

#56: Body Shame and the Whiteness of Wellness with Jessica Wilson,  
Registered Dietitian and Author

February 6, 2023

**Abbie** 0:08

Welcome to full plate, a podcast about healing from diet, culture and reclaiming your right to live peacefully in your body. I'm your host, Abbie Attwood. I'm an anti diet nutritionist with a master's in nutrition. I have a virtual private practice where I work with clients all over the world through one on one counseling and my group programs. Join me here each week for guest interviews, as well as some solo episodes where I'll be answering your questions about food movement, body image, and so much more. Before we get started, I want to remind you that this is a safe space and I will never mention numbers like weight or calories. That being said, please do take care of yourself and just avoid any topics on here that don't feel helpful to you at this time. Lastly, a reminder that the content of this podcast is meant for educational purposes only and should not be taken as medical or mental health advice, diagnosis or treatment. It is not a replacement for one on one counseling and does not constitute a provider patient relationship. Please consult your own provider for any specific changes you're considering. Thank you for being here. I really appreciate you. Now let's dig into today's episode.

Hello, my friends, welcome back to full plate. This is Abby and you're listening to Episode 56, which I can't believe today is a conversation between myself of course and Jessica Wilson, who is a registered dietitian and an author officially if you're listening to this live, her book is releasing tomorrow February 7. And we talked a little bit about that today.

Before I get into today's episode, and tell you a little bit more about what the conversation is about, I just want to give a couple of reminders reminder number one, this show is wonderfully sponsored by our patrons those of you who are supporting the show on Patreon I thank you deeply, you can support the show for as little as \$3 a month you will get bonus episodes each month. And you will also know that you are keeping the show alive and running. And for that I thank you so deeply. And I also wanted to say that in a few weeks, I'll be opening up registration and enrollment for my next group program which will be launching in early to mid April. So I launched one every few months. And it is definitely one of the things that brings me the most joy in the work that I do. So just look out for a little bit more information on that if you have questions, you can go to my website or you can email me my website is [Abbie Attwood wellness.com](http://Abbie Attwood wellness.com). And you can email me at Abbie at [Abbie Attwood wellness.com](mailto:Abbie Attwood wellness.com) as well.

With that, losing my train of thought as usual, let me tell you a little bit about Jessica, and give you a little bit of a sense of what we're talking about today. Jessica, like I said as a dietitian and an author, but she's also a community organizer and an activist. She is such an important voice in the space in the anti diet world in the Health at Every Size and intuitive eating world which we talk about today with a critical lens. And I think a lens that is really, really important and that we don't talk about enough. And I myself have wanted to kind of

dig into some of some of the things that I've come up against and have felt uncomfortable with in some of these areas. And Jessica just has a really beautiful way of expressing the just kind of inherent discrimination in in how we approach all angles of this conversation, the anti diet conversation. So today we are talking about anti blackness and how that is really at the root of diet culture and anti fatness and I hope that you can enter this conversation with your eyes open with an open mind and an open heart and really, really just coming at it from a place of seeking to learn and understand more about the roots of this oppressive system of beliefs that make us all feel shitty about our bodies and pursuing fineness at all costs and quote unquote health at all costs. This conversation is so important because it really provides you with much more context for how how deeply discriminatory these ideas are, how they are rooted in racism and white supremacy, and how that all came to be really connecting a lot of the dots between the foods that are moralized and demonize the bodies that are moralized and demonized and how that has always been about blackness and how that has always been rooted in the white ideal

have, you know what it means to be morally virtuous, and look as close as you can to whiteness. So this is a really important conversation. Jessica is really wonderful. I can't wait for you to get to know her in this conversation and go out and buy her book. I will be linking all of the things in the show notes where you can find her and more of her work. So with that, and without any further ado, let's get into this conversation with Jessica.

Hi, Jessica. Hi. I'm so happy you're here. Thank you. I really really am. I was just telling you, it was gushing and I felt honored that you're here. So a lot of learning and unlearning to do today.

So first question for you just to kick us off on something fun. What has been on your plate both literally like a food or a meal or a snack? You're just loving lately? And then tell us all what's going on in this moment of life for you. What's your plate full of in life?

**Jessica** 6:05

I've been orienting a lot of my dinners around tater tots these days.

**Abbie** 6:10

The airfryer and tater tots situation has just been my favorite food group. So then, you know it goes down to like what goes with tater tots. I was gonna ask what do you dip them in?

**Jessica** 6:24

Depends on what the vibe of the meal is. You can, you know, do like a regular frozen vegetable and protein you can add you know, make them into a baked potato situation. You can make them into more of a nacho go for the nachos. Yeah, take on tater tots. So much you can do Barbie my chicken. Yeah. Okay. Well, you just inspired you just inspired everyone listening because I'm always harping on like, those kinds of foods, just the still fun things that you can make into all sorts of different concoctions. Yeah, and it's fun every time. Got it out. So what about lifewise? I am three weeks out to a book launch. I know you and I were just chatting about this. This was my first book. I was not emotionally prepared for the long haul. But it has been two years. It'll be Yeah, two years from writing to publishing. So I'm gearing up

for book publicity and a little mini book tour that I'll go on and visit some bookstores and universities and things like that. We got our first primetime news situation set up. So I had a young person in my life take me shopping.

So I know what people are wearing these days. My quarantine outfit like coordination is just, you know, being strong. It's been going. So I had to get back out there and shop for pants and stuff like that. Speaking of quarantine, and I'm just thinking about you writing this book, and you said it's been two years. So it started during the pitch. Okay, is there a story behind that? Did it feel like the right time? Oh, definitely. It was the right time. If I was not working from home, like with a commute back and forth to work, everything would have been impossible.

But then there was a New York Times article in I want to December, I want to say, of 2020 that featured me and some other dietitians of color just discussing the dietetics field and how quinoa and kale really are. It is in summary, and fat phobic. So I was featured there. And then someone reached out and said, you know the things that you're saying are important. Would you like to write a book? I said, No. They said, Would you like to write a book? I said, No. They said, Oh, it'll be easy. You're on Instagram. It's just the same and they lied posts together. And that's what they say. Oh, lies. Oh, my gosh. So but yes, if it had not been for COVID and the lack of travel and like the complete shut in. It definitely wouldn't have happened.

