**INTERMITTENT FASTING FLEXIBLE DIETING**

**Male Speaker:** Welcome to the Chalene Show. Chalene is the New York Times bestselling author, celebrity fitness trainer, and obsessed with helping you live your dream life.

**ChaleneJohnson**: Okay. I hope you're ready. This episode is destined to be one of my most downloaded episodes that I've done thus far.

My guest today is an outspoken, sometimes controversial, opinionated advocate for flexible dieting and intermittent fasting. In this episode you'll learn what it means to eat according to your macros, the definition of intermittent fasting, the different types of intermittent fasting, intermittent fasting and how it affects your hormones.

We talk about figure competitors and body builders and how many of them are vailing a form of eating disorder. All of the answers to your questions about fasting are answered in these next two episodes. What it is, who it’s right for, who it might not be right for, what type of lifestyle this is best suited for and so much more.

My guest today is a Canadian, she is Dr. Sara Solomon and she's helped thousands of men and women cut back their exercise, increase their food intake and master their metabolism. Dr. Sara has designed jumpstarts diet lifestyle coaching, she's the author of several top selling books on the topic of intermittent fasting.

She's a research junkie which is why I love her and much of the research and the information that she shares in this episode, well, I mean basically it’s going to flip what you've learned about diet and exercise and when to eat and what to eat, it’s going to flip it on its head.

And I know sometimes it’s frustrating, searching for that Holy Grail of diets. And it’s sometimes even more frustrating because you hear from experts who all claim their way of eating as a lifestyle is the best.

But the reason why I'm introducing you to people like Dr. Sara Solomon is because these are people who - they don't want you to go on a diet, rather they want to share with you their lifestyle in hopes that you'll be able to adopt their diet as a lifestyle, not a temporary short-term fix.

I too do not believe that there is a Holy Grail of diet. I think each one of us has to research, do our due diligence, experiment, taken to consideration all of our own personal factors, do some experimenting, be honest with ourselves and just figure out something that makes us happy and healthy forever.

If it feels like torture, if it feels like deprivation, if it doesn't feel right, it’s probably not. But this stuff today it gets real. I challenged Sara, she's honest, she's open, she's passionate, and some of the stuff is in fact pretty controversial, but like Sara says, “Hey, just think critically. Think this stuff through for yourself.”

All right. So, here we go. Part one of an incredibly interesting interview.

Okay. So, give us your credentials.

**Sara Solomon:** So, first of all I am dentist, I have a DMD from McGill University but before I was a dentist I was a physiotherapist. I also obtained my degree in physical therapy from McGill University, a bachelor of science and I - at the same time I also pursued a personal training certification because that was just the thing to do as a physiotherapist. And after I graduated dental school I put on a lot of weight because when you're studying all the time what do you do to pass the time? You pig out.

So, because I had gained some weight I joined a gym after and I became enamored with fitness, I became a spinning instructor, I started to lose the weight. I started fitness competing and my regiment started taking over my whole life. I was exercising one to two hours a day and my calorie intake became so low on a daily basis, I was eating in a pretty severe daily chronic caloric deficit, like I'm talking around 900 to 1,000 calories a day so that I could get on stage competing.

**Chalene Johnson:** And at the same time you were - you said you were also exercising how much?

**Sara Solomon:** One to two hours a day, I would do an hour of weight training a day and I then I would do an hour to - actually one to two hours of cardio a day, mostly stairmill because that was the thing to do when you were competing because it was supposedly going to make your but look better on stage.

**Chalene Johnson:** Oh.

**Sara Solomon:** So, I competed nine times. I ended up earning my pro card but when it was all said and done my metabolism was shot. I ran it into the ground. So when I resumed by baseline calories, guess what happened to me Chalene?

**Chalene Johnson:** You gained weight?

**Sara Solomon:** I blew up by 20 pounds.

**Chalene Johnson:** You're doing all of this while you're a dentist, is just an observation of anyone I know who competes they - it’s like when someone says, “Oh, so and so is a competitor,” they always go, “Oh, but it’s my offseason,” but this is my offseason it’s almost like to say, “And that's why I'm not normal - I'm not this weight.”

