

#110: From Weight-Loss Surgery Dietitian to Anti-Diet Dietitian with Kirsten Ackerman Morrison, RD

Hey, everyone, and welcome back to full plate. I have a great conversation for you today. We're speaking with Kirsten Ackerman Morrison. You might know her as Kirsten Ackerman on Instagram but she's got her married name now. So Kirsten Morrison and Kirsten is an anti-diet registered dietitian and she's also a certified intuitive eating counselor. She hosts the intuitive bites podcast. And also runs her own virtual private practice helping women heal their relationships to food and their body and today in this conversation. We are tackling a topic that is gosh I want to just say upfront a topic that I hold with the utmost gentleness and compassion.

We're talking about bariatric surgery and weight loss surgery today and the reason I have Kirsten. We ended up going into this topic with Kirsten today, and obviously you all know the privileges I hold and Kirsten also holds straight size privilege. But what Kirsten did in a prior life as a dietitian was right out of school. She ended up working in a weight loss surgery clinic and so she experienced firsthand what it's like to work with folks going through this leading up to the surgery. What happens through the surgery after the surgery. The implications for the physical mental emotional experience and what she's learned through that work. Why she left that work and what that led her into an anti diet and intuitive eating approach to food and body and I think. Obviously this conversation does not capture the entirety of this topic.

But what I did really appreciate and want to do is just get her perspective as somebody who was like boots on the ground in one of these clinics and decided to move away from that way of working with folks. And saw the immense harm, the shame, the implications for people's relationship with food, the implications on body image. I just really thought that you know this is an important conversation to have that we haven't had yet and. In the future I really want to have perhaps one of my clients on or someone else who's actually gone through the surgery and is on the other side and has just you know has had lived experience with having the surgery itself to speak to that and I'm also going to link to some resources in the show notes from folks who are in fat bodies who are writing on this who are researching this because I want you to be able to dig into more more of this on your own.

But hopefully this serves as a really helpful and informative conversation about the realities of the surgery if. You've been wondering about it or if you've had it. , or have people in your life who are considering it. I just really hope that this is supportive, validating and compassionate and I hope that's how you hold it. So with that I'm going to get us into the conversation with Kirsten. It's really great. I really appreciate her. I hope you appreciate the conversation too and I'd love to hear from you as

always on this episode and with that let's get into it and I will see you on the other side.

00:01.36

Abbie

Kirsten, welcome to the pod. So happy that I get to see you for the second week in a row. Such a treat.

00:07.88

Kirsten

I know I'm so excited to be here chatting with you. It was fun having you on my podcast and yeah, fun to be back chatting with you.

00:16.27

Abbie

I know I go from just like social media friends to two weeks in a row of Facetime but I love it so much. So ah, the first question on this podcast is always what's on your plate.

00:24.70

Kirsten

Amazing. I Love it. .

00:34.10

Abbie

And it's a two parter. So the first one is just kind of something fun like what's a food you've been loving lately like so food wise what's on your plate and then Lifewise what's on your plate is the second part.

00:47.12

Kirsten

Okay, love that. So I will say for the food I have been getting back to an old go to which is French toast. I've just been having a lot of fun with that lately. Ah, my ah I have twins and my son has an egg allergy.

00:56.88

Abbie

Ah.

01:04.58

Kirsten

So I've been experimenting with different types of french for him but I still like kind of the regular old for myself. So that's been really, really fun and then yeah, kind of Lifewise I mean I already kind of alluded to it because I have thirteen almost fourteen month old twins. their boy girl twins. And yeah, they just take up so much of my time and it's so much fun and I'm still very much like falling into a new phase of life over here as I'm adjusting to twin mom life have.

01:36.15

Abbie

All right, French toast. You've got my heart. I Love it so much. It's one of my favorites. It's also just it holds so much nostalgia for me too as a kid just I don't know there was something really special about when my.

01:53.31

Abbie

Because we'd have kind of like cereal pop tarts. You know, things like quick things schooldays and I think maybe that's what's so special about it. Memory wise is like it happened on the weekend when I had more time to kind of hang out with my parents in the morning as a little kid and like my dad would make it and do the cinnamon sugar and the.

01:56.25

Kirsten

, yeah.

02:13.00

Abbie

Butter and the ah gosh. So love that you mentioned it.

02:13.12

Kirsten

, oh so cool is he hearing that? yeah hearing that I'm like that's like the memories that I want my kids to have with French toast and like just fun breakfast food. So I'm really excited to hopefully create that for them.

