Ep. 55 Mental Wellness & Losing Weight Your Way!

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: [00:00:00] Welcome to the podcast today and Happy New Year! As we ring in the New Year. There's always the inevitable conversation. Are you a person who makes New Year's resolutions or are you a person who doesn't. We are already halfway into January and you don't need me to tell you that for those of you who make New Year's resolutions, it is very possible it has something to do with weight loss. So, in today's episode, we're going to tackle that subject that people kind of hate to talk about but really would like to get some clarity and success in. Today, I'm welcoming back, Julie Hamilton, she was on Episode 48: Mental Wellness and Exercise. I am so excited for her to talk to us about weight loss, because I feel like she has such a doable approach that I know has worked really successfully with some people I care a lot about. Julie is a personal trainer from Portland, Oregon, where for 10 years she's worked with [00:01:00] clients of all ages doing strength training and nutrition. She has a certification from the National Academy of Sports Medicine and a Level 1 certification through Precision Nutrition, the industry leader in nutrition certifications. I'm so happy to have Julie back with us. It just seemed it would be helpful for many of my listeners to have some of her experience and wisdom on what is a really important issue when it comes to our mental wellness. I know talking about weight loss is a loaded issue, yet I seldom work with a client that they don't mention that their weight affects their mood , energy and self-esteem. I encourage people to not see weight as a character issue, but rather a consequence of how our culture is structured at this particular time. What do I mean by that? Our economy depends on us eating and eating in excess. You know those super-sized portions. Our economy depends on us being devoted to entertainment, which often has us sitting for hours [00:02:00] on end, watching shows and sports or scrolling on our phone, often having more than a few snacks. Employment has moved from agrarian and manufacturing jobs where we used our body to desk jobs where we barely move throughout the day. Combine these new lifestyle norms, along with the epidemic of not enough sleep and it's not surprising that the average American now gains 1 to 2 pounds a year, which adds up to 10 to 20 pounds per decade. That is 30 to 60 pounds by the time we're 60, when our metabolism is known to slow down. These current lifestyle norms cause us to gain weight, not just in adulthood, but in childhood and adolescence. Without updating how, what and when we eat, there is no way the majority of us will not struggle with weight. We are two generations re moved from being the land of plenty. Now we are the land of excess. And with that, I encourage people to embrace the struggle and update their relationship with [00:03:00] food so it's in sync with how we live today. Maintaining or

reaching a healthy weight is not as much about willpower and character, but more about mindset and knowledge that creates a plan for life, that helps us to live in a country that offers food, often unhealthy food, in excess every hour of our day. Let's begin by thanking Julie for being willing to return to the Inner Challenge podcast.

Julie Hamilton: Thank you so much for having me. I am so excited to be back today.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: We are going to jump right in with my first question for you, what's the biggest myth from your perspective when it comes to weight loss and weight management?

Julie Hamilton: I think the biggest myth that I have seen with the majority of clients that I work with and actually including myself is that there is a perfect diet out there and I just need to find it. If you were to actually Google what is the perfect diet out there, you're going to find [00:04:00] results ranging from every diet imaginable. One of the reasons why is that each diet that has been successful has a common denominator. . They have you consume less calories than you burn and that's it. If there was actually a single diet that worked for everyone, you would have actually already heard about it because everyone would be doing. We can stop looking for the perfect diet out there. And we can begin to say to ourselves, what actually works for me? What are the foods that I love to eat? What are the foods that bring me joy? We have to understand that there is not one food that is the actual enemy. The right diet or way of eating is the one that you can consistently stick with for 80 percent of the time, for the long haul, without actually [00:05:00] hating your life. Yes, we need to embrace aspects of being uncomfortable. Being comfortable with discomfort, but not misery and suffering. Can I give an example of a story? I was on the quest for many years to find the actual perfect diet years ago when the ketogenic diet, which we know is eating more fats, moderate protein, and very low carbohydrates. I thought, maybe this is the answer to all of my weight loss issues. I put it into place and for the first four weeks, I was quite excited, maybe going to work for me. But I found over time, because I was so miserable, I disliked the fact that I could have hardly any carbohydrates, I began to feel like I was suffering incredibly. Because so many foods were off limits to me, I began to obsess over [00:06:00] eating more nuts. Then I found that I was actually unable to adhere to the ketogenic way of eating. I found myself actually gaining weight because really what I was craving so badly was a little bit of rice, some starchy carbohydrate vegetables. It's important that we realize there's no perfect diet out there, but we have to find ways of eating that we can find joy in and eat in the right amounts.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's really hopeful, one of the things I hear you saying is people have this opportunity to come to know themself. Ketogenic may work for one person who never even misses rice. It really is about finding the diet, the food plan, whatever you want to call it, that an individual can stick with.

