

Empowering You Organically – Season 2 – Episode 12

Jonathan: Thanks everyone for listening. We are doing another episode of Empowering You Organically. I am joined by my co-host, TeriAnn Trevenen.

TeriAnn: Hey everyone.

Jonathan: We also have our very special guest, Dr. Susan Peirce Thompson.

Susan: Hi.

Jonathan: TeriAnn, give us a quick bio of Dr. Susan.

TeriAnn: Sure. Dr. Susan Peirce Thompson lives in Rochester, New York, with her husband and three beautiful daughters. She is a New York Times best-selling author for her book, *Bright Line Eating: The Science of Living Happy, Thin, and Free*.

TeriAnn: She's also the president of The Institute for Sustainable Weight Loss. She is the founder and CEO of Bright Line Eating, which is a company with an unprecedented track record for helping people lose all of their excess weight, and live in a right-sized body, long-term.

TeriAnn: She has a PhD in brain and cognitive sciences, and she's been teaching at the university level for 13 years. She has been a professor of psychology of eating and neuroscience of food addiction.

Jonathan: We coulda just said you're really smart. And that would've covered a lot of that bit.

Susan: Okay, you want to hear something funny?

Jonathan: Do it.

Susan: I was on a Facebook Live and some guy was like, "Tell us again about how you have your PhD, please."

Susan: That was when I realized there's a fine line between stating your bio and trying to have some authority or whatever, and going overboard with it. I'm really glad that you do the bios, TeriAnn, 'cause that would sound a little weird coming out of my mouth.

Jonathan: For those of you who haven't listened to our first two episodes in season two, make sure you listen. We had Dr. Susan on for both of those, and we talked about some really phenomenal information. We talked about emotional eating and stuff that happens around the holidays. Our last episode we talked all about setting goals and Bright Line Eating, and really how to be successful this year with your weight loss, your getting healthy goals.

Jonathan: Today we are gonna talk about a topic that is very important to me, and that's sugar addiction. I think that a lot of people really suffer from it. Whether they suffer from it on a very minor scale, to a very major scale. I know for me personally, one, I have a very

addictive personality to begin with. We've talked about how I smoked for 20 years, I've had challenges at times with drinking, with other drugs, and overall just addictive personality.

Jonathan: One thing that I know that I'm addicted to and that's sugar. There's no doubt about it. I actually eat a ketogenic diet now because it really helps with that, because it minimizes how much sugar, it minimizes all of that that I take. 'Cause otherwise I enjoy it way too much.

Jonathan: So, what is sugar addiction? Talk to us about that. What exactly is a sugar addiction? And let's define sugars, as well. It's something with a keto diet, and people say, "Well I don't eat carbs." Well, why not? Vegetables are carbs, you should be eating those, and people mistaking sugar and carbs and all of that.

Jonathan: Let's start with identifying sugars.

Susan: Okay. Sure. I love how you use that word carb, and you know, there's eye rolling with the whole word carbs, because it's an unhelpful word. Jonathan, you and I have talked about this before.

Susan: I hate the word carbs, actually. There's two words that I've identified that I have a little, "I don't like those words." Diet and carbs. They're unhelpful words for the same reason. Okay, I'm gonna use a fancy term. They obfuscate the meaningful distinctions. They cloud the issue. They don't help, and so as soon as you're using the word carb, you're not thinking clearly about what matters and what doesn't matter. 'Cause the issue is not carbohydrate as a macronutrient. The issue is really food quality, food source. You want to be eating certain things that would be in the carbohydrate category. You want to be eating apples, and spinach, and carrots, things like that. And you don't want to be eating donuts, and bagels, and tons of pasta.

Susan: Using the word carb is unhelpful. I think when most people say carb, they mean bread, or something like that. But the real issue with bread is the flour. It's the grinding down of the particle so that the digestive enzymes hit every surface area of that molecule really hard, and it absorbs into your blood stream really fast, and then it causes a big dopamine rush in your addictive centers, and so forth.

Susan: When I talk about sugar, Jonathan, what I mean is anything added to your food to make it sweeter. That lumps into the same category, on purpose, things as disparate as high fructose corn syrup, table sugar, honey, molasses, stevia. And then all of the artificial sweeteners, aspartame, sucralose, all of 'em. The Sweet'N Low-

Jonathan: Stevia, erythritol, even [crosstalk 00:04:55], [inaudible 00:04:55], ones that have no glycemic index response, right?

Susan: Yes.

Jonathan: Like the stevia and erythritol. Anything that's sweet to the tongue, correct?