**Sara Solomon:** I'm going to be very blunt, it’s because we are taught to diet like morons, so as soon as you're done with your hellacious regimen and you go back to baseline living then you've turned your body into an advanced fat storing machine, so guess what happens? You blow up and you tell everybody, “Oh, I'm in my offseason,” but in actual fact you have slowed your metabolic rate down and now you're living with the consequences.

**Chalene Johnson:** That sounds awful to me and more power to you if that's what you love and that's your hobby and that's what you enjoy doing, this is not a judgement call, for me I can't - I just would never ever want to do something where people are like, “Huh, how come you don't look like that anymore?” like so dramatic that people don't recognize you.

I mean, I’ve heard stories of competitors who were like, “I only post photos of - or videos of myself if I'm - like within a couple of weeks of or - a couple of weeks of my competition but then after that I'm in sweatpants, I'm embarrassed because I blow up.”

**Sara Solomon:** Oh, it’s so damaging not only for your self-esteem but for your brand and I used to have to go into hiding, here I am trying to have a brand where I'm encouraging people to be fit and healthy, at the time I was writing for Oxygen Magazine and I was humiliated because I didn't even looked like I worked out or ate healthy.

**Chalene Johnson:** What brings you to the point where you're like, “Okay, I cannot keep doing this.”

**Sara Solomon:** You know what, no matter how hard I dieted and no matter how long I exercised I just couldn't lose the weight and it was getting to a point where it was interfering with my relationships with my parents, my coworkers. I wasn't happy. I was ready to throw myself out a window. I was experiencing suicidal ideations just because this lifestyle was all consuming. It was everyday about what I was eating, how many calories I was eating and I had to eat every two hours, I'd have to figure out how to bring that food to the dental office and make sure I got my fish in in-between the patients.

**Chalene Johnson:** Oh, gosh.

**Sara Solomon:** And it was just at a point where my parents finally said to me that they didn't want to be around me anymore. I was unbearable.

**Chalene Johnson:** What - looking back on it now, what have they said or what do you assume? So, what was going on?

**Sara Solomon:** I was in a vicious cycle and I had no clue how to get out of it and I just kept assuming because society teaches, “If you want to lose weight then you have to do more,” meaning you have to work out more and you have to eat less.

So, the trainer just kept prescribing me more cardio and less calories. So, it got to a point where it was like, “Okay, well, I'm already eating 900 calories, I'm already doing three hours a day of exercising, now what?”

**Chalene Johnson:** So - but what was your behavior like that your parents were like, “Okay, you're not fun to hang out with.”

**Sara Solomon:** I was - can I say the B word?

**Chalene Johnson:** Sure.

**Sara Solomon:** I was a bitch. I didn't even like myself.

**Chalene Johnson:** Like what was upsetting you that you - that was always putting you in a bad mood?

**Sara Solomon:** As soon as you wake up you know you have to immediately do an hour of cardio and an hour of weights before you get cleaned up and drive an hour of commute in Toronto traffic to work and you also have to wake up an hour earlier to make sure you have all your food packed into coolers, Tupperware, properly measured, four ounces of fish and one cup of asparagus - that's the other thing I have to complain about, I wasn't allowed to eat anything fun, it was pretty much broccoli, chicken, fish, asparagus, yams, and oats and I - to this day cannot eat asparagus, I can't. It’s ruined me.

**Chalene Johnson:** You have nightmares of asparagus chasing you down the street.

**Sara Solomon:** Yes. One thing I want to mention is then I would get home from work after a long day and have to do another hour of cardio. So, can you understand how that would affect anybody’s mood.

**Chalene Johnson:** Well, okay, let me just be honest, that wouldn't put me in a bad mood, having to work out first thing in the morning and pack my food, that doesn't put me in a bad mood and then having - like for me I think of it as like, “And then I get to work out again in the afternoon, like that would be awesome.” And I - there are days when I work out twice a day, many days I work out twice a day, not deadly hard but I never freak out if I can't and I - it’s no big deal if I can't pack my - like it’s maybe the difference in mindset is I look forward to doing that, I hope I get to do it but if I can't it’s - it ain’t no big deal.