02:27.52

Abbie

You are creating that I love it so much and with them on your plate. , is there anything that you said it's been really fun? Is there anything that just comes to mind like something.

02:30.87

Kirsten

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02:43.36

Abbie

Just that made you smile recently with them.

02:44.11

Kirsten

Good question so they're both starting to walk right now. , and my son ah his name is milo. He'll get up and stand and just like he's so proud of himself and just rapidly clap his hands like.

02:48.52

Abbie

Oh.

03:00.10

Abbie

Oh my god.

03:02.60

Kirsten

Mouth wide open that he's so excited and then it knocks him over because he's so excited like it's hilarious. It's been cracking me up. He's actually getting a little more stabled out and like again like taking a few steps but as he was learning to just stand. Yeah, just like so much overwhelming excitement. It's so adorable.

03:19.50

Abbie

So cute I had I had Netheary Falchuk on the podcast a few weeks ago and , they were on talking to me about we were talking about embodiment like what it really means to be alive in your body and.

03:37.52

Abbie

Always come back to little kids when I think about that and that must be just so magical to watch him and her and then explore their bodies and explore the world and just with no awareness of self-objectification or what the world thinks about their body but just like this is a body I'm moving around and probably don't even.

03:42.32

Kirsten
R m.

03:56.42

Abbie

Know they have a body. It's just like they're living right.

03:57.91

Kirsten

, with just doing our thing except they do. They aren't like I mean they really over the whole year like that you they'll have these moments where they're like looking at their hand and they're like that second what is that? That's really cool too. .

04:05.98

Abbie

Yes, yes, it's so cool.

04:14.50

Kirsten

But yeah, there are so many moments of that just like embodiment and joy and fun and they're just like doing what they want to do and just so much innocence and sweetness and yeah, it's one of those things where it's like oh my gosh. How could I soak up every second of this and also can you stay like this forever but also I can't.

04:30.99

Abbie

Yes, yes, so amazing though, like it just like magic is the best way to describe it I feel like because it doesn't mean that it's all sunshine and rainbows. But it is.

04:31.67

Kirsten

You keep growing and changing. So it's the Bizarre journey.

04:41.66

Kirsten

, it has.

04:46.42

Abbie

It is magic in all the ways to kind of watch that happen. So oh Yay! Well Okay, so switching gears a little , can you maybe just for those who don't know you super well. , or don't know your background even if they do follow you already.

04:47.90

Kirsten

Yes, and present.

05:05.43

Abbie

Can you maybe tell us just a little bit about how you became an r and what brought you into this work in the first place to give us a little background.

05:14.22

Kirsten

, yeah, absolutely So I I mean I think what led to me going down the path of becoming a dietitian was. In retrospect definitely rooted in my own disorder- eating behaviors and you know coming from a family where there very much was like chronic dieting and just a focus on bodies and you know comments around this person's gain. This person's loss is like just being very much at the root of a connection.

05:41.33

Abbie

M.

05:43.10

Kirsten

Within my wider family. , and of course I didn't know at the time I was just looking around like taking everything in and then when it came time for me to decide what I was going to go study in college. It was like yeah so much of my focus had been around.

06:01.76

Kirsten

Controlling my food, controlling my body, controlling my movement that it kind of had blocked out a lot of opportunities for other interests to come into play. , so yeah I went down that path I was like yeah I'll study nutrition this sounds really interesting. It feels like it's like my passion in life. , which always makes me wonder. What else I might have focused on if that had been such a big part of my life at such a critical time. , so yeah I went down that path I ended up getting. You know my bachelor's in nutrition and my master's in applied nutrition went through my dietetic internship. All while struggling with my own relationship with food and experiencing a lot of deep shame around my patterns of eating which I think were only exacerbated by the fact that I was now in a nutrition program surrounded by a lot of folks who I

thought were quote unquote “good eaters.” And I was trying to present that outwardly that I was also going to, you know align with that but behind closed doors I was you know, engaging in behaviors around food that I didn't think were aligned with how I should be eating quote unquote. , so it was really really a hard time in many ways and again I went through. All of that you know education and at the end of it went out to find a job and ended up as my first job as a dietician in a bariatric surgery Clinic. So I just think it's so wild to me that I went through all of the nutrition training and it only exacerbated my disorder.

07:32.92

Kirsten

Behaviors around food.