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- Susan: Yes. Exactly. Other than whole, fresh, real fruit. Whole, fresh, real fruit. It's gotta be fresh, and it's gotta be whole, is fine. But fruit juice is not. And dried fruit is not. You gotta draw the line somewhere, and that's where the line goes.
- Susan: Now that reason that stevia and stuff like that, things that don't have a blood sugar response, are out is that one of the major pathways for sugar addiction is actually from the sweet taste buds themselves, straight up to the addictive centers of the brain. So you don't want to be adding anything to your food to make it sweeter.
- Susan: That's it. So when you say, "What's sugar addiction?" Should we go there? Like what is it?
- Jonathan: Absolutely.
- Susan: I'm kinda laughing in my head, it's like, sugar addiction is sugar addiction. It's like you asked, "What's cocaine addiction?" Well, it's addiction to cocaine.
- Susan: Sugar addiction in the brain is the same as any other addiction. It's essentially dopamine down regulation in the addictive centers, mainly the nucleus accumbens. So the addictive centers are these areas in the brain, you get the ventral tegmental area and the nucleus accumbens. It's a deep, primal, primitive area of the brain. If you think of your head as a cue ball, or whatever, it's almost right in the middle. If you carry your neck up, your spine up, then you get to the brain stem, and then just a little bit above that, like an inch or two right above that. Right in the core of your brain. We're talking super old, super primitive areas, and their job is to give you enough oomph to get up and get what you need to get to survive.
- Susan: It's like yeah, sex, food, we gotta get us some of that. Otherwise we're just not living long enough to stick around around here, and let alone have children, and pass on our genes.
- Susan: So, there are certain things that are so necessary that it is incredibly required that our brain makes sure that we identify the availability, when it's around, and we feel motivated to go get it.
- Susan: Sugar addiction is like pornography addiction, in the sense that it's become really widespread, because we have substances in our environment that were manufactured to really hijack those brain centers. Like donuts? There's no such thing out in the savanna. There is no such stimulus. It's like a loop of pornography. There's so access to any kinda of stimuli that's that intense out in natural conditions. They were manufactured in order to be pleasurable to a certain degree, and what it does is it floods those centers of the brain, the nucleus accumbens especially, with excess dopamine. The dopamine centers respond by down regulating, thinning out, and then you're fine because your brain's now responding more normally, 'cause there's fewer receptors and they're not responding as well if you keep eating donuts. Now everything's leveled out. But if you stop eating donuts, you got a problem. Now you

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- have not enough dopamine on board, and you're addicted. You gotta go get another hit to feel normal.
- Susan: That's essentially what sugar addiction is. On a brain scan it looks the same as cocaine addiction, alcohol addiction. It actually looks a little worse, to be honest.
- TeriAnn: What does it look like coming off of the sugar, just like other things that you're addicted to in the brain?
- Susan: If you look at a PET scan, or an fMRI, and you look at those areas of the brain, the way those scans look is they usually use a color scale from blue to green to yellow to orange to red, where the centers light up orange and red when they're really on fire. A normal brain to normal stimuli will have some orange and red in the nucleus accumbens. A drug-addicted brain or a sugar-addicted brain won't. Those dopamine receptors have been blown out.
- Susan: So, you just don't see much response there. That's what they look like. They look bleak.
- Jonathan: We've identified sugars, and we talk about sugar addiction. 'Cause I personally feel like breads fit inside of that, for me, as I'm coming down off of my sugar high, I can eat a handful of rolls with butter on 'em and get that same-
- Susan: Totally. That'll do. Yup, totally. That's a really important point, 'cause I've experienced this from 25 years now, essentially, of being in the weight loss, food addiction, space. People who don't give up flour don't succeed. You can give up sugar, but you gotta give up flour, too. If you don't think you have a problem with breads, and pastas, and those types of foods, wait 'til you give up sugar, and you'll develop one, because the brain will take it as a substitute for sure.
- TeriAnn: Share what you shared in the first podcast we did about why on, like different flours. You even said coconut and almond. Why do you say no to it? I could say it, but I'll let you say it.
- Susan: All flour, yeah. It's not an issue of is it whole grain or not. I know that whole grain flour is healthier. It's got more nutrients, more fiber, than white flour. But that's not the issue. The issue is the grinding down. I'll actually share something that I didn't share in the first podcast, brand new.
- Susan: It's a concept from Dr. Alan Christianson, who's a good friend of mine. He said the way he describes this to his patients is, the difference between a whole food like rice, for example, and a flour like rice flour, from a metabolic standpoint, is the difference between on a hot summer day in Arizona, taking a big brick of ice, like a one foot square brick. Big brick of ice, and putting it out on the blacktop, on the driveway, to melt. It'll melt. It'll take a few hours, though.
- Susan: Versus taking snow cone shavings, little shavings of ice, and sprinkling them on the blacktop. Well, they melt on contact. That's what flour is, is sprinkling snow cone

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shavings into the digestive system, and it just absorbs like that, and you get the full force of the glucose, the fructose, whatever's in that, hits the digestive system all at once.

Susan: It's not an issue of gluten or any particular substance. It doesn't matter if it's coconut flour, almond flour, whole grain flour, gluten-free flour, rice flour, potato flour-

Jonathan: Even almond flour, even though it-

Susan: Even almond flour, yes. It's a matter of surface area and digestive impact. It's the processing of it that matters. Almonds are fine. Rice is fine. It's like, okay, so here's the best way of thinking about it. What is a drug? Jonathan, we've danced around the issue. I have a drug addiction background. You've mentioned, [inaudible 00:12:06], alcohol, drugs, whatever in your past. What is cocaine, Jonathan? Pop quiz.