Julie Hamilton: Absolutely and that you can actually learn to enjoy. I often ask my clients when they come to me, And we decide on a [00:07:00] path of eating, I ask them, Can you see yourself living this way consistently and actually learning to enjoy this way of eating? If the answer is no, it seems way too restrictive, then what we'll do is we'll go down another path. It's important when we're looking at ways of eating that we do not suffer too much. When we suffer too much, we cannot sustain this way of eating. Our body and our mind will revolt and then slowly over time we'll rebel and we'll not only eat more, but we will actually become obsessive about it.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That leads me to my next question, it was very difficult to be overweight in 1935 because the culture didn't have the excess so now, we're tempted all the time. People are suffering, but they're filled with so much [00:08:00] shame and blame, I'm interested in any tips you have for people who their shame blocks them from getting started in having a different relationship with food.

Julie Hamilton: That's a great question. Because we are bombarded with so many choices Hour after hour with food, whether it be what should I eat? How much should I eat? When should I eat? This is something that is complex and all day long we're being asked to make choices. if I could say anything to the general population, myself, my clients included, is that there is no such thing as perfection. This kind of relationship with food, ebbs and flows between what has been pushed on us through the food industry, [00:09:00] through the flavoring industry, through the processed food industry, even the fitness industry. There is so much shame around I am not good as I am, and if I were to work harder, then I would achieve these results. I think the main thing I would like to communicate is this is such a complex relationship and there is no such thing as perfection. Any little step that you make today In the area of eating and mindset is very worthwhile and it actually can lead to a change with your relationship with shame. Know that you are very normal for struggling this way.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: You use the phrase that there's so many decisions that people have to make. One of the things I try to encourage my clients who are working on this is to really notice when they make the good decision and blow it out of [00:10:00] proportion. I am so awesome that I passed on that food

at nine o'clock in the office meeting. Because what they do is I didn't pass on that food at 1230 and that becomes gigantic in their head, but they don't even give themselves a pat on the back which they deserve for making good choices at nine.

Julie Hamilton: I totally agree. One of my very favorite things when I see a client's is that I often say, brag on yourself this week. What are some of your wins? What are some of the food choices that you overcame? Let's take time to celebrate those. It is so common for all of us to go here's the way that I did bad this week. I really want to echo what you said about celebrating everything. Even for someone like me, I chose to eat one portion of chips instead of five. Even the littlest things make an absolute [00:11:00] difference in our health.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: You said... I ask people, is this something you can live with for a year? I wonder if they begin to map out a wealth of knowledge within themselves of what's going to work.

Julie Hamilton: Absolutely. They begin to see that little changes do make a difference. We are all wired to think to live this healthy lifestyle, we must make drastic changes that involve extreme suffering. I continually communicate to clients that it's actually little changes day after day that change your habits, change your mindset, and that actually leads to fat loss over time. The hard part is, it's often a slower, less linear process. It changes your habits and it becomes sustainable for the long haul.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Let's move to practical [00:12:00] tips. If you had to give people a couple tips that they could implement today, what would they be?

Julie Hamilton: I like to think of some mindset shifts and then I'll give some practical tips. The first thing that I've found with people who have found success losing fat is that they do not give up too soon. Fat loss, Is a much slower and less linear process than all those weight loss formulas that you see out there that lead us to believe, if I eat this many calories a day, I can expect to lose this much weight in this time. Very rarely does it actually work like that. I've had many clients when they start to adopt healthier eating practices. They may step on the scale for me. Some of my clients choose to look at the scale, others do not, but it's a unit of measurement for myself. It has been very common at the [00:13:00] beginning of someone's weight loss journey to adopt those healthy practices, and it take quite a while, sometimes even several months, to actually see changes on the scale, changes in their body measurements. We often want to quit and change course too soon. But one thing I've found over and over

working with clients is we do not know when the tipping point will occur, where our good habits actually start to show in our bodies. So, do not change course without giving it some time.