**Abbie** 9:14

So you were and you wear so many hats. So you are a dietician, you're an author. You are a community organizer. And yeah, yeah, those are humans doing all the human life.

**Jessica** 9:30

Right. I'm married. I have two dogs. Yeah, I

**Abbie** 9:33

I have two dogs. Two. I didn't know you had to. Oh, it's rare that people have to. It's a lot, you know, your face. Thank you for that a lot. And you've been getting hit with the rain like I have because you're in Sacramento, Lucky dogs.

**Jessica** 9:48

So muddy dogs and also dogs that sit in the doorway and look out Yeah. And you're just waiting for them to go out and do their business. And then yeah,

**Abbie** 9:58

oh yes, the struggle. And so with all those hats even wearing what happened while you were writing the book then like in terms of your practice in terms of you know, you said you weren't commuting anymore. So I imagined things changed a little bit. Yeah, what else was going on during them? So

**Jessica** 10:14

I was working full time at UC Davis, the health center there at the time. And so I went down to just three days a week working there. So I had two full days to write. And less of a commute, but Okay, so that's the time made that one work.

**Abbie** 10:29

Yeah. Yeah. But what a journey, so and it comes out February seventh,

**Jessica** 10:35

February 7. Oh, exciting. Yeah.

**Abbie** 10:37

I can't wait to read it. And I just, yeah, I'm beaming. Because I, you know, years ago, when I read, obviously, kind of the work of Sabrina strings. Sonya, Taylor Deshaun. And I just kept craving more like, I just need more of this. I need to understand this more deeply. I need it. And I feel like that's what you're, you're bringing?

**Jessica** 11:01

Thanks. I've got a lot of my Yeah, clinician experience in there. So hopefully, that'll be helpful. Yeah. And the stories of clients? Yeah.

**Abbie** 11:10

Is your story woven into

**Jessica** 11:12

it? Yeah. Well, and I say in the intro, like, it's hard to not have our stories in there. Because there is no research and black folks with eating disorders. Like there's nothing to pull from, there's really nothing written about it. I quote, Sabrina strings a bunch of times, and also Isabel Wilkerson from the cast, but like, there's really nothing specific to like clinical or eating disorder work. So it is so much of me and my friends. I've interviewed them in the book and my clients just because there's nothing else to go on, except for

**Abbie** 11:48

us. So if you were to kind of take us back a little bit, to your like, your story, I know that we could be here for hours talking about it. But

**Jessica** 11:58

They do a short version. Yeah. Yeah. Starting at age four, literally. Honestly, yeah. h4, I was sent to an endocrinologist for growing too quickly, after you write why I was at the 100th percentile for height and weight and four year olds, which I will just pause and say to a four year old or a six year old, that looks like winning, you're at the top of this chart. You're up there, like there are people in the middle. There's people at the bottom, no, you're at the top, that's winning, that seems like a good thing, right until you get told that's a bad thing. And that's very confusing to a kid. So that's not great, basically. So then I was followed by an endocrinologist they did, I just found my medical record. A bone scan when I was four, to get evidence that I was growing too quickly, like my bones were like the age of a five and a half year old and I was four. And so then they were monitoring me for this. And I don't know what was supposed to happen or how that was helpful. It was like proof that I'm taller than everybody, but they were like looking at me. Wild. I don't know how this was supposed to be helpful information. We didn't do anything differently. But then when I was six, you know, I'm still growing.

**Abbie** 13:13

Parents, were they caught up in the concern at all? Or was it?

**Jessica** 13:17

So I remember little, except for winning at the growth chart. I want to say yes, but it's hard to know. And I would give them some grace. And if a doctor is concerned, like you're definitely given me concerned as a parent, unless you know differently. My dad, no, he was not at all concerned. Because kids are kids, and they're gonna be fine. Which was actually really great. My mom did the most No, she did all the medical appointments. So I had a balance thereof like, Yeah, whatever. That's what kids are supposed to weigh, like, not concerned. And then Mom was doing all the doctor's appointments. But I ended up seeing a dietitian at age 686. I remember the bits and pieces that I only I'm sure we're there for a while. I only remember her telling me to specifically donate more than x or y thing, you know, and that that stuck with me. Like because I'm six and that becomes like the rule that you know, like you only have, you know, you never have more than two slices of pizza. You don't do

**Abbie** 14:25

whatever it is. Learn how to stay in line with fry.

**Jessica** 14:29

Yeah, I'm just like this. Like this must be a fact. I'm six. Yeah, and then it took me a while to eat more than two slices of pizza after that. Yeah.

**Abbie** 14:42

How did you experience it, as you got a little bit older and you were still living at home, was there? Was there any like familial experience of diet culture in your home in terms of parents and family, other family members?

**Jessica** 14:57

So this is a place that I think Um, folks of color sometimes diverge from white folk stories. I was, I am black and I grew up in a Muslim , went to school and liked very white neighborhoods. And so and, and I was tall and big as we know from my growth chart. And so I was always, I won't say a spectacle, but I was very obviously different in a bunch of ways. And I talked about in the book how like making myself smaller, he made me feel like I was sticking out less or like I was falling in line more. So I don't think I was ever. My mom was like, always dieting. And it was boring to me, she only had toast for breakfast, I didn't understand it. So I wasn't invested in dieting, but I was invested in ways to make my body stick out less. So that was through high school. And then in college, I think, you know, somewhat opposite from a lot of other people, I became more fine because I met people and got connections with folks of color, queer and trans folks. And they had more than two pieces of pizza. And I was like, Cool. We're friends. This is what people do. And things didn't magically disappear. But I became way less concerned about whether or not my body fit in or was smaller, then.

**Abbie** 16:32

Do you think, looking back, was it prior to that, like getting exposed to those kinds of communities? Was it? Was it disordered eating? When you look back to when you were young?