Jonathan: What is cocaine? Well, I mean it-

Susan: It comes from where?

Jonathan: It comes from the cocaína plant.

Susan: The coca. Yeah.

Jonathan: Coca plant.

Susan: The coca leaf.

Jonathan: I lived in Panama, so we call it cocaína down there.

Susan: Oh, so you're in the natural language. You're like three steps ahead of me, okay.

Susan: Have you seen it? What does it look like? I've never seen it live. Is it like a bush or a shrub or?

Jonathan: I haven't seen it grown. I did not go down into Colombia. I was going to. But yeah, it looks like a regular plant. It's a simple, it's the leaf that they grind down and they dehydrate, turn it into a powder. By the time we get it, it's been cut with all kinds of other stuff, because pure cocaine ...

Susan: There's a scientific journal article that's been published that showed that chewing coca leaves is not addictive. They put 'em in their cheek there, the hikers in the Andes Mountains. It's not addictive, apparently. It'll make your cheek a little, tiny bit numb, and I think it gives you a-

Jonathan: Definitely gives you energy.

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Susan: Gives you a little bit of a lift, maybe like the equivalent of drinking half a cup of caffeinated tea, or something. Nobody's breaking into their grandmother's house to steal a VCR to get more coca leaves. It's not addictive. You take the inner-

Jonathan: VCR. I like that you said VCR, right? Did that just show our age when you said VCR?

Susan: I am so dating myself. I know. I know how old you are, too, I was just looking on your wall, your little thing that had your, I won't say your birthday, but I saw it over there.

Jonathan: No worries. I just turned 40. I have no problem sharing.

Susan: Nice. I'm 44, so I'm your elder. Please act accordingly.

Jonathan: I will.

Susan: Lots of respect.

Jonathan: Don't steal my VCR. Just saying.

Susan: Back to the point. Drugs come from plants that have been modified in a certain way. Cocaine comes from taking those coca leaves, which are not addictive, taking the inner essence, and then refining and purifying it into a fine powder.

Susan: Heroin comes from poppies. You can eat poppies, sit in a field of poppies and eat them all day long, and not get high, and not get addicted. You get the substance into your blood stream. You will fail a urine test for opium. You will fail a drug test if you have eaten a bunch of poppies recently. But you didn't get high off it, and you didn't get addicted.

Susan: But if you take the inner essence of those poppies, and you refine and purify that into a fine, brown powder, you get heroin. So what we're doing in our food supply these days is we're taking these plants, we're taking wheat, we're taking beets, we're taking corn, all wholesome, real foods. And we're taking the inner essence, and then refining and purifying it down into fine, white powders, and we're taking foods and turning them into drugs.

Susan: Research shows, according to some estimates, that sugar is eight times as addictive as cocaine. Eight times. You want to know the study that that one comes from?

Jonathan: Go for it.

Susan: Eight times. Just in case you want to know how screwed you are.

Jonathan: Thank you. Appreciate that.

TeriAnn: That's promising.

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Susan: Said from one sugar addict to another. I'm not putting you in any cage that I'm not in myself.

Susan: This study was done with rodents, and they took rats, and they injected them with intravenous cocaine over, and over, and over again 'til they were quivering cocaine addicts. Then they didn't give them a hit for a few hours, so they wanted one. And then they gave them a choice between another hit of cocaine, which they were already addicted to, and some sugar, which they'd never had exposure to before. Cocaine or sugar. And they chose the sugar.

Susan: Not only did they choose the sugar, but when they redid the experiment with saccharine, Sweet'N Low, the pink packets, they preferred that, too.

Jonathan: Wow.

Susan: Over cocaine that they were already addicted to. Already physiologically needed in their system. Based on the strength of that response and some other things, based on how much shock organisms will withstand to get another hit. Like literally they put the little trough, the dispenser, over an electrocuted grid, and you turn up the voltage to see how much shock will they withstand to get a hit. You can measure addictiveness that way, too. Yeah. Sugar is like, to put it in the category of cocaine and heroin, it not only appropriate, it's scientifically true. It just is. Sugar is right up there in terms of drug strength with heroin and cocaine and way beyond cigarettes, by the way, Mr. Former Smoker. Way beyond cigarettes. Way.

Jonathan: We put sugar in everything now. I mean, the fat-free movement that came in the [crosstalk 00:16:55] late '70s, early '80s, and we've replaced all of the fats with sugars. I think there's a lot of people addicted to sugar that don't even realize or don't even identify that they're addicted to sugar.

Susan: But invite them to quit, and they'll see.

Jonathan: That's my exact point.

Susan: It's like, whoa!

TeriAnn: Well, and it's hard to-

Jonathan: How many kids are addicted to sugar? 'Cause sugar is in everything.