07:36.32

Abbie

Yeah I think you and I were talking about this too and we were when I was on your podcast and it is. It's interesting because it's such a. That's such a common story for folks in the nutrition and dietetic space. , and we could expand that out into other areas of. Like the medical system right? and I think for folks listening That's so important to know that if you're working with a provider who isn't healthy at every size aligned weight Inclusive Anti-d Diet culture informed about weight inclusive Care. You're probably working with someone who's deeply steeped in Anti-fat bias and perhaps I mean we know most people like have ah have a disordered relationship with food like they have a history of some type of restriction or dieting or just these beliefs that we've all inherited like you were talking about your family and so I think. I'm grateful that you share that because I think it's a common story. It's something we need to normalize and something that it's really helpful for folks to understand. You know that the providers they're seeing could have their own issues if they haven't worked on them and likely do right.

08:34.71

Kirsten

, and.

08:45.40

Kirsten

Exactly right? It doesn't take that long to think about like oh yeah, like people who got into this space and felt like it was like their passion in life. Obviously not every single person but a lot of folks who feel like their passion in life and it's their primary focus and then they go down this path like.

08:58.72

Abbie
Mm.

09:03.60

Kirsten

Yeah, they might have some of their own stuff and yeah so I like that call for folks listening that like hey if you had an experience. It hasn't felt good like you're not wrong, like listening to your intuition makes a lot of sense. Yeah.

09:11.78

Abbie

Right? right? on? Absolutely, and also just the I Also think like whether or not anyone listening has been through you know. And training in a medical capacity or dietetics capacity. They can relate to what you said about feeling shame in secret versus what you're presenting outwardly to folks, you know and that what ah how much of a disconnection that creates between you and your body and how much.

09:39.48

Kirsten

, the hint.

09:45.87

Abbie

Trust you lose in yourself and your ability to kind of listen to what you want and need when you're trying to perform something in public versus grappling with the reality of what it feels like with food in private.

09:58.64

Kirsten

Exactly and not even to mention the ways that like trying to perform a certain way around food in front of other people is going to affect what you're doing in private and it just creates this whole messy cycle. Yeah.

10:10.60

Abbie

Amen. Yes, yes, and you mentioned going into and getting your first job in a bariatric surgery Clinic. So I'd actually love to talk to you more about that because this isn't a topic we haven't really. Been able to dive into here yet. I've worked with a lot of clients who have had bariatric surgery and actually I'm hoping I've kind of had it on top. My list to have one of them on to talk about the lived experience of going through that and to know you've worked with folks obviously.

10:41.37

Kirsten

Yeah.

10:45.25

Abbie

Back in the day in the actual clinic and then I know you've worked with folks from an intuitive eating and Anti-dia Culture standpoint weight inclusive standpoint now who've had it. So let's start there. Let's talk about that and I just want to know.

10:55.10

Kirsten

, and his.

11:03.93

Abbie

Want to know more about Maybe we could start with like what's the role of a dietician in those clinics. So what were you doing when you worked there kind of describe to folks just kind of set the stage like what does that look like why does a dietician work in that space. For instance,

11:14.49

Kirsten

Sure.

11:19.87

Kirsten

Oh that's a good question I would say the big Why kind of from a system standpoint is that a lot of these folks that are seeking Bariatric surgery are required to have a certain number of sessions with a dietician before having the surgery there are some.

11:25.18

Abbie

It is.

11:37.63

Kirsten

Interned companies that require one session. There are some that require like 6 or or whatever. So , that's the big reason why in terms of what I was actually doing I would run groups like our clinic. Required folks who went forward the surgery to attend a certain number of these like group sessions and literally there would be like thirty

forty people in these sessions and it was basically like quote unquote healthy eating eating training like nutrition 1 a 1 but also like how to lose weight 1 on 1 , type stuff and then I did individual sessions as well, right? So we had the group sessions and we had individual sessions and the clients or the patients would have them based on how much their insurance required and then the idea was hey like let's give these folks. Support after surgery as well. Like yeah, come in and check in and let's follow up over time and make sure that they're fully supported but at least in my clinic that was not that was not very like. , encouraged to the degree that it really needed to be I think the times that people were coming back were more like if they were really struggling in some way versus it being like a really? Ah yeah, something that was set in place. I don't know.

12:55.97

Kirsten

Ahead of time to support these people but we did have obviously a like immediately post surgery they would need to come in and have you know a little bit more specific training on exactly what they needed to be eating in order to accommodate. , the changes that happened with the surgery and then how much they followed up beyond that was really scattered hey.

