritual bank account. Like, like, like put some money in that account. Meditation, prayer, reading, spiritual literature, going for a walk in nature, breathing exercises, yoga.

Whatever calms you down, whatever brings you a sense of peace, whatever brings you home to yourself. You know, if you do that first thing in the morning, which I, I absolutely do. And I must, um, if you do that, it's time well spent because then you have money in your bank account and you can take withdrawals throughout the day.

But if you don't make those investments, first thing in the morning, if you don't put them in there, you know, you're in the red. And then when you're really overloaded, which usually comes around two or three or four in the afternoon after we've piled up a bunch of stress, you're looking for quick energy, right.

Coffee and sugar, and like something to keep you up.

[00:09:43] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Mm-hmm

[00:09:43] **Tricia Nelson:** you know, but if you, if you've built some resources, first thing in the morning, You're you're in a different place, you know, and an afternoon timeout doesn't hurt either. Like I have a, I meditate twice a day, so I meditate in the afternoon cuz I get the slump, I get the slump and I'm like, oops, time out.

This is when I used to eat. Instead I take a 20 minute little meditation. It could be a nap or something, but I need it. Like my body tells me I need it, because it's that slump and you know, a lot more about that, you know, what's happened in your body when you get that slump, but people always treat it with food and coffee, you know?

And so my experience is, "I have to do something different", so, so making that investment in self care, you know, really getting centered and still in quiet, oh my God, it pays off big time, you know, and people will say, oh, that's crazy. I don't have time to Medi for meditation. I have a busy job and this, that, and the other.

You know, the time it saves, right. And the calories it saves. I mean, it's like you will eat less if you pay into getting still and quiet and being, and being as hard for emotional eaters, cuz over, you know, over eaters tend to be over doers. Like we are. Majorly overdoing, you know, all the time running circles around people.

And that's how we get exhausted. That's how we get burnt out. That's how we right. We, we totally tax our adrenals and it's, it's a lose, lose situation. And so it's really important that obviously we make changes and I'm sure you preach about this all the time. Like it's, there's no magic pill. You gotta change.

You gotta change your way of living. But to me, you know, when people are struggling with food and weight, they're like, give me the diet, like, just give me the diet. Right. Just tell me what to eat, you know, but that's too superficial because we can't sustain that way of eating. If we don't make changes in our stress level.

Right. And in the way we operate in life. And so I'll, I'll tell you right now, emotional eaters are. um, I have this thing in my book called the anatomy of the emotional eater, which is 24 personality traits of the emotional eater. And again, these are traits that have nothing to do with food, but they cause our cravings.

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So a good example of this is people pleasing. So I've never met an emotional eater that wasn't a people pleaser. Like we just love to get validated by other people, you know, and how to get validation. Well, Run circles around everybody else. You say yes to the extra project, you stay up till 11 baking brownies for the soccer team.

Like you're you pack your schedule, you know, do, do more than you can really do. So we do this in hopes of having people think, you know, we're fabulous. And, and so that's fine, but then we're burned out and we're also resentful because never people are never as pleased as we plan on them being. So, so then we're kind of pissed off and it's like the perfect storm for the, I deserve it binge, like screw them.

Like I pulled an all nighter for this project and I was barely thanked and, you know, and then we're, we're going home and rewarding ourselves with our favorite, you know, Belgian chocolate. So, so it's just, you know, again, It's how we're living. We gotta take a look at, you know, because a diet won't fix this cycle

we're in of taxing our bodies, overcommitting, and really like get, having our prior priorities out of whack.

[00:13:14] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Mm-hmm .

It's like it's a paradigm shift.

[00:13:18] **Tricia Nelson:** Yeah.

[00:13:18] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** I mean, you're really, I mean, hopefully everybody who's listening to this right now can really understand that, that you need to change your focus.

[00:13:26] **Tricia Nelson:** Yeah.

[00:13:26] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** And I love the fact that you're talking about these practices, these habits, you know, and, and how that really is the way to make a change. And you were talking about making these changes. So then how do you take people through making a change? You know, what sort of advice do you have? You know, baby steps or otherwise, what do you think.

