

Episode: What Is Healthy Eating?



Full Transcript

HEALTHY EATING FOR BUSY WOMEN PODCAST
WITH KAT RENTAS

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Hello, welcome back to the podcast. I'm so happy you're here. Because today, I felt like it was very, very necessary that I cleared something up for you. And that is "What even is healthy eating?". Right? What is healthy eating, really? I remember years ago when I was really in the trenches struggling to eat healthy. I was trying anything and everything hoping that healthy eating habits would eventually stick. It was like throwing spaghetti up on the wall. And during this time, many of you might be able to relate, I was completely overwhelmed. I was scatter-brained and the concept of healthy eating just brought up all this chatter in my brain. There was so much noise associated with it. And once I really changed my eating habits and focused on what actually works, I realized, there was no set definition for what healthy eating really was. The problem was that I was attempting to follow a hundred different definitions of healthy eating. And incorporate all these types of healthy eating into my lifestyle. So, different definitions for healthy eating. There's so many of them. People like to use the term "clean eating" to define healthy eating. And first off, I'll probably do an entire podcast episode on this, but there is no such thing as clean eating. This is a marketing term that has spread like wildfire. And all it does is damage your mindset around food and increase your black and white thinking around it. But, I digress. Clean eating. That's one way people have defined healthy eating. There's defining healthy eating by being vegan, paleo, keto – all of the things. People like to define healthy eating based on the foods they eat and the diet they follow. So, there's that. There's the god forsaken food pyramid and online calorie calculators that people think they should use to define how much they should eat. They use these methods to define healthy eating. And how much food is quote unquote healthy. Which if you're doing this, please stop. But, I need to stay on track in this episode so I'm not just going off on tangents the entire time. But, the point I'm slowly getting

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to here is that there are a million bajillion definitions for what "healthy eating". And today, I'm going to define it for you in the most simple, non-overwhelming terms. So you can have that clarity. Because it's not serving you to spin in all these different definitions of healthy eating that are being presented to you in our current society. It will keep you stuck. So, you need to decide on a definition for healthy eating that serves you. And the reality is that healthy eating is not a set, individual concept. It's not a finish line. There's no end point. And there's no strict definition for healthy eating. It's actually a spectrum. And like any spectrum, there are two extremes at either end. On one side of the spectrum is eating for fuel and function. So, let me explain what this end of the spectrum really looks like. This is when everything you eat is with the intention of nutritionally providing for your body. It's the food you need to satisfy the nutritional requirements your body needs to be optimally healthy. The goal on this end of the spectrum, is to always eat the quote unquote "right" foods and to take the "right" actions with food. I like to say that this is the way we would all eat if food had no taste. On this extreme of the spectrum, there is no pleasure in eating. Here, food is purely functional. So, a person who strives to live on this end of the spectrum is usually the person who's constantly incorporating new diets, their constantly reading nutrition articles, and maybe their trying new health fads that they see online. They're just really, really desperate for that healthy eating how. Which if you haven't listened to the episode where I talk about your healthy eating how, be sure you go back and do so. People on this end of the spectrum tend to have a very, almost elitist attitude towards food as well. So, they usually define healthy eating in black and white terms. Meaning, they see foods as either good or bad. Healthy or unhealthy. This causes the person on this end of the spectrum to become a perfectionist with food. Thereby creating a toxic relationship with food and

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body. And, I get it. In my past with food, I really, really wanted to be someone who lived at this end of the spectrum. To me, all of those women who naturally ate healthy, I thought they lived here. I thought that they must always just eat for fuel and function. And it wasn't until much later that I found out how wrong this was. But it sounds like a noble cause, right? Focusing exclusively on eating for fuel can seem like what's best for our bodies. But, this type of thinking is also where diets, cookie cutter meal plans, mass-marketed weight loss programs, and restrictive eating live. And what's crazy, is most of you listening to this will relate to this, that pretty much all of the options for healthy eating live here as well. We're taught that if we want to see results with our bodies and lose weight that we need to focus on this end of the spectrum exclusively. Which causes us to try and force ourselves into healthy eating boxes. In reality, to only eat food for nutritional purposes, means you're depending on willpower and self-control to stay on this end of the spectrum. Which isn't sustainable long-term. Perfectionism and lasting eating habits that feel sustainable to you don't mix. Ever. So, stop trying. And really take a long moment to think about this for a second. If this method of eating was sustainable, and we could all just eat for fuel, we'd all be perfectly healthy with zero effort. And we're not. I would not have had my experience with food. I wouldn't be a coach now. And you wouldn't be here listening to this podcast.