13:14.79

Abbie

It's Interesting. You say that because , I've worked you know in tandem with psychiatrists and psychologists in my own practice, kind of like with clients and those that have had experience working in the past in these clinics. Have shared the same thing that post operative care is supposedly there but very rarely accessed and even when you know some of these psychologists I've talked to say like even if it was like someone did come back after the operation.

13:39.54

Kirsten

, yes.

13:48.77

Abbie

It was very clear that they weren't fully opening up about the experiences that they were having after the surgery which and I want to talk about with you in a little bit which could be catastrophic and really harmful right? And so I love that you mentioned that that's interesting. It's so consistent with what I've heard.

14:06.32

Kirsten

Yeah.

14:08.55

Abbie

Tell me tell me a little bit more about why you were supporting folks before my surgery in theory after 2 , what did you observe about you know, working with people who are thinking about getting the surgery.

14:27.49

Abbie

Information they were given, like I'm thinking about 1 of the main issues in the weight loss industry, whether it's bariatric surgery, whether it's ozempic, whether it's just dieting in general, is that there's a really big lack of informed consent like.

14:46.48

Abbie

There is a lack of the there is not a full picture of all of the harmful side effects that dieting weight loss Drugs Weight Loss surgery has so I'm curious what your experience was now looking back and what you kind of learned as you were there.

14:59.00

Kirsten

, yeah, yeah, Okay, so I yeah right off the bat. The things that come to mind are I experienced a lot like a lot of these folks blaming and shaming themselves and that. Because that had been placed on them from the wider culture and from the various asic surgeons of like this is what you need to do for it to be responsible and like yeah, just a lot of blaming and shaming them for where they are and by the way that's also happened a lot postop with like if they weren't losing the weight the way that the surgeons expected them to . Then it was clear they were doing something wrong which is just not the case and I was seeing that in the way that these folks were like time and time again reporting things to me. , they were quote unquote following the rules. But yeah, things weren't panning out every like all the time the way that they were sold to them that they would. So That's another big part right? They were sold This idea that like Bariatric surgery is the gold standard quote unquote. Ah yes, no yes, it's the magic pill it will work and.

15:59.10

Abbie

Right? This is the fix This is gonna do like this is it. This is the ultimate thing if you're gonna do this. You've got this is the magic pill. Yeah.

16:14.17

Kirsten

In terms of like were they getting informed consent I mean certainly they were getting forms to sign on the dotted line while they're in with the surge and not like given time to act through it's like yeah like whatever like there's a whole bunch of paperwork about stuff that could go wrong. , so yeah, that was certainly there. But

16:20.35

Abbie

Right? right.

16:32.72

Kirsten

This idea that it was the gold standard and that it will work and if you just follow the rules. It will work then when it comes time to after surgery and some of these folks a good amount of these folks were either not losing much weight at all or they lost a tiny bit of weight and then it completely Flatlined. We're blaming ourselves and the surgeons were blaming them because it was this idea that like yeah this is the thing that's supposed to work like if it's not then it's your fault in some way which is just so damaging true and so wrong. Yeah, so wrong.

17:00.89

Abbie

It's so Wrong. It's so wrong and it's the same thing. It's the same thing that happens in just your run of themill diet too right? You look at something like weight loss or weight watchers or something like that which is like. It's literally built on this idea that it's built on like recurring customers right? like that they know it doesn't work and they have to keep coming back but you put it on the individual and you say well obviously you didn't try hard enough. Obviously you didn't do the right thing obviously.

17:35.34

Abbie

You didn't exercise enough or you didn't eat the right stuff or you maybe you were emotionally eating or you weren't following the rules kind of you said that like the rules. So we see that with diets and I think that is super important because often like.

17:38.22

Kirsten

, yeah.

17:52.49

Abbie

Weight Loss surgery is sold as like the pinnacle of like yeah sure Maybe you didn't succeed quote unquote on diets. But this right here is surgery. So you're right , this is bigger. This is big time. Yeah.

17:55.42

Kirsten
, yeah.

18:02.30

Kirsten

Ah, right? yeah this Yeah yeah, exactly and by the way the folks listening they're like but like they're not built on repeat customers because it's surgery and like it's done.

18:10.99

Abbie
Yes.

18:17.15

Kirsten

That is not the case because another thing that I saw in my experience was when I was first coming into the clinic they kind of prior to my time at least within that clinic they had been putting in a lot of what's called a gastric band which is a surgery but it's not altering your anatomy. It's putting in this.

18:19.10

Abbie
, good.