Julie Hamilton: The next thing that I like to think about is, clients who often find success do not become overly restrictive and go to extremes. We live in a society that thinks we need to be drastic. We need to go to great lengths, suffer incredibly in order to see fat loss. Then we realize after that period, this is my [00:14:00] actual way of living. I hate my life. This is miserable. And then we start to revolt against it.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's a little un-American, right? Because we like things now but my clients who have lost a lot of weight, often not just with my support, but with other professionals. They were all at a period where they almost stopped because it was so slow. Somebody said to one of them, you didn't put this on in three months. This is weight that you may be put on in five years, 10 years, 15 years. I had one client who put it on in 40 years. That's really a great mindset shift that we give ourselves the gift of time. I always say to my clients, stopping weight gain is as important as weight loss.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What are your practical tips? Those are mindset tips, which are very important.

Julie Hamilton: Practical tips I would say pay attention to actually how [00:15:00] much you're eating. Very rarely are we good at estimating correctly how much we're eating. We wildly underestimate. I love to take nuts, for example, because nuts are healthy. We grab a handful here; we grab a handful there. We may even measure it out, let's say in a measuring cup, but maybe a heaping quarter cup, but often we just don't know how much of one food, especially those big-ticket items, which are very calorie dense. Clients that I've seen find success, become more aware of those type of foods. Sometimes, some of my clients have even gotten a kitchen scale. I don't encourage people to measure everything out. I think that leads to restrictive thinking. But on those big-ticket items, those things like nuts, for me, I love chips. . I might weigh out how much I'm eating so that I am [00:16:00] more aware of the calories that are in there.

Julie Hamilton: Another practical tip, and you probably heard this a lot, eat whole foods. Make vegetables your friend. I know that sounds so simple, but almost every person I know that finds success in losing fat has increased their vegetable consumption. Fibrous vegetables fill up our stomach, so they lead us to feeling fuller for longer. They're slower to digest. I always advise people

before you are going to think about what should I take out of my diet, we always talk about adding more vegetables first.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Those are great tips. I'm interested in any particular tips for age ranges 20 to 40, 40 to 60, 60 and over.

Julie Hamilton: I think more than practical tips, I like to think once again of mindset. If I'm looking at the years of between 20 [00:17:00] and 40, this is a great time to build good foundations and adopt the right mindset regarding your way of eating. If I could encourage anyone, I would say to embrace the idea of adopting some basic level cooking, which includes chopping vegetables and eating whole foods. I have met so many people that chopping vegetables becomes a great barrier in cooking or in adopting healthy eating habits. It sounds really simple, but if you can adopt this healthy mindset it's actually a worthwhile way to spend my time by cooking and eating whole foods, that is going to prepare an incredible foundation that will help on your health journey.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: The other really important thing to say about that is obvious, [00:18:00] but they come into their 20s with almost no cooking knowledge. Of course, there's the, 25-year-old who comes from the Italian family that cooks all the time. But that person, in my experience, is the exception, not the rule. When many of them just learn to do basic cooking, and there's gobs of resources on YouTube and TikTok, they begin to save so much money. Because they're eating out so much. Being conscious of knowing that this is a life skill, you're 25, you don't have it, but you can choose when to integrate it and also see it as really good for your bank account.

Julie Hamilton: I would 100 percent agree. I was on that same journey. I grew up in a family with a mom who cooked, but I didn't learn to cook until after I graduated college. It was intimidating. Chopping vegetables, things that had more than a couple of ingredients. I found that to be a barrier, but give yourself some compassion. Give yourself the [00:19:00] realization that putting 30 minutes of your day is a great way to spend your time. And honestly I think back to my own experience for years, I would cook for my own family. I've grown children now, but I remember I would say to myself, I don't like cooking. I don't like this. I like eating. This is good for my bank account. This is healthy, but I don't like it. I finally decided one day to stop that internal dialogue, to come to the realization that I may never be a person who enjoys cooking for hours or standing in the kitchen, but I was going to come to peace with the fact that this is a worthwhile way to spend part of my evening by cooking nourishing food that is good for my budget, that is good for my body, that is good for my mind. Once I stopped that internal dialogue of, [00:20:00] I don't like cooking,

this wastes my time. It began to change my life. I wish I would have learned that earlier.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What was the new line you had in your head? That you replaced, I don't like cooking with.