**Jessica** 16:45

That one's a hard one as a clinician? Yeah. Because as a clinician, I am able to, like, somewhat assess disordered eating, or I don't know what so my two most disordered years are my one, I guess. Yeah, it was my first year in college because I was so convinced. Going from high school where I was always my body was a problem to college. Like, I was sure that I would not make any friends at this new place if I wasn't, you know, super, very thin. And then it was like when I actually made friends, and they were, like, fine with whatever was happening, that I, you know, let go of the reins. Yeah, that first year was not great for me. I would definitely say that that was disordered eating.

**Abbie** 17:31

When you said earlier that you saw a dietitian when you were six? Yeah. Did that plant any seeds at all, for you for your future career? Like when did the career piece come in for you?

**Jessica** 17:42

That was also very clear. I don't. Let's see. I'm trying to think about how I conceptualize health. And so that was very much the like, low fat snack wells vibe was like very strong. Yes. In middle school and high school for me. And so that was like a, an like, no red. No red meat. Yes. And no eggs. No cholesterol. Yes. All of that. Yeah. And so it was all these rules and ways of eating that were swirling around. And I was deciding what to major in to go to college. And I was like a psychologist talking to people. That sounds great. And then my mom said, you can study nutrition. And I was talking about food all day. That sounds great. I'll do that one. But of course, it played in some I don't. At that moment. Like I didn't recall, Sue, who was my dietitian when I was six, but I'm sure yeah, she I'm sure was trying her hardest she was doing. Yeah, I found my note in my chart the other day. So I saw her name there. But yeah, I'm sure that had a role to play in how it was viewing food. And I'm unfortunately sure that I went into nutrition, like trying to be smooth at the same time.

**Abbie** 18:58

Yeah. And a pursuit of like smallness, and still trying to like figure out with the quote, unquote, right

**Jessica** 19:04

the right way and then sharing that way. And talking about eating. Yeah, telling people that way once I learned it in school.

**Abbie** 19:13

Yeah. Yeah. I feel that. I am curious how you ended up? I'm curious what the, I guess I'm trying to think about how to say this, like, what the path was for you both out of kind of the diet culture mentality with dietetics. And then also, I mean, how did that ebb and flow with the realization of like, how white supremacy you know, formed it and I mean, really, it's like built on white supremacy like how did you end up a did that which came first?

**Jessica** 19:47

Great question. So not long after, so my, I was a transfer student. So I think I took a fifth year in college and that year was the last year and I didn't. I had relationships with three other people in the program and we were like the misfits, the people of color to folks were chubby. And I think there was a fifth person who was an international student. And so we were like all of the not then why did straight women with blonde hair. There's five of us. And at that point, like looking around and being like, this is weird. Like, why are there only like five people that don't fit this norm. And we were very interested in community nutrition generally and working with folks of color. And that was not the path of our curriculum, and then I went to OHSU for dietetic internship. I didn't do a great job researching when we still had binders and not the internet for choosing, and they were very clinically focused. And so calories in calories out, like, carry your calculator, you know, with you type of deal, and that was absolutely not my lane. So at that point,

**Abbie** 20:59

or when you realize that then you were like, oh,

**Jessica** 21:01

yeah, right. No, this is not my job at all,

**Abbie** 21:05

know, that we'll be doing

**Jessica** 21:07

Then I worked for a granola company. Honestly, for like six months, I needed a job and moved to Eugene, Oregon, and then I went to University of Oregon for my master's in human physiology and worked with athletes then for my internship. And that was great, because it was like, how many? Like how can we get as many calories into you as possible? That was fun.

**Abbie** 21:30

Yeah, like, up

**Jessica** 21:33

until 11pm For footplate football players, we liked to deliver snacks. So I mean, that was fun. And then I ended up with the student health center there. And this is the actual, like, stronger turning point, you know, and with athletes, obviously, calories in calories out. And the type of food right, like that was a good like a

**Abbie** 21:53

temple thing, good challenge of that

**Jessica** 21:56

We were feeding them the most calorically dense foods possible. Like with good reason. At the University of Oregon, in the Student Health Center, that job there is where I started seeing eating disorder clients who were not then who were, you know, definitely restricting,

having a bunch of other behaviors and not then. And I didn't know what to do in quotation marks, if you can do that, um, I guess the medical physicians didn't know what to do. Like, this literally just wasn't in our training. So, you know, everything was like IBEW ideal body weight. And like, this is what, you know, all of these things that were like, well, if you like, this is what's supposed to happen. It's not happening. And then it was with two of them specifically that we, like, ended up doing a deep dive and found Health at Every Size that year. 2010, probably. Okay. Yeah, it was a journey we all took together. And then I started talking about it more at the clinic there. And that was like an easy sell. Because we had seen all firsthand that calories in calories out was not real.

**Abbie** 23:09

Yeah. And that there is no, there is no body size. Yeah, inherent for eating disorders.

**Jessica** 23:15

Like starvation happens to people of all sizes. Yeah.

**Abbie** 23:19

100%. Yeah. And you and from there, you started embracing more of this perspective of like, okay, did you start to see kind of the anti fatness within

**Jessica** 23:30

medicine society? Yeah, that was also very, let's move you. Yeah. Michelle Obama, let's move stuff. So like, and that was also Gosh, biggest loser. Time? Yeah. Right. So people are watching that, that. Like, if I was not very aware of anti fatness before, like seeing Jillian Michaels scream at Fat people like, yeah, that was it. It was terrifying. And like, students were growing up, like watching this with their family. And so we were able to have conversations about that. But yes, long story short, I met Deborah guard, one of the founders of Health at Every Size at an eating disorder conference. And she gave the keynote, I'm not sure how they let her do that. About Health at Every Size in 2012. I'm gonna say 2012. And since then, you know, she and I have been connected. I got very into Health at Every Size in the org. The Association for Size, Diversity and health. I was on their board. I was all in. I was like, this is a way to go. I like 100% Team Health at Every Size for a little bit. For two or three years. I'll pause for the sake of this podcast. Do you want to chime in because I could just keep going? Question.

**Abbie** 24:56

No, I mean, I have so many questions, but I want you to like okay, You go, Yeah, go. I'll, I'll jump in if I need to. But yeah, you're, you're in a good spot.