**Sara Solomon:** But the problem was that I wasn't getting to do what I wanted, I didn't get to eat any food that I wanted, I was on a strict meal plan and I wasn't able to do the exercising I wanted to do, it always had to be stairmill, it always had to be a very certain style or else I wouldn't do well on stage.

So, when everything is being dictated to you...

**Chalene Johnson:** Yeah.

**Sara Solomon:** ...and you’re not allowed to do the styles of training that actually bring you pleasure, that can change everything very quickly and when you know your metabolism is fried...

**Chalene Johnson:** Yeah.

**Sara Solomon:** ...you know if you don't do the cardio, if you don't do the full two hours you know the next day when you weigh yourself you're going to be up two pounds.

**Chalene Johnson:** Wow. Okay. So, then, what did you do? What was your decision?

**Sara Solomon:** I finally had my breaking point. I - as I told you, I was experiencing suicidal ideation. It was so bad and I didn't know what to do to get myself out of this situation and I knew that my whole entire fitness brand was being destroyed and one thing my dad always told me was that if something isn't working well then continuing to do it isn't suddenly going to make it start working.

**Chalene Johnson:** Right.

**Sara Solomon:** And I thought, “Well, what if I just started doing the exact opposite of what they've been telling me to do?” So, I went to my DSM-IV that I had in my cupboard tucked away from medical school.

**Chalene Johnson:** What's that?

**Sara Solomon:** Oh, that's the whole psychiatry guidebook and I started reading through it, so like, “What's my problem here? What's my diagnosis?”

**Chalene Johnson:** Yeah.

**Sara Solomon:** And I realized that I definitely had an eating disorder and I realized the way to treat it would be abstinence. So, I thought to myself, “Wait a minute? Abstinence? You mean like fasting?” And that's what happened to me in 2012, the smart theory hit me in the side of the head and I did my first fast.

**Chalene Johnson:** My question when I hear that is, like, “But wait a second isn't that - isn't that a full blown eating disorder then? Like if food for you is becoming this obsession and you're having to do all those regimented dieting then to completely eliminate it isn't that an eating disorder?”

**Sara Solomon:** For the first time I wasn't fixated on it anymore. What I was experiencing is something that has been labeled orthorexia nervosa but it’s actually not currently recognized as a clinical diagnosis in the DSM-V.

**Chalene Johnson:** Okay.

**Sara Solomon:** So, what it is, is it’s unhealthy obsession with eating. It’s like a very - it’s like a fixation on this righteous approach to eating and the problem was that it was taking up an inordinate amount of my time and it was taking so much attention away from my life. I had no quality of life. And I was pretty much suffering from enormous guilt and self-loathing if I even dared deviate from the diet like if I didn't have the asparagus and I switched that out for rice. Oh, oh. So, it was just very obsessive, like I couldn't have gluten, I couldn't have dairy. Everything had to be measured.

**Chalene Johnson:** Now, when you say “couldn't have” you mean by that by your own rules and standards and I want you to if you will expand upon the word righteous.

**Sara Solomon:** There's a certain protocol at the time. It’s referred to as broscience, I'm sure you've heard that term. It’s basically a philosophy on how you should approach diet and training based on just what's generated results for body builders and fitness professionals over the years. So it’s purely anecdotal. It’s based on no evidence, no science.

**Chalene Johnson:** Okay, got it.

**Sara Solomon:** Okay? So, it’s referred to as broscience**.**

**Chalene Johnson:** If there's no clinical studies behind it, it’s like, “That dude over there with the huge calves is doing this, so bro that's what we should do.”

**Sara Solomon:** Bingo.

**Chalene Johnson:** Got it.

**Sara Solomon:** You go it. So, everybody at the time was paying for plans that were based on broscience. So this is what was indoctrinated. I mean, even if you were reading Oxygen Magazine at the time or any online fitness site or even Dr. Oz or Oprah, everybody was preaching broscience. You must eat breakfast as soon as you wake up. You must eat every two to three hours, small portioned controlled meals. You must do cardio if you want to lose weight. And so that was a paradigm at the time. So I got locked into it because you wanted to look lean and amazing all the time.