Julie Hamilton: I am at peace with cooking because of all the benefits it gives me and there is no better way to spend my time in the evening than taking care of my physical and mental health.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: How much time did cooking take you?

Julie Hamilton: Honestly, probably 30 minutes to an hour because I did find over time that I like the way things tasted? So, I would actually cook a little bit more advanced recipes. One thing I would say to that is, especially in those early years and I do want to say it's never too late to adopt these good habits. If you're 60 and you're just new to this, it's never [00:21:00] too late. But I did find that for me, one day on the weekend for a few minutes, I would roughly sit down and say, what am I going to have this week for dinner? I'm the type of person that eats the same breakfast and the same lunch, but I like variety for dinner. And if you spend a few minutes writing down, here's what I'm going to eat Monday, here's what I'm going to eat Tuesday, I would go to the grocery store and I would be planned for the week so that when it comes Tuesday night, Had a long work day, my kids have had activities. I already have the ingredients in the refrigerator and often they're very simple. I do not make complicated meals, but I've already done some basic preparation in my mind and going to the store that sets me up for success and helps make it a shorter time in the kitchen. I continually find success only [00:22:00] with people who choose to change their mindset that it is actually a worthwhile way to spend my time by doing cooking and chopping of vegetables.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I have had very few 20 somethings that came into that decade of their life liking to cook. Some of them had cooked growing up, but they really are trying to figure out how do I do my life around this very Basic life skill that from the beginning of time is what people revolve their entire day around. It's so interesting that we are probably one of the first cultures where people don't want to spend time picking vegetables, chopping them and cooking, yet want the results of their body to look just like they did when people put time and effort into that. I think that's a really helpful thing to say that we [00:23:00] can want something for free, but nothing is free. And if people want to feel healthier they will have to expend energy and time in a different way to be healthier.

Julie Hamilton: I fully agree. That's why I often say, become comfortable with some discomfort. What I am meaning is giving an hour to making food in the kitchen, taking 20 minutes on a weekend day to sit down and write down what you're going to go buy at the store. It's not just reduced portion sizes, which often is part of the process or learn to like new foods, but it's also time management.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Let's move to the next decades, what advice do you have for 40-to-60-year-old? Understanding that some people who are in that age group have to go back to what you just said for 20-year-old, but for the next, [00:24:00] 20 years of our life, which is when people begin to pack on a lot of weight, what advice do you have for them?

Julie Hamilton: This becomes the time of life, which I'm actually in myself, where middle age sets in. Routines settle in. I have found with many people, myself included at times, where alcohol consumption becomes very comfortable. It's very enjoyable, and sometimes it starts to get a little out of hand. Things like late night snacking, get out of hand. Really being mindful of habits and how we often need to rein in those habits and be a little bit stricter. Also, the same thing of cooking some meal planning. This is also the stage of life that things start to change. I know that my youngest child is going to be leaving for college in two weeks. I am going to be an empty nester. [00:25:00] I am no longer going to have the desire to cook more elaborate meals. This is a stage of life where we are also shifting. I have to ask myself, what does this time look like for me? I have to redefine what my eating habits are going to look like. It might be a time where it becomes more simple, a little more regimented, but we need to be able to shift at each stage of our life. I think also at this stage, fiber, most likely through non starchy vegetables is key, especially for women going through menopause. Protein consumption, making certain that we're having enough protein so that we continue to have lean muscle mass and don't lose muscle mass as we age. That also helps our metabolism. This is a time where we become comfortable, but at the same time, Stages of life shift.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: It's interesting because we become [00:26:00] comfortable, but I also hear you referring to two profound changes. One is menopause. One is the empty nest. Of course, there's men listening so you have some kind of menopause, I'm not as knowledgeable about that. Also, there may be people without children. But one thing I really encourage people is when you have those big shifts, That those are times that you really look at your health honestly. There is this underlying belief with the women clients I've worked with, I'm in menopause and I will gain weight. one of the things that I really encourage women to do is the opposite. I'm in menopause, I'm going to really