Now, let's talk about the other side of the spectrum, which is eating for pleasure. This normally means you remove all of the walls when it comes to eating healthy. You have opened the food floodgates and anything goes here. And while this can sound like sunshine and rainbows, this is actually where a lot of the suffering with food lives. This is where people usually feel totally out of control with food. And like they have no idea why they eat the way they do. Because when you're only eating for pleasure, you're not really paying the

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to what you eat. It's very unconscious and mismanaged. Here, is where you will also tend to eat in accordance with your emotional state. So, on this end of the spectrum, providing for your body nutritionally isn't on your mind – at all. This is where your emotional and unconscious eating patterns live. Nothing is eaten intentionally and the relationship with food is left on autopilot. Food is often consumed sporadically based on the emotional state of the person. Which leaves you feeling very out of control when it comes to food. I find that people on this end of the spectrum have the thought, "Life's too short to worry about what I eat". But what's interesting is these are the same people who are really suffering deep down when it comes to food. Because they want different results with their bodies. They want to get healthier and feel more confident in their skin. But they're convinced that healthy eating means you're constantly tracking food and worrying about what you'll eat next. So, obviously this is in sharp contrast to the other side of the spectrum. Which is eating for fuel and function. But what's really crazy, is most of you listening will likely have experienced both sides of this spectrum. Which is incredibly common. What normally happens is people will find themselves in this cycle where they're trying to eat perfectly and lose weight. So, they're really trying to harness willpower and live in the "eating for function" side of the spectrum. Then, their willpower runs out. Eating that way no longer feels natural to them. So, they fall off track. They fail to follow through with their food plan. And they fall all the way to the other end of the spectrum, which is eating for pleasure. They'll emotionally eat. They'll engage in binge eating episodes. And then, they'll eventually get back that desire to lose weight. Which will bring them back to the "eating for fuel" side of the spectrum. So, I hope you see how this works. It's actually pretty fascinating. Now, you may already know where I'm going with this. The goal I have for you, and where true healthy eating lives, is in the

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middle of this spectrum. It's when you find the balance between eating for fuel and eating for pleasure. From this place, you're always aware of the two extreme ends of the spectrum. You know that at one end there's eating strictly for fuel, and at the other end there's eating mindlessly for pleasure. But you very intentionally make food choices from a place where you're set on finding the balance in the middle of the spectrum. It's finding that sweet spot for healthy eating. And this will look a bit different for everyone. And that's why this work is so important. No one can provide you the exact steps to take with food to find this balance. That's for you to experiment with and find out for yourself. As a coach, it's not even my job to provide my clients with the healthy eating how. This would mean I just gave them a meal plan. That would be such a waste of time. My job is always to lead my clients on the path to figure out their healthy eating answers for themselves.

So, whenever you think about the concept of healthy eating. I want you to step away from those rigid definitions for it. I don't want you to see healthy eating as eating perfectly or eating any particular diet. I want your definition for healthy eating to be more expansive and fluid. Remember this spectrum. Because this will give you a higher level perspective on what it really means to eat healthy long-term. In a way that's simple, sustainable, and enjoyable for you. And this is also the key to finding true freedom with food. As cliché as that sounds sometimes, finding food freedom, it's really true. Defining healthy eating as more fluid, allows you to realize that food has no power over you. You have the ability to create your own rules for healthy eating. Everything you eat can be a conscious choice. You're in the driver's seat. Because on any given day, you and only you get to decide where on the healthy eating spectrum you want to live. Some days you may be slightly further on one side where you're eating for fuel to provide healing to your body. Some days you may be a little further on

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the other side where you're eating for satisfaction and pleasure. Maybe you're at a really nice restaurant or enjoying the holidays and just want to enjoy that eating experience, right? But the idea is never, ever perfection. It's to create a happy medium where your eating choices average out to being somewhere in the middle of that healthy eating spectrum. This makes the concept of healthy eating so much lighter too, right? Because you can constantly be thinking of it like that spectrum or even a scale. So, let's go there for a second. In the middle of the scale is where your eating habits are perfectly balanced. But, if you go a little further to one side of the scale, it doesn't mean the whole thing tips to that one side. Meaning, if you decide to go further on the side where you're eating for pleasure, it doesn't mean you're fallen off the scale completely. It may mean that in the future you prioritize eating for fuel a bit more so you balance out that scale. And this also goes for the other side of the scale as well. There may be a period of time where you're prioritizing eating for fuel. And the scale tips a little more that way. But this doesn't mean that eating for pleasure isn't important. You want to always be checking in with your eating habits and seeing how you can bring yourself back to that healthy and happy medium. Where the scale is balanced.

The goal of all of this, is to simply be in a place where you're able to intentionally choose everything you eat. Which means you're paying attention and have such an in-tune relationship with your body that everything you eat becomes an empowered decision. Whether that's eating for fuel or eating for pleasure. This means you decide to choose foods based on balancing the two sides of this spectrum. You're intentionally choosing foods to provide nourishment to our body nutritionally; however, when you want to experience foods you genuinely love you intentionally allow yourself to indulge. You always have an understanding of the balance of this spectrum, and have

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mastered doing this for yourself daily. So, you don't live in a restrictive relationship with food, but you're still able to get the results you want with your body. You need to find the balance in the spectrum where you're intentionally eating to care for your body, while also enjoying the hell out of food. This spectrum is representative of what healthy eating actually entails. Unfortunately, diets or mass-marketed weight loss programs won't not tell you this. Since this would mean you'd never have to spend your money on them – ever again. And I know this is a bold statement. But if you can master this healthy eating spectrum for yourself, you don't need a diet to come save you. This method of eating healthy really does last for a lifetime. Which is why you see some people who seemingly eat healthy effortlessly. They've mastered this spectrum for themselves. So, brainstorm this process. Which side of the spectrum are you living in right now? How can you work to better achieve that healthy eating balance for yourself? The more you can dive into this process, the more you'll be on your way to forming healthy eating habits that feel effortless to you. Alright, I'll talk to you next week.