18:33.55

Kirsten

Like we'll just call it like a rubber band type thing on your stomach that's going to make you feel fuller that kind of thing because it's restricting the amount of space that the food has to go so what was happening when I was coming into this clinic is they were taking out tons of these bands literally anyone that came in that had had 1 put in they were taking it out.

18:33.58

Abbie
Ah.

18:52.45

Kirsten

Because they were finding It wasn't working and it was causing a lot of like people issues and whatever so people had gone in and gotten the Gastric band. Okay, now that's being taken out. So Let's just upgrade you to what's called a gastric sleeve which is actually altering the anatomy. And then for the folks that that wasn't that didn't work. It didn't lead to weight Loss. It didn't lead to sustainable weight loss. Whatever they were finding like hey I'm actually still really really hungry and I have the same hunger cues that I did prior to surgery and that's not what I was sold and told to believe what happened I was told I wouldn't be hungry anymore. Okay, let's just. Upgrade you to the gastric bypass. So I mean it's very very similar in the like yeah the pipeline type thing of like let's just keep upgrading. It. and telling you that like oh this one didn't work or you did something wrong. So Let's just make it more extreme.

19:28.50

Abbie

Yes.

19:38.12

Abbie

Yes, yes, and you said something that was really important there which you said like that the idea is to make you not hungry right? like that right there? Huge red flag right? We're supposed to.

19:52.79

Kirsten

, you address.

19:57.20

Abbie

To feel hungry and what's interesting like something that I'd love to hear your experience having you've worked you worked with people who were invested in getting the surgery wanted it to work I've only worked with folks who have had the surgery and are obviously like. Unhappy as a result and realize that it wasn't the magic pill they thought it was, what I've found and heard from folks is that it doesn't even really matter if you lose some hunger cues or you get full quickly because. That doesn't fundamentally alter our relationship with food or our desire for food. In fact, it can in most cases worsen your relationship with food because of how much shame there is around eating despite not feeling hungry and the drive to binge eat.

20:45.83

Kirsten

E.

20:50.42

Abbie

When you've put on such a restrictive eating plan like you and I have both I know you've talked about this a lot on your social media on your podcast and I talk about it too which is like restriction is 1 of the fastest paths to the experience of. Loss of control eating or binge eating right? So that's no different with weight loss surgery. So tell me more about what you observed or and everyone listening with this idea of like let's solve your hunger quote unquote issue.

21:13.63

Kirsten

Correct.

21:26.71

Abbie

And what that actually results in.

21:27.00

Kirsten

Yeah, yeah, , yeah I think I want to reiterate to your point of like just such a big red flag that like the goal would ever be to take away this like biological cue that is necessary for our survival and it's like that's not a positive.

21:39.52

Abbie

, right? Would we do that with sleep or peeing or like what it's like it's like what this is survival right.

21:48.26

Kirsten

It's like that is terrible. Yeah, that's awful and terrifying and sounds like a problem that we should resolve. , but yeah so to your point of like yeah this is not going to be solveding if you're not hungry. It's not going to solve the fact that you're going to still have that drive to eat for.

21:53.79

Abbie

Yeah, yeah.

22:05.81

Kirsten

Various reasons and with folks who've had this surgery that do feel a level of restriction right? A lot of folks, not all, feel a level of restrictiveness right? after the surgery certainly and and for a little while before your body kind of adapts. , ah.

22:20.95

Abbie

Because there's a really restrictive diet that you're put on right after surgery right? Insane yeah like liquid only for a while right? it? yeah.

22:25.81

Kirsten

Yeah I mean insanely restrictive like yeah like tablespoons of food type thing and yes, you're not what liquid only right? Yeah, absolutely for a period of time and then you kind of transition to like a puree type thing and you know, go up from there. , but so what I was going to say was like that , the binging or like overeating a food might look different. It might look more like grazing and like having small amounts like constantly throughout the day but like that behavior and that drive to eat will happen and just because your body is restricted in certain ways physically doesn't mean that like.

23:01.61

Abbie

Yes, that's exactly right.

23:04.18

Kirsten

Going to find a way to get the nourishment that it's really like of course it's going to find a way that is good for your body for doing that. , but yeah so I mean I will say like in terms of like the hunger queue going away for some of these folks like.

23:19.43

Abbie

So.

23:19.69

Kirsten

I did see in my experience that like yeah that might play into them not eating as much for certain people. It's going to depend on the person. What level of that drag to eat was tied to stress or emotional things and what you know what level was not , but some of them. Yeah, certainly like they would end up eating less because of. The hunger cue not being there at least for a period of time and then the backlash and a rebellion that is so normal would kick in eventually and your body be like oh let's let's

catch up for that. , but again, that's not a part like obviously right, That's not a positive thing that it would lead to.