**Jessica** 25:05

So I left Oregon, I moved to the Bay area where a lot of the health of every size thing takes members a lot of the as the members were living in the Bay Area, I moved and these two things were not directly connected. So I moved and was able to attend a lot of these meetings and quickly saw how single issue as done Health at Every Size was, so it was very much only about fatness it was very much in a healthcare setting. The only thing that is bad is fatphobia. Like that is as far as the conversation extended. And I was surprised, I would ask. So it was a table of all white folks. And you'd be like, hey, you know, you know, has there ever



been a person black or brown or indigenous indigenous person here? And they'd be like, oh, yeah, she was here for like, a few months. And you should totally connect with her. And then oh, and then there were so and so she came once and I'm like, Are you? Are you seeing a pattern here? All of the white folks are coming and staying. None of the folks of color are staying at this literal, figurative table. But yeah, they were like, Oh, it's just because they were busy. And I was like, Okay, sure. And then 2014 Eric Garner died in New York. And if folks don't recall, he was arrested or was killed for selling cigarettes, single cigarettes on a corner in New York. And he was one of the first who was saying I can't breathe when people were sitting, were kneeling on his back. And he was blamed for his death because of his size. He was a very tall, fat man. And the reason he died was because he was fat, not because there was somebody murdered,

**Abbie** 27:01

killing him, right? Yeah.

**Jessica** 27:03

And I thought for sure, like that moment would be the time when people of every size at the think tank would be like, Yes, I see these two things are connected, you know, blackness, police violence, anti-fatness, the intersections here, I felt were so clear. And that I was like this, you know, I'm presenting intersectionality in this moment, and they were like, it's not about that. Jessica was like, Oh, right. I didn't want to break up. But this is the point where I have to say goodbye. And then I started quickly. Just a community group for folks who wanted to have conversations beyond haze. We called it hazed and confused, of course. So we were all just like, what is what is happening? And yeah, in body liberation and fat liberation spaces. Also this like real serious focus on health and health that it resize just didn't resonate for a lot of us who were disabled queer had chronic illnesses. Like we were just never going to be healthy, regardless of whether or not we were fat.

**Abbie** 28:15

I was going to ask you, when you were talking about the first kind of starting to you're looking around the room at that literal, literal. And I was going to ask you, because it sounds like you were posing the question of like, this is just not this is not just about size. Yeah. And then the other thing is that it's also that like, this construct of health, yeah, is entirely made up, in and of itself, right. Like, it's so there's all there's almost like these, I'm asked, I guess I'm asking you like, do you see it as like, both of those things are problematic in that

**Jessica** 28:48

kind of so many things. Yeah, yes. house

**Abbie** 28:52

itself is constructed out of whiteness, right. It's

**Jessica** 28:56

it looks away from it. Yeah, it moves away. Yeah. Yeah. Yes. So many people are signed to health based on what their body looks like, without even knowing what's going on inside of them.

**Abbie** 29:07

And then somehow, I mean, we know how but it's also not even that. I mean, health itself is a construct. And then on top of that, it's become like the sole purpose of everyone's life. Right. Like it's been the sign of morality, the sign of virtue, success, achievement. Yeah. AKA white white supremacy.

**Jessica** 29:28

Yeah, white supremacy and capitalism. This is what Yes, right? 1,000%.

**Abbie** 29:34

Can you guess? I know that it took you an entire book and you could probably write 10 More on this. But can you explain the connection to like, Can for those listening, that connection between anti fatness and anti blackness take it back? Because we know that it actually predated medical fat phobia? The fat phobia itself, right? Rooted in white supremacy. So I'm curious, like, can you give people that sense of how these things are so deeply intertwined and can't be separated?

**Jessica** 30:09

Sure. So 1800s, late 1800s We were still engaged in enslavement and transatlantic slave trade. And Sarah Baartman was from an African tribe and was a very large woman. They called, and they described her as having very large buttocks. So she was busty, she had a big butt. And she was literally taken from those who were enslaving her in one place over to London, to Piccadilly Circus, her body was literally put on display, and people would pay to look at her, right. So black woman's body, a black woman's body, in that case, was a literal spectacle that you could pay to objectify as something very different. Her people were called, well, let's see, she was deemed to be hot and top, which is what we'll say. And then like, there was a medical diagnosis afterwards called the Hutton tuck bustle, which is just a big but was just just a big butt, which also now has like ICD 10 code for like localized adiposity, which is just having a larger but then then white people as quote unquote normal. Yeah, right. Like what is happening? So that's the 1800s and then into the 1900s. It became very clear through writings in women's journals at the time, that white women were to really hold on to their virtue and not spill over into what was thought to be savage or hedonistic, which is the definition of blackness at that time. So blackness, black women, you know, because of their large s, were thought to, you know, be hedonistic be only eating, you know, eating so much and beyond for pleasure. And,

**Abbie** 32:19

yeah, Gladiator gluttony was very, like animalistic pick. Right.

**Jessica** 32:24

And that's, that's another word that was used. And we see the connections both to whiteness, but also a religion, right? Yes. Already since, yes. That we should not be perpetuating that. Yeah, we've just assigned people, because their bodies look different than those in England. And if anyone's

**Abbie** 32:44

listening and thinking like, well, you know, I don't know. I mean, we just think about the language that's used today and wellness culture, like cleanses, and the names on certain food labels that are rooted in diet culture. I mean, it's all there. It's sneaky cleaning. Yeah, clean eating. Exactly. Which is impure, right? Dirty, dirty. No willpower. No self. Yeah,

**Jessica** 33:08

That's a good one. Yeah, honestly, I'll connect another one. I'm gonna throw it in, and we can throw it out. But when we come back to it, intuitive eating only eats when you're hungry, which to me is very much tied to this idea of hedonism and like not eating for pleasure. And like, like, only for biological reasons. And not for pleasure. Is that like, I feel and if connected to be similar?

**Abbie** 33:40

Yeah. It's funny. You see that? Because I was just doing a group session on hunger, the concept of hunger. Yeah, this week and talking about how like, it's, it's actually almost the term hunger just using that as a marker of whether you should

**Jessica** 33:57

be eating. That's a good one. Yeah.