[00:13:43] **Tricia Nelson:** Yeah, it's totally baby steps. You can't do it all at once. It's kind of like turning around a big freighter ship. You know, it's like that ship is not gonna turn on a dime, like a little 20 foot Boston Wheeler is, you know, it's like, it's gonna take time to even slow down in the direction it's going before

it can start changing its direction,

[00:14:04] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Mm-hmm

[00:14:04] **Tricia Nelson:** you know, or do a 180. So it's definitely takes time. And I just say it's one self care habit at a time. But what's also true is that it, you know, we have to start prioritizing ourselves and this is hard for emotional eaters to do again because of that whole cycle we're in, of wanting approval from other people and people,

confuse self care as selfish

[00:14:32] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** mm-hmm

[00:14:33] **Tricia Nelson:** you know, they think, oh, I can't possibly do that. I'm a mom, I've got, you know, people need me, blah, blah, blah. But I, I constantly remind people like if you're stressed out and over committed and run around like a chicken with your head cut off. Is your family really getting the best version of you?

You know, chances are you're haired, you're bitchy, you're tired, you're grumpy. Like it's not, or you gotta smile plastered on your face, but inside your bitchy and grumpy, you know? And so then you eat to keep up the facade of everything. Every of being happy, go lucky. This is my MO you know, and so it's like something has to give and if we spend time in self care, Our whole family gets the better version of us and

they get more of us, ultimately, cuz we have more energy, you know, like we won't have energy if we're, you know, burning the candle at both ends. We just won't. So this illusion that somehow we're being selfish, you know, when we take time for ourselves, I mean my, my clients are doing it. You know, they, they, and I say wake up half an hour early, if you have to go to bed half an hour earlier, if you have to in order to make up the time.

But. But take that time, have quiet time in the morning for yourself. You know, not always easy when you got kids running around, but, but they will notice the difference. You know, ultimately they'll be like mom, time out, like go like, we'll get time out, you know, because, uh, we give it to our kids. Like we, we know they need it.

Like they need a time. We need time, time out as well. And it totally pays off in our relationships. Um, our work habits, probably our brain capacity, you know, certainly our energy to move our bodies. Um, but also in how much food we consume, cuz the more tired and stressed out I was the more food I'd I'd consume to compensate energy wise.

[00:16:31] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** It makes a lot of sense. And I love the fact that you brought up that word selfish, because I grew up with that word having a negative connotation and I coach people on ye- you gotta change that word. You know, you gotta change your relationship to that word. Right. It's gotta have a positive connotation, you know, maybe make, make it means for me or loving me or something like that.

Right. So it's yeah, it. It's so incredibly important. I grew up with a mother who said, love is service. So great. That self is forgotten.

[00:17:02] **Tricia Nelson:** Yeah. It's nice in theory, but it's like, it's like it. Well, and it's like the, the a, the airplane analogy is to the best. It's put your oxygen mask on first. Right. You know, don't give from an empty well, right.

Cause that's when we start filling up with food and coffee to, um, compensate. So we had to fill, you know, People get the spillover of what I'm doing to myself. You know, if I'm self critical, if I'm, if I'm like not giving myself any self care, I'm I tend to be critical with other people and tend to be hard on them and not give them what they need.

You know, it's sort of like people, people pick up on our, on our energy, really. They pick up on what we're doing to ourselves.

[00:17:48] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Mm-hmm. I couldn't agree more. Yeah, that was part of my story. You know, when I had chronic fatigue, a part of it was people pleasing and part of it was pushing that. And so much of it is cultural, you know, like I don't believe as humans, we're actually, we're actually set up for success in this culture because there are so many demands and we're supposed to push, push, push, push, and, you know, we're just not made for that.

We're made for excelling, but then there's gotta be some relaxation. Gotta, you gotta take a siesta.

[00:18:16] **Tricia Nelson:** Yeah. And it's excelling at what price, right? Like, so we have to really evaluate what price am I paying

[00:18:22] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** mm-hmm

[00:18:22] **Tricia Nelson:** for this quote "success". And if I'm tired and I'm unhappy, right? Because when, where I'm so out of balance then is, am I really successful?

Is this really a successful life? So I think it's, I do agree that we, our priorities are outta whack and it's, you know, so much better to make a conscious decision. To make changes than to be forced to, to drive ourselves into the ground. That's usually what happens in our culture. Right?