TeriAnn: It's hard. You read labels now and people think they're not getting sugar in certain foods, but they are. But they don't know. They don't even know.

Susan: But they are. 80%. 80% of the calories in the modern day supermarket are laced with added sugar. 80%.

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TeriAnn: I have a question for you. Earlier you talked about, not in this episode but in the first episode we did with you, about stevia, erythritol, things like that. That's still a no-no, even though it's natural, not considered, "Sugar," by a lot of people. Why is that a no? Can you talk about that a little bit?

Susan: Because it's the extra sweet taste on the taste buds that connects directly to the addictive centers of the brain that releases that dopamine hit. If you want your brain to heal, you gotta stop putting the sweet taste on your tongue.

Jonathan: You know, when I was quitting smoking I had a lot of people say, "Well, why don't you smoke an e-cig?" Or, "Why don't you smoke a joint? Or do something like that?"

Jonathan: Just the motion of inhaling something would've triggered me. I don't know that it's the same, but I can relate it to that, that I can't do anything that's even remotely similar to, other than inhaling oxygen. But anything that felt like taking a hit of something would've instantly made me want to smoke again.

Susan: Now we're gonna maybe wander off into some pretty deep research, but here's what makes me and you, Jonathan, different from TeriAnn. We're addictive, addictable, heavily. TeriAnn, are you addicted to anything, or you run on moderation naturally?

TeriAnn: Oh no, I have some things in my life.

Susan: You have some things.

TeriAnn: But I-

Jonathan: Work. She's addicted to work, there's no doubt.

TeriAnn: Work. For sure.

TeriAnn: Yeah, there's definitely things. I don't like to necessarily control other people. But I like a lot of control over my life. I would probably, to the point that it's an addiction of control in my life. Things just so. Things a certain way. I could care less if your house looks just so. And it's not so much about keeping up with people, it's a feeling for me.

Jonathan: Little bit of OCD.

TeriAnn: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Everything being just so for me. I don't care for you, I don't care for him, I don't care what Travis' house looks like, or Alan's house looks like, but I care what mine looks like.

Susan: Is it a problem? Do you do it to the point where you're hurting yourself?

TeriAnn: No. No. There's been points in my life where yes, it did. It was like, I would do things just so that it was, you know, this way.

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Susan: 'Cause this is a separate topic now, but the whole thing of everyone's addicted to something, or every excess is an addiction. I take issue with that. I have been really addicted to things, like sitting in a crack house for days upon days, smoking.

Susan: I feel like unless you're harming yourself, knowing that you shouldn't be, wishing you were doing it differently, with tears streaming down your face saying, "Why am I doing this to myself?" That's addiction. I'm doing it and I can't stop.

TeriAnn: Oh, for sure. There were points in my life, especially when hard things were going on, that the control was so strong that it was like, "Why do I have to do this all the time?"

Susan: Yeah. That's it. Yeah.

TeriAnn: But it's interesting when you talked in a previous episode about getting to a point where it's a lifestyle, and you get control over things like that, and you realize it doesn't have to be this way, and you get past that.

TeriAnn: It was definitely something that happened previously when there was a lot of stress in my life, but gaining control over that again. I'm definitely-

Susan: Control over the control?

TeriAnn: When you talk about your quiz, I'm not a 10 on the quiz, but I've certainly had things in my life where I could fall back into that super easy if my life got stressful again. And now it's a control thing for me, like everything being just so, and feeling like I'm stressed, and my life feels stressful, and my emotions feel chaotic if everything's not just so. It can be crippling for me.

Susan: Totally. I get it.

Susan: So Jonathan and I are super addictable. You're either low or moderate.

TeriAnn: Yup. For sure.

Susan: What's different about how our brains work? What makes someone addictable?

Jonathan: They like to party? Oh no, sorry, I didn't know that was a rhetorical question.

Susan: Well, yeah.

TeriAnn: Party with donuts if you're talking about sugar.

Susan: We woulda had fun, back in the day. Just sayin'. Just sayin'. Back in the day.

Jonathan: This is 15 years ago for me, too, so yes I'm with ya.