**Abbie** 34:00

Why? Right. What if we just asked ourselves, do we want to eat rather than like, are we hungry? Right, like, yeah, why does that need to be the barometer for when we're allowed to eat? That's

**Jessica** 34:12

what it is. That is when you're allowed to eat not even when you're supposed to, right.

**Abbie** 34:16

Yeah. And then people deem themselves wrong or quote unquote, emotional eaters? Yeah. I had the confines of like, what it feels like to be hungry, which, right, it feels different for everyone. How can we even define that? Sure. So yeah, I don't I'm totally I'm with you. It's like it's so there's okay. So to kind of go back to where you were a decade ago. Okay, so we're seeing the connection between this gluttony, suppose it is like animalistic eating, that's where I started getting on a tangent.

**Jessica** 34:47

That's okay. And if you look back, it's also not only how people will, like distinguishing white folks from black folks is also like distinguishing good white people from bad white people.

**Abbie** 34:58

Right. So there's a disconnect. People from bad fat people do this.

**Jessica** 35:03

Well and even glut wetters like gluttonous people. So you know, at one point they're talking about, you know, Irish, Gottesman, who you know are eating a lot of food and that the only way that that's acceptable is if you're black because of course, you're hedonistic. So then that is the direct lead into, you know, anti fatness, so anti fatness from anti blackness there. And then that's not just looked at as a marker of distinction, it's like also applied then to white folks to get folks more in line with what is supposed to be pure moral, morally righteous, like race, which is the white race. So we have people who don't follow the rules and their bodies, you know, spill outside the boundaries of what's acceptable. And then we have white people who are supposed to be then you look at again, like eugenics and other things and just really trying to create this pure, like moral, white race, Anglo Saxon particularly.

**Abbie** 36:00

And then people will ask, well, if it's if anti-fatness is rooted in anti-blackness and why are you know, white women being fat, fat, white women are being oppressed? And along those lines, it's well actually, it's the seeking out of getting further away from that definition of blackness. The seeking of weight loss in terms of weight loss is like, let me distance myself from this quote unquote, wrong way to be in a body.

**Jessica** 36:30

Right? And you know, if that white women are able to lose weight, they will be granted access to all that white supremacy promises. If fat black people lose weight? They are not. Yeah, yeah. Regardless of you know, a black person sighs a black woman sighs like, they will never have access to what white supremacy offers to others who are thin.

**Abbie** 36:57

Right? Yeah. And how, how do you see this playing out now? So like we know, the 1900s? Like, how does that progress and kind of become more sneaky, more talked about, like wellness culture these days? And

**Jessica** 37:14

Well, yeah, so I jumped ahead to intuitive eating and how I think that hedonism represents avoidance, like the principle changed in the fourth edition or something. But I was comparing texts, like principle seven of intuitive eating is used to be Oh, help me out here. cope with your emotions without using food. Yeah. But now it's to cope with your emotions. Yeah, but no, that's to cope with your emotions with kindness. But I read paragraph for paragraph two, the same same chapter, just a different title. And it is just like this is not different. You're on two urine. Yeah, I think it's like an untuned eater. And like, unregulated eater if you're eating anytime you're not, you're hungry. No, that's, that's not life. I don't understand. Yeah. So really, it's the same parameters in a different flavor. And also, structural like, purity I find, and like, you know, I have, you know, been asked like, Oh, you're not healthy at Every Size or intuitive eating dietitian, do you promote weight loss? Like, how is there a right and a wrong way? In like, you're either intuitive eating or you're, you know, pro intentional weight loss. Like, there's no like, option. So we have created again, like a right and a wrong way of being. Yes, the good moral kind, which is the intuitive eating and then like the bad kind in, like, a different structure and entirely

**Abbie** 38:49

so hard. Like, it's, it's, everything you're saying resonates with me. And it's one of the reasons I don't use it like principle for principle, because it's, yeah, I do think it still gives its own set of rules in a way. And I know I get that there's a lot of nuance, and you can teach it with that new Yeah. But I think that it's hard if you have to teach something with Yeah. Right. Like, yeah, it shouldn't be that way necessarily. Like, I feel like it should be. I just like, yeah, it's just Just feel free. You know, it just should feel unique to whatever you need. And those principles can be helpful for a lot of people, but they can also really lead people astray. And what I've been what I've witnessed and Yeah,

**Jessica** 39:37

and if you're not hungry, you don't eat and how many reasons could there be for me not to be hungry? Yeah, yeah, but I still need to eat a meal. We still need to eat

**Abbie** 39:45

We are hungry. It's like our bodies need energy, even if we don't feel like it

**Jessica** 39:50

right. The person who took me shopping Lexie is actually profiled in the eating disorder. Chapter and 100 do like a quick read. have the book before, before I sent it in, and she read through the intuitive eating chapter and was just like, What is this what is happening I work 12 hour shifts, I don't eat because she's a fit tech and works overnight on emergency doesn't eat, and, like, doesn't get hungry. And then you know it ends up, you know, in the US having to stop it like McDonald's who's just gonna have a hunger meltdown after. But also like, there are other times she's not studying and also, you know, doesn't get hungry. She's like, What do I do then? Do I just not? Yeah, she was like, this is confusing. I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing. And then if I'm thinking every moment to moment about this, that's just gonna drive me bananas. Because I don't want to be overthinking food as somebody in recovery from an eating disorder. She doesn't want to overthink food, again,

**Abbie** 40:59

right? We just need to, we just need to have the permission to just eat whenever it is that we want. And you know what I'm thinking, as you say, that is I have, obviously, I have many, many privileges. I do have several different chronic illnesses. And something I'm thinking about is medications. And now, there's some ableism there in the sense that a lot of people's hunger cues, get dysregulated on medications, and then they just trust Oh, like, I'm not hungry. I mean, I mean, we could go on a whole tangent of like, the medications that are now prescribed. Yeah, to actually support that. Extremely fucked up. But yeah, then I'm also thinking there's, there's so many examples of when you know, we're sick, we're taking medications, we're right, it's,

**Jessica** 41:49

yeah. Or we've just eaten dinner, and our friend is getting a divorce and wants to go out to dinner. Like, what am I to be like, I'll just get a glass of water and eat alone.