[00:18:48] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Mm-hmm

[00:18:48] **Tricia Nelson:** we wait to get sick before we actually get serious about making changes unfortunately.

[00:18:53] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Agreed. So let's talk about something that you mentioned. Let's talk about these uncomfortable emotions that people experience. My wife, um, says that noticing is like a superpower and you know, so just trying to be the observer and just trying to notice what's happening in the body, but how do you, how do you coach people on those uncomfortable emotions and how do you stop that from, from, uh, then reaching out and grabbing something that they shouldn't be consuming?

[00:19:23] **Tricia Nelson:** Yeah. So my experience it's, uh, it starts first thing in the morning. Like we talk about having a morning routine, but the emotional part, um, you know, that doesn't happen overnight. It's I, I, off, I don't, I'm not a nutritionist, so I don't teach health per se. Most of the people who come to me. Are pretty, uh, pretty knowledgeable and well read about what's healthy eating.

You know, I don't think of really, a lot of ignorance around the fact that salads are healthier than donuts. you know, it's not rocket science. But why do we reach for donuts anyway, in spite of what we know, like that's really, to me, that's the crux of the problem is like we know better, but we can't do better.

[00:20:07] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Mm-hmm.

[00:20:07] **Tricia Nelson:** And so, um, so it's really important to realize that it, it is a deeper problem, you know? And, um, and, and so what I do instead of teaching about health. Healthy eating because people generally know that is what I'm helping them do is get in touch with their emotions oftentimes for the first time.

So the only thing around diet I recommend is something I call free meal magic, which is an affectionate term I coin, which is eating three meals with nothing in between. And, um, and this might not work for everybody. Consult your doctor, but generally, it works great for emotional eaters because we tend to snack all day.

And when we do that, we are missing an opportunity to, to know what we're feeling. You know, it's like, we're just numbed out. Um, whereas if you eat three meals with nothing in between, although that's a hard thing to do for a lot of people at first, because what's in between is a little bit of hunger. You know, after three or four hours, I, I say put four or five hours between each meal, but it's not just, you know, a way of eating.

It's also a way of connecting with what our emotions are. And with a little bit of hunger comes some emotional hunger. Like some of that might just be emotional because we're not used to having space inside of us and, and feeling numbed out. So what happens is, feelings start to bubble up. You might be a little edgy, you know, I mean, you might feel sort of impatient with people, but that's just cuz you're unaccustomed to having that space in between the meals.

But over time, you know, you can adjust to a little bit of hunger, you know, before your meal. Um, when lunchtime comes along, you can adjust, but you can also start, start to recognize why you were eating all the time in the first place, you know? And so I just find it's really important to connect with ourselves.

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Now I do all my work in groups because there's incredible power in community, you know, and especially community with other emotional eaters because everybody just relates to each other so much. And the comradery and the identification. Is very healing because emotional eaters have spent so much time, you know, dogging themselves for not being able to eat right.

Or not being able to keep the weight off. And so, um, there's a lot of isolation and shame, you know, in our food behaviors. And so again, the community is very, it's encouraging and it's also motivating, you know, to, to see other people doing well and it encourages you and then you're doing well and you encourage others.

So, um, but the point is. You know that inner journey. Isn't an easy one to take when you've been running from yourself for so long. You know, and again, so that's baby steps too. So the point is the self care I do the self, I call it, um, the six self care success secrets. So the actual morning routine or routine of self care, the six self care secrets are meditation, prayer, reading, inspirational or spiritual literature, walking, talking like expressing yourself to somebody else who can hear you.

um, and then writing journaling.

[00:23:16] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Mm.

[00:23:17] **Tricia Nelson:** Um, so those are the six that I have found help the most for getting, getting centered, you know? And so, um, that that's gonna help a lot for kind of knowing what your emotions are. Like. I I'll write, like, I'll just, I'll sit down and write like bang much. When, when I'm angry or disturbed or something, I just sort of start writing and then I can kind of sort out what's really going on.