**Chalene Johnson:** So, you discovered intermittent fasting or fasting in general? And explain to those who are not familiar with that term, what does that mean from a broad sense?

**Sara Solomon:** Okay. So, fasting obviously means not to eat, intermittent means you're not eating in episodic timeframes, meaning you're still going to eat your normal amount of food but you're just going to eat it in a smaller timeframe.

**Chalene Johnson:** All right. So that window could be - because we've had Melissa McAllister on this show and she has a program called the Eight Hour Ab Diet where...

**Sara Solomon:** Yes.

**Chalene Johnson:** ...she eats all of her food within an eight-hour window but that - I've also heard from experts who I've had on the show who eat within the six-hour window or a 12-hour window. So, is there a - here's the thing, if you're sleeping you're fasting so everybody in a sense is doing intermittent fasting, correct?

**Sara Solomon:** Yeah, at least - if you're sleeping at least eight hours you're at least fasting for eight hours.

**Chalene Johnson:** Okay. So, what is the protocol, like in order for it to be considered “intermittent fasting” what does the length of time that it actually provides benefit?

**Sara Solomon:** I would recommend 16 hours, but 12 hours will still give you some benefits, I think that if you really want to shed stubborn fat, you want to try and get at least to 14-hour mark. But my answer to this question is that there is no right or wrong answer, in order to -

**Chalene Johnson:** Yay. Hurray, everybody, standing, a round of applause. I agree, I - and that's the reason why I have you on the show and why I bring experts on the show is because I don't believe there is a Holy Grail, I want to introduce the listeners of the Chalene Show to a variety of experts who live a lifestyle like this isn't a short-term thing for you, this isn't you getting ready for a competition, this is your lifestyle and I want to share with people which is fantastic for me to have someone who has your complete obsession with research and so maybe this is going to be right for some people, so let’s talk about the different types of intermittent fasting, if that's where you think we should go next.

**Sara Solomon:** Yes. The first thing I want to say is you're right, intermittent fasting is not for everybody and the first thing you need to do is consult with your physician because it is intended for healthy adults, I don't recommend anybody to start any nutrition diet exercise plan without consulting with their physician.

The different fasting protocols are all based on the same concept and that's why I don't preach one as being superior or inferior.

**Chalene Johnson:** Okay.

**Sara Solomon:** So they're all based on the same concept of there's a timeframe when you're eating and then there's a timeframe when you're not eating. It’s also based on you're eating personality and your schedule because the only way you're going to have success, long-term success on a diet program is if you can adhere to it on a daily basis for years to come.

**Chalene Johnson:** That's so true. I - we just know, study after study that if people can't maintain something for indefinitely then you're going to put the weight back on and that leads me to my next question, is intermittent fasting something that's recommended for weightless or fat loss because I've seen both?

**Sara Solomon:** It’s recommended for fat loss and it’s important that some type of resistance training be happening especially if you are training in a fasted state because you want to preserve you're lean muscle, why? Because muscle is what burns calories. If you want to have a robust metabolism, then you want to have as much lean muscle on your body as possible. So if you want to minimize muscle catabolism I recommend that you’re fasted training, you're training fasted with branched-chain amino acids and you're lifting weights.

**Chalene Johnson:** So, if I'm just trying to lose weight, I really don't care about my body fat, I've got - I'm carrying around extra 75 pounds, is this what you would recommend people start with?

**Sara Solomon:** Oh, yes. I think that intermittent fasting in my opinion is the most effortless way to not only lose fat but also keep the fat off and that's the biggest problem people have is that they can never maintain their fat loss.

**Chalene Johnson:** So, I guess what you're saying is by a byproduct you're going to lose weight but this is ideal for those who want to lose body fat first?

**Sara Solomon:** Absolutely.

**Chalene Johnson:** Can you explain for us what macros are and how this is different in terms of the way you use to eat and the way you eat today?

**Sara Solomon:** As I mentioned before I used to follow a meal plan, I paid close to $500 for these meal plans and they would tell me, “Meal one, you eat exactly this. Meal two, you eatexactly this.” And it was referred to as the frequent feeding model because you would eat every two to three hours.