**Abbie** 42:00

Or like, I'm not gonna have a piece of birthday cake because I'm not hungry. Right?

**Jessica** 42:06

Who isn't helping? How was that? Yeah.

**Abbie** 42:08

It goes back to I think I really, I know. Like, I know, there's a lot of I know, there's a lot of nuance there. But it goes back to the thing that you were saying before, which is this idea that if we go outside these parameters of hunger and fullness, that we are deviating from what is quite unquote, right, good. Pure. Yeah. And white.

**Jessica** 42:37

Anglo Saxon, yeah. All of those ties. So it's,

**Abbie** 42:43

What do you propose? What are you proposing? Yeah, I want to know more like everybody wants

**Jessica** 42:47

a solution. They're like, well, what if it's not intuitive eating? What should I do? But it sounds like you're already

**Abbie** 42:52

It's freedom. It's right. Like it's just letting food be food. Let it be food? Yeah. Perfect. Let it Yeah, right. If we need in the moment,

**Jessica** 43:03

yeah. All this assignment to YES to food in all different directions. If needing to be, you know, balanced, and all of these words that we think are very flexible,

**Abbie** 43:17

no. Icky feelings. Or,

**Jessica** 43:21

yeah, sometimes you know, my friends will have dinner like a cereal buffet, like and they just go through. There's three of them in the house and they'll put out a dream. Food. Yeah. So it'll be a buffet of cereals that they ended up being like, that's a mix, because I'm a cereal mixer. I love mixing stereo. Oh, sidenote, I just found Cinnamon Toast Crunch flavored frosting. It tastes like milk at the end. That's my favorite cereal. Amazing. It tastes delicious. Okay, sorry. Cinnamon Toast

**Abbie** 43:57

Crunch. Ice cream. Oh, yeah, that combines my two favorite foods. So I'm here for it. But yeah, and it's just, I mean, it's like we get so caught up with the food stuff that it distracts us from the picture of like, why we don't trust ourselves to just eat in the first place. Like, why we

become so disconnected from that, like distrusting our bodies. Feeling like we can't just just eat just food. Yeah, and that will be okay. Right and

**Jessica** 44:32

that tomorrow with another day like it's today it's today. Tomorrow's another day like whatever happened today. It's gonna be fine. Tomorrow is still gonna come?

**Abbie** 44:42

Yeah. And then there's the bigger picture of you know, there's there's both the pursuit, there's the use of like diet culture via like, weight loss, right and like anti fatness and then there is the this massive fear now kind of the fear mongering or on health, like, using, like eating in the quote unquote, right way, will deliver us immortality and wouldn't that be great. And so there's that other piece. So tell me more. Tell me a little bit about that side of things like the health, the construct of health, and how you're talking about that in terms of in terms of white supremacy in terms of the constructs we've been talking about

**Jessica** 45:25

When the contract is not super far from food, when it comes to health that you and I have already briefly discussed, I think it will not, I think, help look away. But yeah, you mentioned your chronic illnesses, but if you walked into a doctor's clinic, like they would be like, yes, we're gonna treat you, you can have appointments like you look, quote, healthy, like what does that mean? In the context, I actually

**Abbie** 45:48

I didn't get diagnosed with a brain tumor for years, because they thought I was quite, unquote, healthy. It's like, it goes multiple ways. I mean, yeah, a million privileges. Like I'm not saying that's true. Every other others are harmed, and right, your race, but it's interesting how those assumptions just infiltrate everything,

**Jessica** 46:09

right? People that people can't get, like sleep studies, because they can't have sleep apnea, because they're thin. Yeah, yeah. So it affects all of us in many different ways. So yes, the construct of health was also along in those like the 1800s -1900s, like constructing public health, there was a Harvard professor who was also involved in eugenics who was engineering, the pure the white race, basically. And like, the stuff that is written, I had to edit a bunch in my book, but I had to cut out because there's just so long and so old, but it was basically like word for word, but public health is telling us today, like making this like catastrophe, if we don't address this thing, like everybody is just going to be, you know, unhealthy. But like, what are you? What are you talking about? What, what does that mean to you? Are you worried, like, what are you worried about? It's, it's wild. So basically, eugenics when it comes to health, wanting to have like this very healthy brace of people versus like the underclass, who would not be which is predominantly folks of color. So it's capitalism

**Abbie** 47:22

In the end? Yeah, that's the thing, quote, unquote, healthy.

**Jessica** 47:26

Just last year, I was at a conference for a public health conference. So you may have heard of it, because you're in the Bay area, but it's the healthy kitchens, healthy lives conference. And other worlds in there, they're very much the fear mongering, you know, this generation, you know, of people is not going to live as long as they're, you know, older, the older generation,

**Abbie** 47:52

and just data to support that.

**Jessica** 47:55

And why are people dying? Is it because, you know, yes, all of these health disparities, like, what are you keeping track of here, and then the ID you can eat your way to health is just so wild? To me.

**Abbie** 48:07

It was in Right, yeah,

**Jessica** 48:09

That's what happened. I was one of the most in Syria paired. Yeah, I was not prepared. Everything is behavior change, right. You can control your health if you eat less, if they quote, eat less and move more. That's it. So and I'm like, Oh, by that calculation, farmworkers should be living longer than all of us, because they move for a living

**Abbie** 48:32

that calculation, you would never have to do a second diet ever again. Because if it just worked if you just ate less, and let's say, right, and if everyone could just make the quote unquote, right choices and have the quote unquote, willpower, then we would all be perfectly pure lips

**Jessica** 48:48

be 100. Yeah, yeah. Yes. So it was a lot of Mediterranean diet. And of course, speaking of whiteness, like manage, right, yeah, the Mediterranean diet

**Abbie** 49:01

for a second for everyone, because it's very important, like that's still touted as like, oh, well look at the Mediterranean diet, they ate everything. Maybe this is the best way to eat, you know, rather than what kind of people will say, I'll hear people say that now as an alternative to why we shouldn't be so afraid of grains and gluten, which is so demonized, in wellness culture. So they'll be like, well, look at the Mediterranean diet. It's like, well, it's just yet again, another example of the way in which we've we've conducted studies on white people by white people, and then basically handed this out to anyone and everyone as the quote unquote, healthiest cultural diet, when it's again, just born out of racism. And this idea that if these white people are eating this way, then it must work for everyone and that somehow



everyone has access to all of the specific foods that we're just taking from one geographical region in the world. It's just such a biased and discriminatory example of how, you know, cultural foods get demonized. And how, how our dietary recommendations get so whitewashed.