Like, what's usually it's fear, there's some fear underlying the anger, you know? And so, so these are tools that just, you know, meditation's a tool that can help us start to know ourselves better. Um, but it's a process. You don't do it all at once. Um, and again, the community can help you stay accountable to doing these kinds of things, because

we'll talk ourselves out of it. Oh, I don't have time or it doesn't really matter if I skip today. It's kinda like the gym, you know, once you skip so hard to go back, you know, so, so yeah, the accountability is important, but, but it is, these are life changes. Like, and I often tell people, like, we act our way into right

thinking, you know, instead of thinking our way into right actions, so the more self care we have, you know, the more, and it's really, it it's, it helps on so many levels. It's not just reducing stress, but it's also it's. I find it builds self-esteem, you know, for me to take a time out and say, I'm gonna stop working right now for 20 minutes.

I'm just gonna do a little meditation. It could be a guided meditation, an insight timer or something calm app or something. But when I, when I actively say, I'm gonna give myself some time here, I'm affirming I'm worth that.

[00:24:56] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Mm-hmm.

[00:24:57] **Tricia Nelson:** You know, like I am worthy, of taking a time out. I'm worthy of putting myself first right now.

And again, back to that, the idea of that not being okay, it's, it's like the best thing I can do for myself and others is to start building my own sense of worth, you know, so much of, so many of our problems come so much of our people come, people pleasing comes from not having that sense of worth and seeking it from outside ourselves instead of inside of ourselves.

[00:25:25] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Mm-hmm

[00:25:26] **Tricia Nelson:** so for me, taking time for self care, Is building into, again, we're, we're, we're investing in ourselves, we're investing time in ourselves and we're also investing kind of the, the idea that we are worth that time.

[00:25:42] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Mm-hmm. So if somebody has some resistance to that where they're like, where they don't feel worthy, it sounds like do the practices.

[00:25:51] **Tricia Nelson:** Yeah. Develop those. It's amazing. Yeah. You act your way into right. Thinking, you know, do it anyway. It'll be it'll benefit. You benefit you whether you wanna do it or not.

[00:26:00] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** mm-hmm.

[00:26:01] **Tricia Nelson:** You know, um, but do something that, you know, meditation's hard, again to do on your own. If you don't, you aren't in a community.

Just walking, going for a 10 minute walk. It doesn't have to be a long walk, like just, just do a time out and go out and go around the block once or listen to your favorite song, you know, on, on Spotify or Pandora, like listen to like, just rock out to a song and, or take a dance break or, you know, or read a book.

Oh my gosh. I just started reading. I've been really resistant cuz I I'm always reading like marketing books. I'm like I have to. I have to accomplish something. So , but I went on vacation recently and, and my partner's like, just get a novel, just buy a novel at the airport. And I did, and it was like, it was a big deal for me to just read a novel.

It was, it felt so like decadent. It was really crazy. So. So as you can see, I'm still guilty of some of this too. So, um, but it, but it was, it was really a gift to myself and then I realized it it's really cool. It's kind of changed me to read a novel. It it's really, it's so sweet. And then last night I could sleep in the middle of the night.

So I just. Picked up my book, you know, normally I get on my computer and start working. So, but instead I read my novel, you know, I'm just about done with it. So it's anyway, it's these little things, but it helps, it helps to just do something, you know, that can give us stress relief, um, and, and take us out that grind also

[00:27:30] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** brilliant.

And I think that, you know, if people are having a hard time with some of the self-care stuff, just think about something that's fun for.

[00:27:37] **Tricia Nelson:** Yeah.

[00:27:38] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** You know, like you were talking about putting on a good song, you know, like eighties dance party for everybody, you know, I like to go see musicals. I like to sing, you know, like you just have to figure out what's fun for you.

That's gonna be easy. That'll take five minutes.

[00:27:52] **Tricia Nelson:** Yeah. And I think the pandemic gave us that message. Like, let's, let's do the pause thing. Like let's, let's reevaluate. What's really important, you know, in our life is the drive, you know, is that really getting us what we want? You know? And how about a little bit more life balance?

You know, it's, it's not a bad thing.

[00:28:12] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Yeah. So let's talk a little bit about, or let's define a couple of different terms here. Let's talk about emotional eating versus, um, food addict.