23:45.22

Abbie

Brave ray.

23:54.62

Kirsten

You have less of a drive to get that nourishment that your body would need. It would lead to more malnutrition and issues after surgery.

24:04.98

Abbie

Exactly Yeah and and I just want to reiterate again like if we have a loss of Hunger cues. Even if that is an outcome of this which you've said very clearly like often isn't . Even if that happens like we're just not wired as human beings with human bodies to not eat like so if that was true if the idea that we could physically feel full but not then Eat. Eat and the weight come back on then diets would work and we know they don't right because so like how many times have diets taught us all how to suppress our hunger in all sorts of ways whether it be. With coffee or g or a shit ton of vegetables or high protein or like right or all of these ways. All these quote unquote tricks and quote unquote Hacks. But the emotional and mental drive and physical drive to eat exists too.

25:16.78

Abbie

Bite trying to trick your hunger.

25:19.80

Kirsten

Exactly right? and then you are sitting there like having eaten an insane amount of vegetables and you're like I am stuffed full like I do not feel good and yet I want to binge on the chocolate I want a bit. There's something wrong with me and it's like well there is something really right with. It's going.

25:28.49

Abbie

, yes, yes, that's right, there's something really right? with how your body's saving your life right now.

25:38.36

Kirsten
, exactly.

25:43.20

Abbie

Did you know that you had this background? I looked into some of the statistics a little bit on the quote unquote "success" of these surgeries and it's hard to find because I think you know someone who's done a lot of really great research on this is Reagan Chastain Reagan has.

25:53.72

Kirsten

, yes.

26:01.81

Kirsten

Are .

26:02.91

Abbie

Has an amazing newsletter. I'll like that in the show notes. But first of all we can talk first about things like what are they? Even what are they even counting as quote success with these surgeries. You know, I have a client who. Regained all the weight and more after this surgery you know like something like £150 like right and I mean all the while intense extreme physical pain with eating like so much so much pain.

26:24.93

Kirsten

, you yeah.

26:34.90

Kirsten

Ooh Yeah, who.

26:38.24

Abbie

, and so much shame and we haven't even gotten yet to the body image implications of all of this which is that there's so much body shame and body dissatisfaction with these surgeries specifically with like so extra skin and then the weight regain that happens.

26:48.86

Kirsten
What.

26:57.29

Abbie

, so sorry I'm giving context. But I think one of the things that she told me was like she's like I'm considered a quote success because nothing went wrong with the surgery. I'm still alive so there was no right like I didn't.

26:58.80

Kirsten

Exactly.

27:16.60

Abbie

Like right? and there's you know in Theory you know a couple pounds maybe in their notes that I've maintained right? you right? right? Yeah, so let's talk about that like what success is counted as.

27:26.60

Kirsten

, of wheel I mean Yeah, yeah.

27:34.64

Abbie

But these surgeries.

27:36.81

Kirsten

That's a really good question because what I will tell you again going back to my experience that like there was so little post-op follow-up really beside besides those first few weeks so like

27:46.30

Abbie

, ah yeah.

27:49.18

Kirsten

In a couple months I'll put it out too but like so really like what success was looking like I don't remember the numbers to be quite Frank with you but like it was the surgeons had this chart of like how much. Percentage of body weight or whatever

you should have lost by this many weeks out in this many weeks and this month and whatever. So ah, these people are going to these post-op appointments with the surgeon and being told like oh like you didn't achieve that percentage. So like we've got to like you got to tighten this up and do better things. So I mean.

28:20.33

Kirsten

That's what their success that they were measuring was pretty extreme weight loss based on their charts at that point.

28:29.37

Abbie

What I found I have to dig this up again where I found it but I found that like the longest term studies and statistics they have on this is like 12 years and in that it's.

28:41.98

Kirsten

, yeah.

28:47.19

Abbie

Over 90% of folks who are deemed successful with these surgeries over 90% of folks who are quote unquote "successful" have after 12 years only been able to maintain 10% of the lost weight. So as an example that means that. If you lose £100 with a weight loss surgery. You end up after 12 years only having maintained £10 weight loss for all of this pain, emotional struggle, everything you've been through physically and and then we know.

29:17.58

Kirsten

Yeah, yeah.

29:25.39

Abbie

Okay, that's 12 Okay, so those last £10 probably come back on over the next few years after that right like. So yeah.