**Jessica** 50:19

Yeah. greased, specifically. So it was a they call it like a seven countries seven country Yeah, cuz it can't be continents any studies that compared diets from people across the white world and Japan. So we've got, you know a bunch of diets that are compared to each other and then they're looking at longevity mostly right? They're looking at cardiovascular health. And from what I've been able to dig into, like, I didn't see many controlled variables here. So they are comparing a bunch of white people and Japanese people to each other to find out whose diet like wins in like best of health, and where there's so many things but my, the most interesting part, like there in the follow up study, they go back to the Grecian community, and it's like, well, they stopped eating the Mediterranean diet, and now they're not healthy anymore. And I'm like, it can't be like, make a choice, right? Like these people are eating the foods that they eat in the Mediterranean area that you're talking about, like, what? What could be happening to folks here? Like it was okay. So it's a white diet. It is whole grains. It has lots of nuts. It's so it's copious amounts of olive oil, avocado, you're eating fish, you're not eating meat? Only wholegrains? Of course, lots of vegetables, fruit. That's pretty much it.

**Abbie** 51:55

Yeah, so there's I mean, there's on the one hand, there's, there's privilege there. It's not a cheap way of eating. No. And it's also that we missed the point of like, we are what if we were to eat the food that was available to us where we live? Right. So what if, what if it's a lower stress environment? Because they're eating whatever might be available to them? Like, geographically? Right? And then we try to emulate that somewhere else? And it just doesn't make sense. Nor do we, like, control for any of the socio economic factors. In any of these studies? Not at all, not oppression, not eating disorders, not it's not the stress

**Jessica** 52:36

that food access food apartheid, like, yeah, just how close you live to away here. Yeah. How many of us are the stickers

**Abbie** 52:47

you sit down? Like, what are they eating? And that must be just because? Well, I think this is what you've been saying the whole time. Which is that because health is this construct? Yeah. And rooted in? In whiteness, it's actually like, it's informed. It's informed. The questions were even asked, yeah, in the medical community, right, right. Like that. They're all It's all designed in this way that like, it's there's so much bias, I mean,

**Jessica** 53:15

right. At the same time, they'll do a separate study to be like, Oh, racism negatively impacts cardiovascular health. But still, that doesn't matter. Because all of these white folks in their Mediterranean diet have better cardiovascular health. And so what, what's happening here? So yes, indeed, like the questions that are asked in the first place, even though there is actual

evidence to the contrary, and quite interesting, the nutrition research all the time, talks about, you know, Japanese, you know, heritage diet, and it's fine. If they're eating white rice, because they're eating all these vegetables, I'm like, Well, is it fine that they're eating white rice? Over here, you were telling me it wasn't?

**Abbie** 53:59

It's okay. As long as you're healthy is the message right? It's okay to eat white rice. If they're eating lots of vegetables, it's okay to be in a slightly bigger body, if your blood pressure, if you're strong numbers are within the range. And it's, it's so harmful, because then we just come right back to that construct of health and like, what are we talking about? It's the end all be all. Yeah, what are we talking about?

**Jessica** 54:22

Yeah, my friends, get yearly onesies or you know, every six months, they do not have diabetes. They've never had diabetes, but you know, the fat tax is, you know, just having to get that test, and then having the surprise, like a message every time like, Oh, you don't have diabetes.

**Abbie** 54:44

Oh, and the stress that's experienced in going into those medical appointments, and then getting diagnosed with high blood pressure when you were just really anxious. Your blood pressure was fine. If you hadn't been in the doctor's office, it would have been, you know, not really even matters, right? That doesn't define who you are. But at the end of the day, there are signs how

**Jessica** 55:04

you're treated, though. Yes, yes, yes. And

**Abbie** 55:07

you're assumed to be at risk for these things just based on what you look like, the color of your skin, the size of your body.

**Jessica** 55:14

I always call that like identities as risk factors. Like, yeah, you're you, you are a risk factor, is what it is. If you're not, then why don't you look like your middle or higher class, if you look, if you're unhoused, and look as such. Let's see, we can't say that that looks away. If you look poor, we'll say and don't have new and fresh clothes on. Yeah, health looks gone. And if you don't look that way, you're inherently a risk factor when you're walking into the doctor's office.

**Abbie** 55:55

So I know we've been in and out, connecting all these dots this whole time, and I just want to pause and help everyone listening, kind of just catch their breath and make sure they haven't missed any of all of the amazing brilliant things that you've that you've shared and all the ways that all of these different things were connected. So we started out by explaining how anti fatness is really born out of anti blackness and that can be seen in a myriad of ways, but one of which being that black bodies have been demonized and made out to represent the the opposite of quote unquote, health and virtue and morality, that this started in the 1800s if

not earlier, and that very much pretty predated, excuse me, any medicalized fatphobia. So this anti fatness rooted and anti blackness came before any of the quote unquote, kind of like health fears that we have around anti fatness, and in this day and age, and that those bodies are rooted in these ideas of gluttony and animalistic pleasure seeking with food, things that are still demonized to this day with terms like emotional eating, right. And then we have terms like we've talked about clean eating all of these things that really serve to moralize one way of eating, one way of eating that is very white and demonize another way of eating and a way of being in a body which is assigned to blackness. And we see that now that you know, that is the way that we now look at foods. If you look at wellness culture today, it very much glorifies eating this whitewashed version of, you know, the quinoa and the kale and the Mediterranean diet. And it looks down upon cultural foods. I mean, cultural foods are the things that are eliminated from the wellness, diet and diet culture diets. And then we also have this entire construct of health that's built in whiteness, and the idea that pursuing fitness and pursuing health is now really what we're doing when we pursue those things pursuing weight loss is we are trying to get as far as possible from blackness, that is what anti fatness borne out of anti blackness and the diet culture of our, of our current time is really about, and I think it's so important that I just wanted to reiterate this for folks just in case it's been missed. And this kind of the weaving of our conversation is that all of these things are so inextricably linked, and we can't look at one without looking at the other and like you've said this really, the intersectionality of these issues has just been largely ignored. Even in the movements and the institutions and the paradigms that seek to dismantle diet culture and dismantle fat phobia weight stigma, because we really need to understand that it exists because of white supremacy it exists because of the racist ways in which health has been painted in a certain way in our culture.