**Chalene Johnson:** Yeah. That’s still the general, common, commonly accepted prescription.

**Sara Solomon:** The thing is there had been studies done that show that there is no evidence that eating six meals a day will increase your metabolism, your thermogenesis or your weight loss. In fact, evidence suggests that meal frequency and timing have absolutely no effect on weight gain at all.

So once I read those studies, I’m like, “Ooh, okay. Well, then this is all a bunch of bullroar and rubbish. And I don’t have to eat according to this, you know, meal plan. I can just eat when I’m hungry or when I’m not hungry.”

So I think that’s going to be a big relief for a lot of people who think that they have to have a timer and eat exactly every two hours, which is not feasible for people who work.

**Chalene Johnson:** Well, and there are a lot of people who are hungry every two hours and there’s a lot of people who are like, “I’m not even hungry. I forget to eat.” And so - but the teaching has long been that if you are skipping a meal or if you’re not starting your day with breakfast that you are slowing your metabolism. What science do you have that debunks that myth?

**Sara Solomon:** Yeah. I actually have a study right here. You got my papers here.

**Chalene Johnson:** Yeah. Sara science Solomon.

**Sara Solomon:** So there was a study in 1987, way back in 1987, okay? By Nero et al and the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. The earliest evidence of a lowered metabolic rate in response to fasting occurs after 60 hours and it was only an 8% drop in resting metabolic rate. Now, I don’t know about you, Chalene, but I’m not going to be fasting for 60 consecutive hours.

**Chalene Johnson:** No. Wow.

**Sara Solomon:** Okay? And then another study in 2000, in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, they showed that the resting energy expenditure actually increased in early starvation up to 60 hours.

**Chalene Johnson:** Whoa. Well, true confession. I never claim to be a diet or a nutrition expert. But once I started doing consumer videos - I mean, I always loved exercise and exercise that was fun and didn’t feel like exercise. And when I started creating consumer videos, you know, they ask you to put your stamp of approval on diet plans.

And so most of the information that I would share in those early videos and those early blog posts and the advice that I was giving was much like you said, just the advice I had heard other experts giving. I was just regurgitating it which was, “Eat every two hours,” “Start your day off with a breakfast.” But I never looked at any science about that.

Now, when it comes to exercise, I love looking at science. I just - I guess because I never assumed that people should question it, that I just regurgitated what everybody else was saying.

**Sara Solomon:** Because we’re all guilty of that, Chalene. Because the reality is that our thoughts are greatly influenced by those around us.

**Chalene Johnson:** Yeah.

**Sara Solomon:** And that’s why. And that’s why one of the first things I teach people who start my program, the very first lesson I teach them before I even teach them intermittent fasting is the whole entire concept of the importance of thinking critically.

**Chalene Johnson:** Okay.

**Sara Solomon:** Before ever making a decision.

**Chalene Johnson:** I dig that.

So what you’re saying is you were looking at this research, you’re saying, “Okay, it’s not going to drop my metabolism. If anything, it can increase it.” But I have to say that still for so many people, the thought of having to go until, say, 11:00 or noon or - I even have one guest on - Mark Sisson who said a lot of times that his first meal is around 1 p.m. For many people, that sounds like total depravation. Like they’re - it sounds like jail. It sounds like something they’re having to force themselves to.

And you had mentioned that one of the things you hated about your previous lifestyle was you were doing all these things that weren’t fun for you, it wasn’t what you wanted to do. So was this something you want to do? Do you want to wait each day until a certain time to eat?

**Sara Solomon:** Yes.

**Chalene Johnson:** Let’s talk females for a second. There are a lot of questions on my Facebook wall when I told them I would have you on the show asking specifically because there is this general consensus that intermittent fasting is terrible for your hormone levels.

**Sara Solomon:** Because there was this recent article posted online that was discussing a study that was done on rodents about fertility. And they said that the rodents that were doing pure, alternate-day fasting, their ovaries shrank.

The first thing I want to say is that we can’t make inferences from a rodent study. You can’t assume that that’s going to apply for humans.

**Chalene Johnson:** True.

**Sara Solomon:** And the thing is very few people are actually going to be doing what the mice were doing which was eating nothing for 36 hours and then eating ad libitum, which means eating however many calories you want, every other day. So I mean, we’re not mice and we’re not going to do that experiment.