29:30.44

Kirsten

Right? And the thing is it's so painful about all of that too is that the people are of course blaming themselves for that. So even if on the land. But it's like when you pan out and you see it happening.

29:37.38

Abbie

Yes, and they're being blamed literally being blamed by the surgeons or by the industry. Yeah.

29:49.42

Kirsten

First I just this is what I want people to know too that are listening that are like have been that place of blame. It's like no, you are not alone, like this is actually like the most common experience and the other thing I want to say too about that study that you're pointing out is like those are the most successful of.

29:53.23

Abbie

, right? No yeah.

30:05.17

Abbie

Right? exactly.

30:08.34

Kirsten

Right? It's like how many people probably dropped out of that 12 year study because they were ashamed and felt so much shame because they regained above their starting weight or like to their start. Whatever it is right like they go I'm not staying in this study. So like.

30:21.45

Abbie

Right? right? We're not talking about 95% of everyone who's had the surgery, we're talking about 95% of the very few people who have had the surgery and quote unquote maintained weight loss which is a very small percentage to begin with.

30:27.50

Kirsten

That. , you know.

30:40.91

Abbie

So even the very small percentage of people who are deemed successful at this. It's a very small number that people are only maintaining that tiny tiny tiny amount of weight loss which is quite frankly similar to dieting.

30:57.58

Kirsten

Exactly.

31:00.88

Abbie

Having gone through all this and I appreciate you Kirsten for saying repeatedly you are not alone like this. This experience has so much shame around it. It has so much blame and.

31:14.15

Kirsten

Let's.

31:18.16

Abbie

What needs to be understood widely and talked about and normalized is how harmful this is emotionally mentally and physically and that like that's not a rare experience and that you're not. It's not your fault if this didn't work for you.

31:31.55

Kirsten

Is a.

31:36.62

Abbie

You are not the exception.

31:37.60

Kirsten

Exactly I mean and it is just it speaks to me so much to say that to people because the folks that I have worked with especially you know more recently that have had very much career and are in this healing process with food in their body like they just hold.

31:46.87

Abbie

Yeah.

31:53.79

Kirsten

All of this blame and shame and yeah so I just am like I need these people to know that they're not alone and I think going back to like the body image experience of so many of these people and like the body shifts that happen and it's like okay, especially for the people that have experienced extreme weight loss with the surgery and maybe have gotten to a point where they have. Loose skin and then they have skin removal and then they're experiencing weight regain as they go further out and then they're experiencing pain in their body at these incision sites where they had skin removed I mean it's just like.

32:20.23

Abbie

, right, right? right.

32:28.89

Kirsten

These people go into this experience like okay this is going to make me feel better about my body. This is what I've been told by the wider society and this is what's being pushed on me to do by these surgeons and it ultimately creates so many more and different issues with body image and just the experience.

32:42.33

Abbie

Right? right? If weight loss yeah and across the board. No matter what the avenue is whether it's surgery or dieting. It's like it's not magic.

32:48.75

Kirsten

Money.

33:02.19

Abbie

Bullet that we've been sold like because it's not actually what creates a good life. It's not actually what it's not what really Upholds true meaningful relationships For example, like if you're you know I mean like but it feels like it can.

33:03.82

Kirsten

You can.

33:16.38

Kirsten
, when.

33:19.64

Abbie

Because we're so conditioned to believe that it's the answer, like we could have everything else we could have everything else we ever wanted and still feel like this is the thing that's going to solve all the problems and then it's not and then it feels like well clearly I did something wrong and you know.

33:26.95

Kirsten
, yeah.

33:38.24

Kirsten
, and.

33:39.31

Abbie

This is the story over and over and over again and it is. It's really painful and it's so violent like it's truly so violent and it makes me so angry that this is just touted as the ultimate fix. , what would you say to somebody who's.

33:43.18

Kirsten

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33:53.47

Kirsten
, it is.

33:56.58

Abbie

I mean I want to make sure we speak to everyone when we're speaking about this like this episode in itself is not like oh my God This is hopefully anything but an episode that makes you feel bad about whatever you've chosen for yourself. Whether you've had the surgery, whether you're considering it anything like you have body Autonomy. So Like. What would you say to someone I Even want to say like to someone who's even considering this right now like who's even thinking about it like

we're kind of talking to the people who've maybe gone through it or you know, But what about what about someone who's had a doctor suggests that this to them.