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- Susan: What makes our brains different turns out to be this interesting thing. Researchers back in the day were doing basic behavioral experiments with rats in Skinner boxes. Basically the rat presses the lever, they get food. There are like a million variants of this experiment.
- Susan: They tried this experiment where a lever came down into the cage, like it just came down in there, and then three seconds later food came out into a dish. The rats picked this up super fast. Lever comes down, food's coming out. They're quick on that one. Easy.
- Susan: What researchers didn't expect is that when the lever came down some rats ran right over to the food dish area, which made sense, they just sit there for the three seconds, wait for the food to come out. But some rats ran over to the lever, and nuzzled it, rubbed up against it, like they loved the lever.
- Susan: And researchers were like, "Why are they lovin' on the lever? It's the cue that the food is coming. But don't they just want the food? Why are they loving the lever for its own sake?"
- Susan: So they started doing some variants where they would only let the food come out for a hot second, and then they'd suck it back up, and some of the rats would love the lever so much they'd actually miss the food. They'd miss the whole point because they were so into the lever. It turns out that addictive rats are the ones who love the lever. And the non-addictive rats are the ones who run right over to the food and go, "Oh, there's the cue that the food is there. I'm gonna go get the food." They're the sensible ones, they're like, "Yup. Waitin' for the food."
- Susan: The addictive ones are the ones who are lovin' the lever. So what? The lever is the cue that the reward is coming. The rats were pulled toward that cue, almost to their own detriment, to the point where they would even miss their sustenance to be pulled toward that cue.
- Susan: Now think about what it means in this society, to be pulled toward the cues that predict food rewards. Let's say sugar rewards. If you're pulled strongly, maybe even unconsciously, toward golden arches when you see them in the corner of your eye, like all of a sudden your car is driving that way.
- Susan: If you're walking down the hall of your school, 'cause you're a teacher, and you catch a little glimpse of a Dunkin Donuts box, that pink box, through the window of the teachers' lounge, and suddenly you're pulled in that direction, and your friends are talking, and you're like, "Oh," and now you have a donut in your hand. You don't even know how it happened.
- Susan: If it's Friday night, and you're pulled toward the bar where the wings, and the beer, and the nachos are happening because it's a certain time of day.

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- Susan: If you're driving to work, and you're pulled toward the Starbucks, and suddenly you've got a latte and a muffin in your hands. You can picture it, right? Our society is one long stretch of food cues. Time of day, smell, sights, TV commercials, on, and on, and on. If those cues themselves pull you with a force that's magnetic, imagine the job of getting over sugar addiction, of losing weight. When it's not just that you gotta eat fewer calories. It's like, well you've gotta break all of those association. It's a massive job.
- Susan: So when you talked, Jonathan, about being really cognizant when you quit smoking of, "I'm not hanging out with people who smoke. And I'm not gonna put myself at a party on a Friday night. I'm gonna stay home." You were aware of all the different cues that might undo you because they pull you harder than they pull other people. Those cues.
- Susan: That's a little bit about what it is to be addictable. You're pulled toward the cues to a degree that other people are not.
- Jonathan: Absolutely ... Yeah. And I agree with you. It still goes back, it's amazing as others that listen to this take that journey to break that sugar addiction, of the challenge that they have ahead of them. It's eight times more addictive than cocaine.
- Jonathan: You talk about, I mean, we, I think about, you know, the holidays, and I think about having a cheat day on Christmas, just calling it a cheat day, and having sugar and candy with my daughters, and having that whole quote, unquote, fun day. Then the next day there being some of those treats left over but yet I want to go back to eating a ketogenic-style way of eating, which is what I prefer. But all I see is an M&M bag over here, you know, a little chocolate thing there. Some little thing there. That's what I see, and it's like you know, you almost want to, you just gotta throw it all out, or do something.
- Susan: Did you eat them the day after?
- Jonathan: No. No.
- Susan: And how did you not?
- Jonathan: Well, that's willpower. But if they were there every day, it would be different. I don't keep a lot of that stuff in the house, but I do still keep things. What I don't keep is my weaknesses in the house as much.
- Susan: I think of ourselves as we embark on this breaking the sugar addiction journey as having parts, and one of the parts is definitely the saboteur who whispers, "Just a little. Time for a cheat day. You deserve it. It's been a long week. It's your daughter's birthday." Whatever the whispers are. The first thing that the saboteur is gonna whisper is, "You can't do that forever. That's unrealistic. There's no way. What about this event? What about this occasion?"
- Susan: It's basically like, it's the most rudimentary move of the saboteur. It's the first move. And so many of us fall for it. And we forget that life doesn't show up as forevers. Life

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always shows up as today. There is no such thing as all those days in the future. When we get there it will be today.

Susan: So, all you need is a plan for handling today. You don't need a plan for handling all of the infinities into the future. You will do just fine if all you have is a plan for today. The one day at a time thing, as trite as it sounds, and the saboteur will say, "Oh that's some slogan. One day at a time. What does that mean? Come on. You're never gonna not have any cookies ever." It just goes right back into future tripping. But actually, the truth is, you can have the cookie tomorrow, Jonathan. You can have the gum in the future, and you can eat whatever you want at your daughter's wedding. You just can't eat sugar today.

Jonathan: Right.

Susan: You give me today, I'll give you all those future days. How's that for a trade?

Jonathan: It's true. Listen, I get it from an intellectual side as well, 'cause smoking, there's no way in the world right now that I would have a cigarette next week because it's been a couple months since I've had a cigarette.

Jonathan: I mean, it's been over four-and-a-half years, so it's just saying goodbye. That's the thing with addiction, whether it's cigarettes, or sugar, or coke, or heroin, or something like that. That's a friend. That's something that's been there with you that we usually turn to at bad times, but we also turn to, to, to good times. It's the same thing with sugar.