**Chalene Johnson:** Does it have an effect on your hormones to some extent?

**Sara Solomon:** It’s going to have a different effect for everybody. And that’s true for any diet.

And let’s take into consideration confounding variables. I mean, for all you know, some female who started intermittent fasting and then they claim that they stopped getting periods or something affected their fertility, what else was going on? Were they under stress? How old are they? Did they recently get off of birth control pills that they’ve been on for 20 years?

What’s their nutrition like? Because if your nutrition is poor, regardless of when you eat, you still will have issues with fertility. And what about your calories? And you also need to increase your fats if you’re trying to get pregnant.

So there are a lot of other questions I have. And the only way you can really make a decision based on this is by consulting with your physician. Because the reality is I’ve had thousands of female clients have tremendous success with intermittent fasting without having any issues. In fact, many of the females have had all their acne go away doing it.

But I’m going to play devil’s advocate and say, “You know what, there’s probably other females out there that will tell you horror stories, but that’s true for anything.” And that’s why I say, “Think critically and always consult your physician,” because you don’t know if something is going to work for you unless you try it, and then you’ll know.

**Chalene Johnson:** Right. This is so true.

Okay. Let’s go to macros first. Do you still keep track of your macros when you’re intermittent fasting?

**Sara Solomon:** You see, I’ve been doing this now for three years. So I’m pretty good at it. And now, my mom has been doing it too, my mom and dad. And at first, we all did track it. But because we’re just - we’re good at it now, we don’t really need to.

So it’s not something you have to be committed to doing. I recommend it when you’re first learning it, so that you understand. But it’s not like a sentence that you have to track your macros and calories for the rest of your life.

And just so you know, my mom and dad do the same protocol that I’m doing right now which is the 20 and 4. We don’t eat until 5 o’clock. And let me tell you why, because we can be so productive at work all day long without having to stop to eat. We are so much more efficient, focused, and we’re in a better mood when we’re fasted. And then we can come home and unwind and pig out at night all the calories that we would have had have we eaten all day long. And it’s really satisfying.

**Chalene Johnson:** I have 5,011 million questions.

**Sara Solomon:** Okay.

**Chalene Johnson:** So let me first ask this one about macros. For people who are unclear, do you have a simple way to explain what macros are and how somebody can figure out what theirs should be?

**Sara Solomon:** In case you’re wondering, flexible dieting is also known as IIFYM which stands for if it fits your macros. So this approach to diet is giving you a greater flexibility with your food selection just because you focused on nutrients rather than focusing on the food source. So basically you can toss your meal plans in the trash.

I have a calculator on my website. What you do is you input your height, your age, your weight and that will establish your BMR. And I have a PRO Calculator as well where you can take your heart rate reading from your workout, put that in to establish the most accurate total daily energy expenditure for you. And then I teach you how to select the percentages for your macros based on your goal for the day, because, remember, I told you it’s based on calorie and carb cycling.

So some days, you’re going to be higher carb, some days you’ll be lower carb. And then, poof, you hit the calculate button, and then that whole calculator tells you. I also have it on my mobile app too.

**Chalene Johnson:** So generally speaking, people can understand, when we’re talking about macros, we’re saying for you personally how many carbs, proteins, fats, and total calories? Or we’re just talking carbs, proteins, fats, and you don’t have to worry then about calories?

**Sara Solomon:** Yeah. Don’t worry about the calories. At this point, when we’re calculating the macros - well, it’s based off you have to know what the calorie total is in order to establish how many grams of the carbs, how many grams of the fat, and how many grams of the protein that you’re eating every day. But when you’re thinking about what a macro is, I want you to think about actually your carbs, your fats, and your protein. And we’re not going to talk about alcohol.

**Chalene Johnson:** Okay. Okay, we’re not going to talk about it.

Let’s go back though. This trips me out. And I’m just going to say this - and you know that I love you and we can speak honest to each other because we have that kind of relationship. But to eat within a four-hour window to me feels disordered. Like if - like I - that would be torturous. It would feel like a mental game.