34:21.58

Kirsten

, you know, hundred percent yeah yeah

34:29.19

Kirsten

Yeah I mean I want to echo exactly what you said which is that you have body autonomy and yeah, like please do what feels best for you especially for 2 you know, straight size women having a conversation about this right? like it's hope.

34:35.52

Abbie

Yeah.

34:41.48

Abbie

Right? right? exactly? Yeah, like yeah like we're exactly thank you like so much privilege. It's just more like looking at the research looking at lived experience from people. We've worked together but I want to speak to everybody and I want to say like you are allowed to do whatever you want to do.

34:47.42

Kirsten

We got acknowledged? Yeah yes.

35:00.51

Abbie

And we support you in that right? Yes, yes.

35:02.50

Kirsten

, yeah, and like we don't personally have that lived experience. We yeah so like hundred times over like I will not make judgments on your decisions because I don't know how you have felt in your lived experience. , one.

35:12.58

Abbie

A thousand percent yes

35:16.26

Kirsten

Also I think hopefully this conversation has opened some doors to some things that maybe you wouldn't hear as disclaimers going through this process in terms of like I mean we didn't even touch on but like please like go out and and and look into like. Some like the medical complications right? that they can come from the surgery and that are again, not necessarily totally the exception like a lot of people experience this stuff. , and yeah, the mental health impacts and just like the true studies and research that is showing like what's going on long term for these people because.

35:31.59

Abbie

Right? right.

35:50.19

Kirsten

I Don't want you going through all of this and doing all of the pre-app stuff that you have to go through and going through this surgery and altering your anatomy and having this belief that like again, this is the magic bullet just to find like oh wait like this is really just gonna throw me my roller coaster throw me for a loop and end up.

36:03.11

Abbie

Right.

36:08.74

Kirsten

Really just in a more painful Spot. So You just have to know right? You have to have that informed consent and I would say too if you're considering the surgery and you haven't had this support and guidance of like yeah somebody that can support you on healing your relationship with food in your body and like starting to open that. That door where I would encourage you to reach out and try to do that work. , because that will only support you even if you move forward with that process and you decide. That's the right choice for you like working on your relationship with food now is going to be the best case Scenario. Always.

36:27.50

Abbie

Me here.

36:43.24

Abbie

Yes, yes, so much? Yes, , and I know I mean like when I introduce this conversation like I am going to reiterate how much privilege we both hold and like that. That's why I want to link out to some resources from Reagan Chastain and others in the fat community who have talked about this. and I don't want to. This is not an end all be all episode I just think like Kirsten has really important lived experience as a dietician in one of these clinics and i.

37:01.16

Kirsten

M.

37:16.99

Abbie

Think therefore it's really important to hear from someone who's been there who's seen firsthand What how these clinics are run and what happens leading up to the surgery. What happens after working with people firsthand through this I think you're.

37:20.84

Kirsten

M.

37:35.53

Abbie

Experience is really important and I'm really grateful for you speaking out on it and even more grateful that you took what you learned there and decided like there is another way to support people and this ain't it.

37:46.90

Kirsten

Yeah, exactly Yeah no and thanks for having me here to talk about it and be able to hopefully get this into some people's ears that need to hear it. , but yeah I Do think it's really powerful, especially with the folks that I have been able to work with who have gone through the surgery and now are on this healing journey with food and body like it's It's powerful to know where they were had been and what exactly they had been through and be able to help them from that lens now.

38:14.45

Abbie

Yeah, yeah, so glad you're here. Can you kind of on that note can you just let folks know where to find you and follow you learn from you.

38:18.34

Kirsten

Thank you.

38:24.38

Kirsten

Yes, so I mostly hang out on Instagram at the intuitive underscore rd I also have a podcast with episodes that come out a couple times a month that's intuitive bytes podcast and I have links to work with me on. You know my Instagram or over on my website. The intuitiverd.com.

38:46.48

Abbie

Yay! All right? Well I'll link to all of that in the show notes and just want a big. Thank you to you again because this has been so great and I feel lucky to talk to you two weeks in a row and I know this is gonna be a helpful conversation. I hope it just provides folks with like we kind of started by saying like.

38:54.94

Kirsten

Affect.

39:03.52

Abbie

More information so you can be informed about this experience and the realities of it. So hopefully this is just a good starting point. Thanks Kirsten.

39:11.40

Kirsten

Exactly exactly? Yeah, thank you so much Abby.

Full Plate Podcast Transcript for Episode # : "I Used to Work at a Weight-Loss Surgery Clinic" with Kirsten Ackerman Morrison, Registered Dietitian