[00:28:22] **Tricia Nelson:** Mm-hmm . Yeah. So I, you know, I really consider this to be a spectrum with emotional eating on the low end and food addiction on the high end.

Um, you know, I am definitely a food addict, but food addicts are also emotional eaters, but emotional eaters aren't necessarily food addicts. So it's. It's really, uh, it's, it's qualified Evan by two things primarily. Um, one is control and the other is consequences. So I feel like we all can go overboard now and then.

I mean, my partner is not an emotional eater, but you give him a bag of potato chips and they will be gone. like people inhale the potato. So, is that a multiple, I don't know. I mean, pit potato chips are highly addictive, but he's like as low as you can get on the emotional eating spectrum. Um, versus, you know, it's because, and, and another person let's say goes on a cruise, they gain five pounds because they ate a lot of cheese and drank a lot of wine, you know, was free on the cruise.

They come back, they're five pounds heavier. They're like, Ugh, I don't fit into my pants. I'm gonna jog extra this next couple weeks and cut out sweets. Boom. The five pounds are. Five pounds is not great consequences, and they obviously have a good amount of control cause they can course correct. Okay. So that's on the low end.

The high end is somebody who, you know, starts eating donuts. And then two weeks later, they're 10 pounds heavier because they just went into this vortex of carb binging, you know, carb and sugar binging, which I've done many times. And so somebody with very little control, like they don't, they don't course correct.

I mean, for every day of the next two weeks of carb binging, they're saying today, I'm gonna get back on track. They don't, you know, because it's just, sugar is highly addictive. Carbs are addictive. Like they're just in the hole, you know? So somebody who can't course correct, doesn't have a lot of control, but also you do that kind of thing long enough, your body's gonna get pissed off.

You know, you're gonna have joint pain, you're gonna have autoimmune diseases. You're gonna have gut issues. Like our bodies can only take so much abuse. And so when we're eating processed, you know, chemical Laden foods in high quantities, you know, sugar fat and starch which are my three, they used to be my three favorite food groups.

so, but you do that long enough, your body will break down, you know, your body will break down. So that's the consequences. You know, amass, the longer you have that kind of behavior. So I serve a lot of people in their, you know, forties, fifties, and sixties, and they've been dieting and going up and down the scale and eating crappy foods for many decades and they are paying a price.

You know, they're definitely paying, maybe they throw in some gastric bypass surgery or some liposuction, you know, They've done a lot of drastic things to try to fix themselves as well, which didn't fix anything of course, of their emotional eaters, but that's somebody more in the addiction realm, you know, and, and, and classic signs of addiction are you can't stop right.

Once you start, you can't stop. You can't stop in spite of negative consequences. , you know, um, you have cravings when you stop. So you crave, right. You go through withdrawals. So anytime I would stop eating sugar, I'd get headaches and, you know, feel really bitchy, you know, because I was addicted to sugar. So it's, it's really, you know, there are very classic signs of addiction.

When you're talking about food. Some people are like, how can you addicted to food? You still have to eat. Well, I just, you know, I was addicted to food, you know? I mean, I ate to my demise. You know, and I don't today by the grace of God. So it's, it's, you can heal from this, you know, and it's even trickier. To me

it is the hardest addiction overcome, probably because you do have to eat, you know, you have to take your addictive substance out of the refrigerator three times a day and try to eat it, you know, in a very balanced way and put it back in the refrigerator. You know, I, I often liken that to try to take a tiger out of the cage, you know, a, a really hungry tiger and you have to like pet the kitty and then put it back in the cage three times a day without getting your ass torn off, you know, like that's, , it's not easy.

So, so this is a hard one to overcome, which is. You know, people always, they, they there's so much shame with this condition. So people are always like, I sh- like I should be able to do this. I should be able to eat right. I should be able to follow a diet, you know, but this is so hard and we've been doing it for longer than most other addictive substances.

So, stop shooting on yourself, you know, and get support because it's a hard one. And, you know, studies show that we have a lot better success rate when we get support and don't try to do it with willpower.

[00:33:15] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Exactly. And that's, you know, that's the reason to find a mentor like Tricia is really to compress time.