It would - I feel like I’d have to eat for the entire four hours to get all my food in. I feel like I’d be stuffed. I feel like that would be really - it would be so strange to go out to lunch with people and just sit there. Like, I don’t know. That just feels really disordered to me.

**Sara Solomon:** But that’s why you’re eating personality is different. So you would be better suited to, say, an eight-hour eating window so that you don’t have to cram all of your food into a narrow window.

One reason why I like a narrow window is because of my eating personality. Because of all the years of the way I was dieting, I became a binge eater, a yo-yo dieter. Let me explain this because this is going to really help people who have binge eating personality types.

**Chalene Johnson:** Okay.

**Sara Solomon:** So if you’re a binge eater, listen up right now.

**Chalene Johnson:** Okay.

**Sara Solomon:** So if you’re that kind of person who, you know, when you get home from work and you just want to sit down on the couch, unwind, and you just want to eat and eat and eat, and you just keep putting it in your mouth, and you don’t know why, well, then, this is a good protocol choice for you to have a four-hour window because it basically gives you permission to eat all of your food in this narrow window. You’re going to achieve satiety because you’re eating a lot of calories in a short amount of time. And you don’t have to suffer any guilt for it.

**Chalene Johnson:** So you start eating at 5:00.

**Sara Solomon:** And then I finish at 9:00.

**Chalene Johnson:** And then are you like, “I am in a food coma”?

**Sara Solomon:** Honestly, sometimes, I can eat all my food in 45 minutes. I can eat all the calories and macros and I’m done.

**Chalene Johnson:** Wow.

**Sara Solomon:** And I could pack back a lot of food. I’m an eat beast. So I can just pack all that because that’s my eating personality. But I also want to cater the people that have an eating personality more like you where you kind of want to spread stuff out throughout the day, so then you might be better suited to a 12-hour window.

**Chalene Johnson:** Gotcha.

**Sara Solomon:** But meal frequency doesn’t make a hooted difference. It doesn’t matter how many meals you eat during your eating window. If you want to have one big meal or you want to have three or if you want to have, you know, 10, it doesn’t make a hooted difference.

**Chalene Johnson:** Okay. What happens when their - I mean, how does this interfere with your lifestyle? Can you handle it and how do you handle it when there’s a special occasion and it’s just - makes other people feel uncomfortable that you’re not eating? Like do you give in to that? Will you - are you - how flexible are you?

**Sara Solomon:** Well, I mean, considering that most special occasions happen in evening hours, it works really wel, l because I can go there and eat the whole buffet. And they’re all like, “How does she look like that and eat all of that?” So that does work well.

But there is a certain amount of flexibility. Like if you know that you have something important happening, then live a little.

**Chalene Johnson:** Okay.

**Sara Solomon:** So that day, you’re probably not going to do intermittent fasting or you could switch around your window a little bit. But I don’t think it should ever - I don’t think any diet should ever interfere with your quality of life.

**Chalene Johnson:** Like there were a lot of people on Facebook, when I asked for their questions, they were like, “What do I do if sometimes on a Saturday” - fill in the blank. I’m like how are people like not realizing to just use common sense.

**Sara Solomon:** Yes.

**Chalene Johnson:** And it’s generally best practices, you know, an 80/20 rule. I don’t know what percentage you look at, but my personal belief. And I’m not a doctor or psychiatrist, but things become disordered when we feel completely out of control if we can’t stick to a particular regimen every single day.

**Sara Solomon:** You’re absolutely right.

**Chalene Johnson:** Okay. And do you feel that way? Like if something comes up and you can’t do it, are you distraught, does it upset you?

**Sara Solomon:** No, because I swore I would never be like that ever again.

So what I created on my website is something called flexible fasting, which is the notion of how can we apply the theory in a real world setting without experiencing self-loathing or, you know, becoming neurotic that you’re not going to be, you know, on point.

So when I look at my parents, the way they approach it is that Monday through Thursday, they are spot-on with their calories and macros. They are perfect. They are spot-on with their eating window. But on the weekends, they do anything they want. They’ll start eating at like 10 o’clock in the morning.

**Chalene Johnson:** Cool. I love it.

**Sara Solomon:** They don’t even follow a window at all. And they have kept their weight off for over a year. My dad lost 30 pounds and his asthma went away. And my mom lost 20 pounds and she looks sensational. She’s 67 and she’s 120 pounds.