dial up what I do for my health. For some people, they might not lose weight, but they actually stop the gain. For many people, exercise , drinking water, all those little things are helpful. The same thing with the Empty Nest. For [00:27:00] people who have the Empty Nest with partners, I really try to encourage them to have it be something that they do together, because we orbit around our children. If you put 20 percent of the energy into your health that you used to put into your children, for the first semester of college. It really helps people feel that they have something to do in the midst of the loss.

Julie Hamilton: I fully agree and realizing you are worth it. Whether you're in menopause, empty nesting, you are worth learning more about this new stage of your health and doing it for yourself. It becomes a time in life, where you maybe are no longer creating these incredibly healthy meals for your children, but you now have to believe that it is worth it that you do this for yourself.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Many empty nesters I've worked with, that's when they start to go out to dinner a lot [00:28:00] and that's part of the weight gain. I've had numerous people say to me, Oh my gosh, my kids have been in college and I've gained the freshman 15. A lot of that is because they don't have to be home, they eat out more, it's less to eat out without a child etc. I'm also really glad that you touched on alcohol consumption because alcohol is lots of sugar, lots of calories. But the use in my 35 years of being a therapist has really changed. People used to drink on Friday or Saturday, but many people I work with drink five to seven times a week. During the pandemic, I was doing an online session and one of my 20 something clients was taking her laptop to the room where she was going to do this session. And I could see in her kitchen all these dirty wine glasses. I said to her, Go back there, get a measuring cup, and I want you to, show me how many ounces you [00:29:00] pour in that glass. She did it, and it was about 11 to 12 ounces that she was drinking. A serving of wine is five. Then I showed her the only wine glass I had from when I got married, it's a four-and-a-half-ounce wine glass, and it literally looked like a thimble, and we laughed so hard. Off the top of her head, she goes, I have one or two of these a night. Think about it, if you're having, let's say 10 ounces, she's having 20 ounces, she's having four glasses of wine a night. There's so much unexpected consequence of that, just in that funny little moment, It was, wow, that's the portion part and that isn't her fault. She bought those wine glasses they're all sized like that because they're sized for restaurant. It really made a big difference for her. It taught me to be more aware as I work with people I no longer say, how many drinks have you had? I ask, how many ounces did you drink? Those are great tips for the 40 [00:30:00] to 60 listeners. Now we're getting to where I'm in the 60 and over. What tips do you have for me?

Julie Hamilton: I think the main thing is once again, it's never too late to shift, to be a lifelong learner, to continue to focus on green leafy vegetables or non-starchy vegetables with fiber, adequate protein. Our metabolism does slow a little bit, 60 and beyond, but this is a time that's important once again to have adequate protein, I would say there's nothing radical about this time other than getting and continually be in the habit, just like you said, of the empty nesters who are going out to eat a lot is continually look at that practice in your life. If you're going to go out to eat, that is great, but I like to think about it as I'm looking at my week ahead. Even if I don't have [00:31:00] children living in my house, I say, okay, what are my meals going to look like this week? On Thursday night, I'm going to go out to eat. I'm going to look forward to it. But the other nights, I am going to cook something very simple. It's a continual focus on the same practices that I put into place the decades before. Really, once again, keeping alcohol in check and also portion sizes. What we have to understand is if a tasty food, dessert, is in my home, I need to expect that I will eat it. The first step a person can do, perhaps if they're in their 20s, 30s, 40s, onward, is if I have it in my home, it is going to be far more likely for me to have easy access. I often ask people when we're talking about certain foods, and I'll quiz them even, I will say, are you an abstainer or [00:32:00] are you a moderator? We'll take myself for an example. I have a love of granola. Anytime it is in my house, It will take superhuman strength for me to have one portion size. I will find myself often overeating. In that one instance with granola, for most of the time, it is best if I do not keep that in my house because it becomes so much easier to access in my moments of weakness. On the other hand, there are people, and you can be a person who needs to abstain from certain things to not have in your house, and you can be a person who is what I call a moderator. I happen to have ice cream in my house. It is not tempting for me, like granola to want to go and constantly eat ice cream all day long. I think we have to ask ourselves, what foods I can have in my house and [00:33:00] for the most part, not overeat. And what foods I don't need to have in my house. It's okay to live like that. It is okay to not have some foods in your house. That's the first step. Because it is so hard to resist what I call hyper palatable foods. Foods that are high in sugar, salt, and fat. They are amazing. It takes a huge amount of self-control to have them around all day long and not desire to eat them. You're normal if you want to eat them. The first step is don't have them around you if you struggle with your portion size.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's interesting because it brings up a topic that we haven't talked about and that is the ability to be honest with ourselves. I think for people to live a healthy lifestyle, they do have to be what I call brutally honest. I've had this conversation with a number of my clients who are worried [00:34:00] about their children, who are overweight. I Said if you look in your pantry, what do you see? They see a lot of processed foods. They themselves