Susan: Oh, and we celebrate with food brilliantly, right? Big time.

Jonathan: That's the thing I think a lot of people don't grasp if they haven't been addicted to smoking, and I don't think a lot of people that are addicted to sugar, which I think a lot are, have not identified the fact that you're saying goodbye to a friend. That's what you need to do, is say goodbye to that friend.

Susan: There are layers to that grief, too. It's really important to honor that. For a lot of us, food has been almost like a lover.

Jonathan: For sure.

Susan: I was an only child, raised in San Francisco by hippie parents who, you know, you would love this story Jonathan. My parents were, they met in a hippie commune, and they were on acid, and they bought a motorcycle, and started traveling around the world. And I was conceived somewhere in Costa Rica, and they kept goin'. So, my mom was getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger. They got down to Argentina, southern tip of Argentina, the hocked the bike for plane fare back to the states.

Susan: Anyway, I was born in San Francisco, only child, and my parents got divorced, and then my mom settled just a few blocks away from Castro Street, so very gay neighborhood,

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1970s, 1980s. There were no kids in our neighborhood, 'cause it was before a time when gay couples could adopt kids, so I was the only kid in my neighborhood that I knew of.

Susan: There was a sadness in the neighborhood, 'cause my neighbors were dying of AIDS. They were dropping like flies ... And I went to a school way across town on scholarship, but since I was a white kid, no one knew I was on scholarship. But I didn't really fit in. They were rich, and two parents in the house, and very Leave It To Beaver-y.

Susan: And my parents worked hard. My dad was a cab driver. My mom ran this little shop in Fisherman's Wharf and worked long hours. I was a latchkey kid. I was home alone after school every day. So I was by myself, in a neighborhood with no kids, on streets that weren't safe to be out on, so I was just in the flat in San Francisco, and I turned to food. Food was my companion, it was my friend, it was the activity, it was what I was doing was making food.

Susan: I coulda made you Thanksgiving dinner when I was 10 years old. With all the trimmings, every dish arriving to the table at the right time. I could bake pies, I could bake cookies, I could bake everything. Food was what got me through my childhood. When people say, "It's hard to think about life without certain foods," for some of us, foods are so woven into our identity.

Susan: I know there's people listening to this podcast that are like, "But you don't understand. I bake." Or, "I'm the person who brings the dishes to the potluck. It's like my most"-

Jonathan: It's their identity. It's who they are.

Susan: Yeah. Exactly, exactly. So there is a grieving process of letting go of using food. I go over to some people's houses and they've got cookbooks lining, like floor-to-ceiling cookbooks. It's food porn. But I also don't want to paint it as just a bad thing. For some people it's their creative outlet.

Susan: So, there are layers to that grief and that letting go. I don't bake anymore. I don't. I've learned to be creative in other ways. But just in the same way that you had to make certain changes when you became a non-smoker, I had to make certain changes when I became a thin woman. I orient toward food differently. I've just changed.

Jonathan: We'll replace it with other things, right? You replace it with stuff that's healthier, that's better. The smoking got replaced with other things, or whatever it is.

Susan: Totally. Totally.

Susan: I have a question for you Jonathan.

Jonathan: Yes.

Susan: Have you been intrigued by Bright Line Eating? Have you thought about trying it? What have you been thinking?

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- Jonathan: Absolutely. Since we've been doing more podcasts and getting to know you more, I'm absolutely intrigued. I want to dive deeper. We had you on the show. There's a lot of things we do selfishly. We started Organixx, a supplement company, so that we would have the best supplements, 'cause I wanted to take 'em, and I wanted my family to take 'em. We wanted the best supplements that were out there, and so that's why we started a supplement company.
- Jonathan: It's why we're doing a podcast, and why we're having experts like you on, is because we want the best information from the best experts, when it comes to things. So it's something I was so excited about having you here for the new year, and to talk about sugar addiction, and to talk about eating, and talk about our relationships to food, and all of that, for selfish reasons. Knowing that if I did that, just like our supplements, I would help hundreds of thousands of other people. So, yes.
- Susan: What do you think Bright Line Eating might bring into your world or give you that you don't have now?
- Jonathan: More structure around the eating. Yeah, more structure.
- Susan: Totally. That's a way that Bright Line Eating helps a lot of people. There's so much confusion out there about what to eat and when. You're busy. You're a high functioning, get-it-done dude, right?
- Jonathan: Right.
- Susan: You got a lot going on, and to have the food nailed down, like done, handled. That feeling of days are ticking by, and you're like, "Food? Check." Like, ain't no thang.
- Susan: And to have that bar set so that you know where you are with respect to it. Not to say that every day you hit the bar, but the bar is set really clearly, and if you slide off track, you know exactly how you can look back and figure out why, and you know exactly the tweaks to make to get it back. Where there's that level of precision and clarity. You probably have that precision and clarity in other areas of your life, right?
- Jonathan: Sure.
- Susan: Where you know exactly what you're trying to hit.
- Jonathan: Take out the guesswork, too, right?
- Susan: Zero guesswork.
- Jonathan: I look in my closet, every shirt in my closet is back. I don't have to think about what I'm wearing today, it's gonna be a black shirt. I know that. Black shirt and either khaki shorts or jeans. I'm being dead serious. That's what I have in my closet.
- Susan: It's the Barack Obama gettin' dressed approach.