Yeah. You know, you can probably figure it out in five or 10 years, but if you want to get it done in the next, you know, six to 12 months or whatever like that, you know, that's why you invest in that kind of program. So let's transition to, I'd love to hear about what you're doing. I know that you have a program.

I know that you have events. Tell us a little bit about what you're doing

[00:33:38] **Tricia Nelson:** Yeah. Um, I have a cool event coming up called, make peace with food. Love your body, love your food, love your life. That's a three day event. Um, so that's really fun. I mean, if anybody resonates with this message, definitely go to my website and check that out because

um, we do a deep dive into emotional eating, and what's really behind that, but we also have a lot of fun. So I have friends who are coming friends, you know, um, who are coming to like read Dr. Remar is doing a cooking class and Deborah Atkinson's doing some movement. So it's just a fun, it's like attending a conference, but we do it on zoom.

um, thank you, pandemic. And, um, and then we, I also do a quit sugar challenge because cha- you know, quitting sugar is hard. It is a challenge. And, but when we do it in community, it's so much easier. So that's a, a journey of quitting sugar and then finding alternatives that are yummy and sweet. Cuz I still have a sweet tooth, but I I'm sugar free.

So really helping people identify what foods are in their cabinets that might be tripping them up. Cause a lot. Unfortunately, you know, food manufacturers are, are hip to us and they know the sweeter, our foods, the more we're gonna buy them.

[00:34:51] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Mm-hmm.

[00:34:51] **Tricia Nelson:** You know, and so they hide sugar in our foods by other names there's over 80 names for sugar.

And so I teach people how to read labels, how to identify where they hidden sugars are. So they aren't getting sabotaged, um, by the manufacturers. And, um, and then just having recipes that are yummy and sweet, but. Addictive, you know, and so it's, it's really fun. It's called the quit sugar challenge. So, so yeah, these are some things that, um, and then I have my courses as well.

So people that really want, like you said, wanna compress time. Um, I take people through a 90 day process of healing, emotional eating, and ending emotional eating. It's really, um, pretty powerful

[00:35:32] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** sounds like it. And then you have a, a free gift for our audience.

[00:35:36] **Tricia Nelson:** Yes. So what I would recommend to people is, um, my free quiz.

So the quiz is, um, it's on my website. It'll pop up and it's basically the first, it's a good first step. So if this is something you feel like you relate to, and you might be an emotional eater, take that quiz and find out where you are. Spectrum that I talked about. So, um, basically, um, you'll, you'll know where you are.

If you're more on the most eating side or the food addiction side and then steps you can take to start healing.

[00:36:11] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Excellent. And the best place to find you online?

[00:36:15] **Tricia Nelson:** Um, my I'd say, just go to my website, which is healyourhunger.com H E A L um, heal your hunger dot com. You can access my book there, you can acc- access my podcast.

They heal your hunger show, which Evan has been a guest on before. Um, and, uh, my TEDx talk is on there as well. So, um, that's a good place to go.

[00:36:38] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Excellent. So last question, cuz this has all been amazing information and people's heads might be a little bit, uh, full at this point. What is one thing what's like the one thing that you would recommend that people do today to take action?

[00:36:54] **Tricia Nelson:** Um, besides taking the quiz, I would say, um, take a look at your schedule. Know, where can you give a little bit more space in your schedule and stop overdoing? So not that that's an easy step, I realized, but I would say, I would say, yeah, I would, you know this again, this is real change that we have to make, you know, where can you delegate?

Um, where can you delete? You know, where can you get support with things? We tend to take everything on when we could be asking for help and, um, and making more space and time for ourselves.

[00:37:34] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** I love that. So important. So, so important.

[00:37:38] **Tricia Nelson:** Yeah.

[00:37:38] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** Tricia, you're a wealth of knowledge, and you're doing wonderful work in the world.

Thank you so much for coming on today.

[00:37:45] **Tricia Nelson:** It's been great. Thanks for having me.

[00:37:48] **Evan H. Hirsch, MD:** I hope you learned something on today's podcast. If you did, please share it with your friends and family and leave us a five star review on iTunes. It's really helpful for getting this information out to more people who desperately need it, sharing all the experts I know and love. And the powerful tips I have is one of my absolute favorite things to do.

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Thanks for listening and have an amazing day.