had really good self-control, we want to give this to our children. And I said, That's fine. Then we can't talk about your child being overweight. This is the same thing that if you want your child to read, they need to go to school or you need to homeschool them and teach them to read. It doesn't just happen. If you want your child to be at a healthy weight, you have to create a home that gives them a chance at that. My experience has taught me, because there's so much food out there for children, It means that parents who want their kids to be a healthy weight have to have what you call hyper, what was the word? Hyper palatable foods. Chips, cookies, they have to be the ones that limit them. That honesty sometimes [00:35:00] goes against the norms of I make cookies for my children. They deserve to have dessert every night. I want to have something when I watch my favorite show at nine.

Julie Hamilton: I fully agree. I like to think along that line, Putting gentle guidelines in place. In this society with all the hyper palatable food out there with the flavoring industry that makes these flavors that actually makes a person almost reject whole foods because the flavors are so basic. We have to look at it as I am not punishing or putting really strict guidelines in place, but I have to have gentle guidelines that I am not going to fill my body with that type of food so that I can then truly desire whole foods that are nutritious. To not look at it as, I am depriving my children of a childhood or a life they deserve [00:36:00] by having many of these foods out of my house, but I am actually giving my children a step up in not only physical health, but mental health as well.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's why I don't think weight is a character issue. It really is exactly what you said. I don't think people understand. I certainly didn't. In the nineties, I worked on this initiative at our local kid's health museum, and they brought in someone from the CDC who was the head of the obesity task force nationwide. When he told us that there are many additives in food that actually shut down the system in our body that tells us we're full, I was shocked. I was like, Oh my God, this isn't about character. It's really understanding that if I eat foods that have these additives, I'm not more powerful than science. I won't feel full and I'll just continue to eat. From your experience, if someone makes this shift, the [00:37:00] shift I'm talking about is more whole foods, less processed foods. And I do think it is a very big shift initially. How long, in your experience with working people, do they feel like, I hate this, I don't like vegetables, I hate to cook? When does that bus turn the corner where they're like, Ooh, this feels better.

Julie Hamilton: The difficult answer is, it all depends. When I am talking with someone, I really like to get a firm understanding of what for the past few years and even growing up in childhood, their eating habits have looked like. If you

grew up in a home that it was mostly process and there were, there was very little whole foods around. It's going to be a much bigger shift. This is going to feel foreign. If you grew up in a house or if for the last few years, you've just fallen off the wagon where you have eaten more processed food, eating out most of the time, it may be easier for you to go, Oh, I remember how good [00:38:00] I felt. I remember liking this taste. It's a mindset shift and it's habits.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I want to end with another area of your expertise, which is the exercise, because I find this so confusing. My clients find it so confusing. My friends find it so confusing. What is the relationship between losing weight and exercise?