**Jessica** 59:22

And we say that health doesn't have a look and you and I believe that and know that and that it doesn't matter when you go to the doctor's office which is a lot of what I see in a lot of like eating disorder recovery spaces like body image spaces, you know, a lot of these like assumptions that we make about you know our body types and view when I can feel great about our bodies but you know, as a black woman walking into a doctor's office like it doesn't matter how I feel and so all these like individualized solutions you know, I eat intuitively I am quote unhealthy or whatever it is. I'm not have a chronic illness but I feel that all this, like the internal work I've done, doesn't matter in society. So like even, yes, it doesn't matter and it doesn't have a look. And then it matters when it comes to medicine that is, you know, rooted in white supremacy. So it's all of those things and to bring it back to like, disordered eating, eating disorders and particularly bipoc. Folks, the closer we get the quote, the smaller we become, the closer we get to whiteness, we will never get there. But like, if that is a survival tool that is a survival tool for many folks who experienced oppression, many bipoc folks and getting like that proximity to whiteness. Yeah, yeah.

**Abbie** 1:00:48

Isn't that you're just it's like a hamster wheel. Oh, yeah, we're gonna get there, but you can get as close as possible. And still, that just means that your entire life is consumed by trying to chase after Yeah.

**Jessica** 1:01:03

Right. And, and an eating disorder, you know, spaces will talk about like that than ideal or just wanting to be thin. But like, nobody's well, people aren't often talking about like, just wanting to be safer.

**Abbie** 1:01:14

Right? Exactly. It is. It's all about safety. It really is, when it comes down to it. I mean, it's the most basic need we have. And yet, what we all have to understand is that, like, it's not keeping us safe. It's keeping us down, it's keeping us distracted. It's keeping us, I mean, feeling completely unworthy. And it's, it's hurting everyone, because as long as any, as long as anyone is. I said, I say this all the time, like we can't hold these. We can't help these beliefs about ourselves. And simultaneously believe that we don't believe those things about others. Like, it's not possible as long as we believe we need to lose weight, or we need to look a certain way. That's part of why we're complicit in the oppression, we're complicit in the system, because we're inherently saying somebody else needs to look that way, too.

**Jessica** 1:02:08

Yeah, I'm placing value on it, even though we don't, right. Yes, I don't for anybody else. But I do it for myself. And

**Abbie** 1:02:16

Right, right. I don't believe this about them. I believe all bodies are good bodies. I believe everybody deserves respect and dignity, but I just want to lose weight. I need to lose weight. Right, right. That's, yeah. Yeah, that's me. That's the hard thing. And it's hard to come to terms with the fact that that inherent belief about yourself still means you hold judgment. Right about bodies, although, yeah. You've been so positive. Let's, let's. Let's close it out with something positive. What would you leave everyone with today? If you could, I know that's a big ask. But

**Jessica** 1:02:57

no, it's okay. I've been practicing this one. Two weeks ago, and it took me a bit, but I want people to know that their bodies are not problems to be fixed, problems to be solved. And how do we look at ourselves, especially in thinking about bipoc? Folks, for fat folks, for a lot of us with chronic illnesses? Like, what if we didn't have to fix whatever it is? What if we weren't? What if our bodies aren't broken? Like, what if it is society and not us? Then I feel like a lot of people, maybe not your listeners, but a lot of people have just not thought about that. Like the problem is not yours to own?

**Abbie** 1:03:41

Yeah, no, you're not wrong. Your body's not wrong. Yeah, you belong. We have to change the culture. Yes. It's bigger. It is so much bigger. All right. And then to just fully wrap us up, can you let people know where they can find you to follow you, learn from you and get your book on all of those things?

**Jessica** 1:04:03

Sure. Yeah, I'm pretty active on Instagram. It's Jessica wilson.ms rd, at Instagram, by Jessica Wilson on Tiktok. less active therapists still find me. Website is my full name, Jessica Wilson, Msr d.com. And my book, it's always been ours, rewriting the story of black women's bodies will be out February 7, but it is available for pre orders and for your listeners and everyone else. This is something we don't know. pre-sales really matter to the success of the book. I did not know this. So buying it before it is out really indicates to you know, big buyers whether or not they're going to carry the books, so folks are able to preorder my book, I would very much appreciate that.

**Abbie** 1:04:53

Yeah, I want to echo that because I have definitely learned that in the last few years talking to a lot of authors. Oh yeah. How important. It really, really is. And so I'll link where folks can preorder. And I can't wait. Yeah, I'm excited for you. Thanks again for being here. You're welcome. All right, my friends, that is our show for this week. I just want to say thank you to Jessica again, for being here. I have so much respect for her. And the work that she's doing in this world, I could have picked her brain for hours. And we are so lucky that she wrote a book to really expand upon all the topics we talked about today and so much more. And I want to thank you for listening with openness and curiosity and compassion to conversations that really challenge all of these ideas that we've been conditioned to believe and indoctrinated into our whole lives. And I know this is challenging, but it is so important. So again, I appreciate you. And if you want to find the show on Instagram, you can do that at full plate dot podcast, you can always find me on Instagram, I'm at Abbie Attwood wellness. And if you have a moment today, please take just a minute to leave a rating and a review for the pod. It helps other folks find this information, it helps them on their path towards healing from diet culture. And clearly as we talked about today, all of these different intersecting systems of oppression that are playing a role in the way that we all experience our own bodies and the bodies in the world around us. So thank you deeply. I look forward to talking to you again next week. Have a good one.