**Chalene Johnson:** Oh my gosh. And I’m the president of your mom’s fan club, FYI. She’s so funny.

What have you found to be the case? Do most people do this cold turkey, they just start the plan the next day, or should you ease into it?

**Sara Solomon:** You know, I tell people both options. For me, I did it cold turkey. The very first day I actually fasted for 20 hours and like I could have kept going. Like this is like the best thing that ever happened to me.

**Chalene Johnson:** Why, why, why, why? Like to me, I’m like, “What? Not eating is the best thing that ever happened to you?”

**Sara Solomon:** I was just - for the first time in my life, I wasn’t hungry. What people don’t realize is that fasting has a suppressive effect on your hunger. It’s like the longer you fast, the longer you can keep fasting.

And the key point is that you need to minimize hunger by staying hydrated. I’m drinking a lot of water, tea, calorie-free beverages, because I train fasted, I drink branched-chain amino acids which really help promote satiety.

So, I mean, hunger and thirst comes from the same area in the hypothalamus. So, oftentimes, people will confuse the signals and think that they are hungry when in actual fact they’re thirsty. So you’re going to go to the bathroom a lot because you’re going to drink a lot, but you can stay satiated just by drinking tons of water.

**Chalene Johnson:** Okay. So again here you say it’s an individual thing, some people should do it gradually.

**Sara Solomon:** Yeah.

**Chalene Johnson:** And how would you recommend people experiment with intermittent fasting and ease themselves into it?

So, how about that? Crazy, right? Well, be sure to download part two immediately because we just - we go into depth. Like every question that is spinning around in your head right now, I basically just - I couldn’t end this interview because I had so many more questions. And I got to the most popular of the questions that you posted for me knowing I was going to be doing this interview on my Facebook wall. So we’ve got answers to those questions. They are in episode two.

But I want to leave you with this, you know, and I brought this up with Sara. I said, “This feels disordered.” And so as soon as we hung up, I thought, you know, “I’m going to look up the definition of disordered eating.” And here’s what it says, “Disordered eating can include attitudes and behaviors like binge eating, skipping meals regularly, induced vomiting, obsessive calorie counting, self-worth based on body image, misusing laxatives and diuretics, fasting, or chronic restrained eating.”

Based on that definition which comes from the eatingdisorders.org, based on that definition, well, then, sure intermittent fasting would fall into the category of disordered eating. But, you know, dieting falls into the category of disordered eating. Dieting falls in that category.

But, wait a second, 80% of Americans are going to go on a diet this year. So what it makes it disordered? Isn’t it then maybe normal to be on a diet? Like maybe what I’m suggesting, we think of this as being so bizarre.

Like we talked about this interview in the office after I finished with Sara, and there’s mainly women in my office, and Lauren and Jacquelyn, and Allison. And we were discussing how so much of the way that we eat is based upon what we’ve been told as normal. But yet what Dr. Sara is suggesting is that what we’ve done is kind of abnormal compared to the way that we evolved and how caveman used to live and what seems to be best for us.

And so is it disordered because it goes against the norm that we’ve accepted culturally over the last 50 years? Who gets to decide what’s normal?

If by chance, this gives somebody like Sara and thousands - perhaps millions of other people the freedom from dieting that so many people are looking for, then doesn’t it just make sense that we at least open up our eyes, open up our minds, and consider alternatives? And I don’t know.

So all I do know is this, is Americans in general have gotten more obese and more unhealthy in the last 10 years and so have our children. And we’ve become obsessed with calorie counting and dieting and our weight. And it’s not working.

So before you dismiss this as being disordered, just consider that there might be an alternative, that we might need to open up our eyes, open up our minds, and try something different, because what we’re doing isn’t working.

I invite you to share this episode with somebody else. I would love to hear what you thought about it. Leave me a SpeakPipe message by going to chalenejohnson.com/podcast. Send me a tweet. I’d love to hear your thoughts. But please, first, listen to part two.

And as always, I love you. I mean it. And you are the bomb dot com.

**[END OF RECORDING]**