Julie Hamilton: When many people decide that they want to lose weight, the first step most of us often take is I'm going to work out and one of the things I love about exercise, and this is always the good news, it is the first what I call domino on someone's health journey that makes everything else seem doable. They become consistent, and now they say, I can tackle my eating. However, almost all of us find out very quickly that working out alone does not lead to continual fat loss over time. Part of this [00:39:00] is a mystery, is that over time, our bodies become incredibly efficient and they begin to burn less calories during exercise. The calories that you might burn when you start an initial exercise program, from being sedentary to then moving more, and you look maybe on your Apple Watch and you go, Wow, I just burned all these calories over time, and I don't know when it actually takes place. But the body says, Oh, I'm going to be efficient and no longer are going to burn this many calories. That's one of the complicated relationships between exercise and losing weight. However, study after study does show that as people begin to change their nutrition, one of the biggest things that they can do to keep the weight off is to exercise. You can look at every big [00:40:00] box gym in America and you can see people working really hard day after day, but they have a lot of weight to lose. If we could lose weight through exercise alone, most people would be really good at it. But you have to primarily lose weight.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Yeah, I think that's another part of being honest. That seems to really be a deep held belief for many of the people that I work with . The sad truth or the empowering honest truth is that it does come down to what we eat, how we eat, when we eat, how much we eat. I really appreciate you being on not just one episode, but two, you're one of the rare few because I think that when we think about mental health, it is not separated from our physical, it's not separated from how we [00:41:00] perceive ourself. I know people that are overweight, they're very content with it. They're very happy. They're like, nope, this is how I want to live. But for many people I work with,

they really struggle with their weight and I want to ask for one closing comment from you for those people who really do want to lose weight. What would you like to say to them in closing?

Julie Hamilton: First off, every day is a new beginning. You can begin to make slow changes today through brutal honesty with yourself, it is never too late to begin this journey.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Thank you so much, Julie. I think this has been incredibly helpful. Here are my Inner Challenge insights.

Inner Challenge Insight, number one.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Looking for the perfect diet? Begin with Julie's question: what are the one or two foods that, you know, you cannot live without?

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number two.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: [00:42:00] In the land of plenty, or as I said earlier, the land of excess, I don't think deprivation is going to work for most of us. I love Julie's tip. Add foods before you begin to remove foods. With many of the clients that I've helped with weight loss, they've added breakfast before they took away chips. They've added healthier food at lunch before they stopped having Frappuccino's.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number three.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Go ahead. Brag on yourself. Passed over the donut at the nine o'clock meeting. Maybe you brought your lunch instead of going out or maybe at dinner, you got the vegetables instead of the fries. Hey, say to yourself. Great job. Remember those wins. Most of us do so much better when we get a little bit of validation. But we often don't think to give it to ourself.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number four.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What to do about shame? What to do about shame? Shame makes us feel uncomfortable. I think today's guest gives us a big [00:43:00] insight when she says, if we're going to tackle this issue, we're going to have to be able to hold discomfort. So, it's really a choice. Do we hold the

discomfort of shame. Or do we hold the discomfort, I can't eat cookies every day.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number five.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Perhaps one of the most surprising tips that Julie gave us today is that we don't really lose weight through exercise. We lose weight by changing our food choices and the amount we eat. We can use exercise as a way to maintain our weight. When it comes to our mental wellness, the topic I am most passionate about, I see both of these as two sides of the same coin. I've seen it with hundreds of my clients throughout my years of practice. When people begin to move and exercise more, they feel better. And when people begin to eat healthier. They often are surprised that their brain fog lifts, they have more patience, they have more energy and they sleep [00:44:00] better at night. All foundational aspects of our mental and physical wellness. It's important to hear Julie's wisdom that our proportional food choices are what really helps us to lose weight. Sometimes the truth hurts.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number six.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Perhaps you found Julie's perspective, a little refreshing, down to earth. It feels possible to me. She actually does coaching online. And listen to the name of her business: Julie hamilton @velvet dumbbell.com. Yes, I love how she emphasizes gentle guidelines. It's really learning to take care of yourself from the inside out. I deeply believe that each of us knows what we need to do to maintain a healthy weight. What I love about Julie's perspective is she really listens to your story, your preferences, what you can't give up and she creates a [00:45:00] plan with you that really can help you reach your goal. Whether it's a New Year's resolution or not. I'll put her contact information in the show notes.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Thanks for listening. And if weight is one of those things that really makes you feel bad about yourself. I encourage you to gently face the challenge and take it a day at a time. This is your Inner Challenge.