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- Jonathan: It's these decisions that you don't want to have to make every time. Why don't I just have something that's done and set.
- Susan: Yup. Bright Line Eating is that for food. Absolutely.
- Susan: We were talking at the break here, just before the podcast happened we were just chillin' out, and I was in your kitchen, and you're like, "Oh, you're weighing your food, and da-da-da." And I was telling you like, "I like to weigh 112 pounds. If I'm not 112 pounds, I like to make a tweak, and get right back there."
- Susan: There is something so special for a woman like me who just struggled with her weight her whole life. There are no words for how much I've struggled with my weight. There are no words. And to be able to just dial it in like that. Food, weight, handled. Not a problem. And then with it of course comes the self confidence, and the mental clarity, and the lift in the mood that comes from eating the way we eat when we're eating well. There's a million and one reasons to do it, you know. And then the ability to do it, 'cause Bright Line Eating provides the automaticity that makes it feel really free, and easy, and automatic, and handled.
- Jonathan: With that said, I know we're getting close to the end. I've gotta ask this question, 'cause again, I'm selfish and it's relevant to me, 'cause I have a two-year-old and four-year-old daughter who love the organic lollipops in the pantry right now.
- Jonathan: How are you with your three daughters when it comes to sugar, and bread, and eating?
- Susan: I feel like Bright Line Eating is not for all the people who need it. It's for people who want it, and are willing to work it. And that means grown ups who are making their own choices. It is not something for parents to force down their kids' throats. There's a problem with forcing our kids to eat a certain kind of way if we're living in this society.
- Susan: So, you wanna take your kids to some rural mountain commune in Oregon where all they got is tofu and kale around, and that's all they're going to be exposed to, then great. Feed your kids tofu and kale for the rest of their lives.
- Susan: But if you're gonna live here in this society, you cannot turn food into the forbidden fruit, because you will turn your kids into sneak eaters who hate you, and are craving every calorie outside the house, 'cause the food mommy and daddy-
- TeriAnn: And go to the neighbor's house and raid the pantry.
- Susan: Exactly. So we as parents are in a very painful, almost unwinnable situation, where the reality is our kids are gonna get exposed to foods at birthday parties, at school, at Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, whatever. Just fill in the blank, occasion, party, religious observance, grandmother's house, whatever.
- Susan: The no sugar, no flour rules are not for parents to impose on their kids. But there are some rules that are really helpful. The rules are the division of responsibility. I didn't

come up with it. This is Ellyn Satter's work. E-L-L-Y-N, S-A-T-T-E-R. Interestingly, if you go to her website, buy her books, just fair warning, she doesn't believe in sugar addiction, and she doesn't believe in food addiction at all. I've talked with the woman, and just sayin', she's obese. I don't agree with everything she says about adult eating, by any stretch. But she has a method for feeding kids that I think is genius, and it has worked so far for me with my own kids, and it solves all my nightmares when it comes to feeding kids. Not all of 'em. But you know, it really is the linchpin.

Susan: So here are the rules. The division of responsibility. Are you ready?

Susan: As parents, we are responsible for when meals happen and what gets served. We are responsible for providing food. And then we become deaf, dumb, and blind, and we let our kids be responsible for whether and how much to eat from what's provided.

Susan: So we do the providing and they do the eating, and we hands off. So that means never commenting on, "Aren't you gonna eat your vegetables? Take one bite of everything. You have to finish your food. Finish everything on your plate." None of that.

Susan: You provided the meal, they get to eat from what's on the table. If that means there was a pot of white rice, and there's some butter over there, and they're eating nothing but white rice and butter for the meal, fine. Their choice. They get to choose, okay? As a parent, your job is to provide meal structure, which is really important for developing brains and bodies. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and kids need snacks, too. Parents don't, but kids need a mid-morning snack, and a mid-afternoon snack.

Susan: You don't short order cook, which means you got more than one kid and you're serving whatever. You're not making a grilled cheese sandwich for Sarah 'cause that's all she'll eat. No, no, no. You provide foods that are foods you feel comfortable serving from lots of different categories. We're talking 1950s, Leave It To Beaver meals. There's some vegetable on the table, there's some bread and butter on the table-

Jonathan: Some starch on the table, maybe some fruit, sure.

Susan: Exactly. Just think like, food from every category, and then your job's over.

Susan: Now if you're doing Bright Line Eating, it's gonna be a lot easier, 'cause you're eating breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and you're feeding yourself meals with foods from every category, and all you gotta do is throw a big pot of starch on there, and put out from bread and butter, and it's a meal. It's a lot easier if you're doing Bright Line Eating.

Susan: Parents often fall down because they're not eating meals themselves, so how are they gonna feed kids meals? They're grazing, catches, catch, canning their food all day long from drive-thrus and vending machines, and they don't even know where their food's coming, right? The first rule of thumb is your kids will grow up to eat like you eat. So make sure you're feeding yourself well.

Susan: That's how I feed my kids.

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- Jonathan: Love that. I think that's a great way to end the episode, by the way. I love that idea, that I need to provide the food, and I can provide healthy food, but then it's on them. They'll develop their own way of eating, and I need to lead by example.
- Jonathan: I struggle right now, especially with two and a four-year-old. My two-year-old, she eats everything, so I'm not worried about her. But my four-year-old, it's like, "You gotta eat this. Well, at least eat this." It's not enjoyable. I think that an emotional state matters when you eat, as well.
- Susan: Totally. You don't want to turn mealtimes into a battle, or an emotional battleground. You don't.
- Jonathan: Exactly.
- Jonathan: Dr. Susan, this was wonderful. Thank you so much for joining us. Brightlineeating.com is your website. I know you've referenced some other things. You can always go to empoweringyouorganically.com. We will have the transcripts, we will have the show notes, we'll have links to the book, and to every other thing that you've mentioned on here. We'll have links to studies, we'll have links to your website.
- Jonathan: Is there anything else that you want to share before we close off here?
- Susan: Yeah, one last thing, 'cause this podcast is on sugar addiction. I just wanna presence, and I just mentioned the name of someone who doesn't believe in food addiction, or sugar addiction. I want to just presence from a scientific perspective where that debate comes from, because it still is quote, unquote, debatable in science, whether food addiction, or sugar addiction, exists. I just want to clear that up in people's minds.
- Susan: Sugar addiction is real, and it's not debatable. The reason that people bicker about it is because we've got a bunch of people who are trained professionally in the treatment for bulimia and anorexia, for eating disorders, to believe that there's no bad foods. That you gotta get over food rules, and food exclusions, and that the treatment, the way to health for someone who's been anorexic or bulimic is to learn to eat all things, again.
- Susan: There is not anyone who is a researcher or scientist in the field of addiction who does not believe that sugar addiction is real. You take anybody who studies the brain from an addiction standpoint and ask them, "Is there such a thing as sugar addiction?" And they will look you in the eye, and they will say, "Yes there is. And I can point to it on a brain scan. It's right there."
- Susan: That's where the controversy exists, is you've got psychologists who really are clinicians who treat eating disorders, whose skin crawls a little at the thought that we're gonna try to tell people not to eat sugar, 'cause they want their bulimics and anorexics to stop thinking that certain foods are bad. But the reality is that certain foods are problematic for some brains. They really are. They're like heroin, they're like cocaine, they're addictive, and for some people and an approach of abstinence is gonna be more helpful than any other approach.

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- Susan: I also really believe that different strokes for different folks. I don't think Bright Line Eating is the solution for everybody. I don't think Bright Line's for sugar, or abstinence for sugar, is right for everybody. I'm not looking to get sugar out of our food supply altogether, but I do think that we need to empower people to notice if they're feeling like they're addicted to sugar, it might be that not eating cookies is easier than trying to moderate and eat one cookie, 'cause the one cookie experiment never goes well for me, or for lots of other people.
- Susan: So I just wanted to clear that up, because a lot of people don't realize that that's where that so-called controversy comes from. It's not controversial.
- Jonathan: I'm glad you did. I'm not involved in that conversation much. I didn't even know to ask that question. So I appreciate you clearing that up, and I think that if most people look in the mirror and ask themselves honestly, you know, if they're, have addictive personality, are they addicted to sugar? They likely are. They can look at them like myself, and it's the same thing around, "I'll just have a few cigarettes as I quit down," or, "I'll just have a few cookies."
- Jonathan: It's not gonna happen.
- Susan: You can always try giving it up and notice yourself come down with flu-like symptoms, and shakes.
- Jonathan: See what happens.
- Susan: Yeah, see what happens.
- Jonathan: See what happens. Give it up and see what happens.
- Jonathan: Listen, as with everything that we do on this podcast, it's just to deliver you the information. You're an adult. Make up your own mind. It's not on me to tell you what to do. It's not on Susan or TeriAnn to tell you what to do. It's our job to deliver you the information the best way that we can, and then you have your own come to Jesus moment, and decide for yourself. Is that an issue for you? Is it not an issue for you? What stuff do you want to accept that we talk about? What stuff don't you want to? You're an adult.
- Jonathan: So, do that. And I do encourage you though to do the research. Go to brightlineeating.com. Try it for a little while. Do your own research and don't just make assumptions without trying it and being educated around it.
- Jonathan: With all that said, I'm off my soapbox. Thank you guys both for being here. TeriAnn, thank you. Susan, thank you. And go to empoweringyouorganically.com for everything podcast-related. Thanks again.
- TeriAnn: Thanks everyone.

