

Kate Northrup: Hello. I'm so excited for you to meet today's guest. Her name is Sue Van Raes, and she has been in private practice helping women heal their relationship with food and find peace with their plates for decades. So after a lifelong battle, well, a battle that began as a battle that turned into a healing journey, Sue really has found a surprising path to unlocking freedom around your food. She is non dogmatic.

She is feminine healing oriented. And today, we talk about your nervous system and food, how our control behavior shows up, disordered eating and what it has to do with disordered money behavior, all the different ways that the different parts of us are running the show, how to balance your blood sugar, how our stress levels interact with our blood sugar, and so much more. So if you have had any kind of battle or anxiety or control behavior around food, this is the episode for you. Sue's work has been featured by People Magazine, The Chopra Center, Elephant Journal, and more. She has an integrative nutrition background, a functional nutrition background.

She is absolutely just this beautiful, nurturing, healing energy, and you are going to absolutely find this episode so healing and nurturing for you. So enjoy. Welcome to Plenti. I'm your host, Kate Northrup, and together, we are going on a journey to help you have an incredible relationship with money, time, and energy, and to have abundance on every possible level. Every week, we're gonna dive in with experts and insights to help you unlock a life of plenty.

Let's go fill our cups. Please note that the opinions and perspectives of guests on the Plenty podcast are not necessarily reflective of the opinions and perspectives of Kate Northrup or anyone who works within the Kate Northrup brand. Hey, Sue. Thank you for being here.

Sue Van Raes: Kate, it is so great to be here with you and to come to Miami and see you in person. Thank you for having me.

Kate Northrup: Oh, my god. It's an absolute pleasure. I as I told you, I really loved your book. There are so many new concepts in it that I had not heard about or not heard about in this particular way. And I have read so many books on food and nutrition over the last 30 years or so.

So, you know, it's really beautifully done. So I wanna start with blood sugar. I think that one of the things that we really misunderstand is the importance of blood sugar, especially, if people are more plant based, especially because folks eat a lot of processed foods. And something I hear from folks who think they're really healthy eaters when they tell me about what they're eating. And not that I work in nutrition as a field, but I know more than average people.

I can tell that their relationship with their blood sugar is all out of whack. So first of all, how what are some of the signs that somebody is has has some blood sugar issues, that it might be an area to tune into for them?

Sue Van Raes: Absolutely. I mean, I really see it as so foundational in how we feel and how food can help us feel how we wanna feel or can kind of accidentally take us down a different path. And there's so many different kinds of symptoms that come with blood sugar imbalance, but the ones that are gonna happen in real time, like when you've maybe had a meal prior or that day where your blood sugar's off, are generally gonna be things like feeling a big drop in your energy, noticing you're craving sugar a lot, which I think often that can be confusing because we just might be like, oh, I'm having a sugar craving, and I have a sweet tooth, and that might be even part of our story or identity. There's definitely gonna be times where we notice that we're, like, shaky. One of mine is definitely hangry or grumpy, where we just notice all of a sudden we're, like, super irritable or sensitive or, you know, even our mood can plummet.

And as I talk about in the book, also, there's so much going on with, like, our brain chemistry. And so it's so fascinating to me to see how our brain chemistry is mimicking our blood sugar, and that can set us up for a complete downfall throughout the day if we're not kind of starting off on the right foot. It's like a, you know, the roller coaster starts with breakfast sometimes, and that's when a lot of people are eating kind of more high carb, high sugary, quick on the go breakfasts, and then the rest of the day can just obviously take a downturn. I think we can self correct if that happens, you know, with different things throughout the day, but it is a 100% gonna affect how we feel. And, there's just endless things that are happening inside unison with that blood sugar drop, including our hormones, including, you know, noticing the different ways that our bodies are either burning fat or burning glucose, and it just, you know, kind of goes on and on.

And then what's also interesting is there's obviously long term things that are gonna take a little bit more time to show up. Like what? So inflammation, for example. I mean, I've had clients who get their blood sugar back into balance, and they notice their arthritis symptoms improve, or they notice their back pain improve, or things that are going on chronically. Another one is actually just the gut microbiome and the balance of good flora and bad bacteria that feed off of sugar.

And so sometimes our digestion is gonna be the problem. I feel like we all sort of have, like, different weak links in our systems.

Kate Northrup: Yeah. And it That'll be our barometer that something Yeah.

Sue Van Raes: And it's so some people might notice one thing where someone else might notice another. But, generally, we're gonna find that if we're not in balance with our blood sugar, we're we're generally just not gonna feel that great. We're not gonna feel imbalanced.

Kate Northrup: And do you recommend people actually test their blood sugar, like, with a continuous glucose monitor or with a finger prick? Like, should we get that scientific about things if this is an area we're working on?

Sue Van Raes: You know, I love tracking and getting some information, and so am I. And so I think that if it's something that's problematic or you're curious, or you've noticed that this is, like, genetic, and you have some kind of sensitivity in your family that's, you know, traceable, and that you're really interested in learning what works. I did 30 days on a CGM a couple years ago, and even after studying blood sugar for almost 2 decades at that point, I still learned a lot.

Kate Northrup: Isn't it amazing? Yeah. So I did a continuous glucose monitor, and here's what I found, and I'm curious your thoughts on this. I found that so I've been working on balancing my blood sugar and eating a low glycemic diet since I was in my twenties. So I've got that pretty dialed in.

However, my blood sugar was spiking in the morning when I was getting my kids off at to school and at night during the dinner bedtime kind of rush. So it was obviously stress induced. What do I do about that given that, like, I can't it's not diet related with me. It was stress related. So what are some suggestions, and why might that happen?

Why might stress be like, why might, you know, off to school transition and dinner bedtime transition be spiking my blood sugar if those are not times when I'm eating, like, a bowl of Cheerios or something? Totally. So And I'm not drinking wine. Just to be clear, I don't drink.

Sue Van Raes: Right. Okay. So I think we can definitely speak to a lot of the parents out there. I remember school drop off every day that I took my kids to school felt like a victory. Like, even, you know Totally.

It's just like day by day, I feel like we should all hop on to some kind of celebratory podcast or, you know, broadcast, and be like, we made it through another morning. And so it is really stressful. And when we are stressed, we know, like, that our bodies go into that adrenaline or cortisol or sometimes both elevation, and that releases sugar into the blood. So stress literally spikes the blood sugar.

Kate Northrup: And why does it do that? Why would that happen in our body?

Sue Van Raes: So if you were imagining yourself being chased by a lion, which is one of my favorite analogies to use in multiple scenarios when it comes to blood sugar and the nervous system, we want energy. We want something. We want fuel. Yeah. And that that sugar in the blood elevating is there to give us that extra little boost that we need to run away from the mountain lion or what have you, the grizzly bear.

Although, obviously, you and I both know that stress in our culture is rampant and that we shouldn't always be running away from the lion or the grizzly bear, but, yeah, we often feel like we are. So this is gonna sound interesting for you because I know you specialize in this as, you know, something that you're so passionate about, but, you know, how can you, in those mornings and in those pickups, do extra nervous system regulation? How can you manage your stress? I mean, I have a friend. I think you and I both know Kimberly Anne Johnson, actually.

And, you know, she speaks so so wisely about the nervous system, and I've learned so much from her. But one thing that I remember her speaking about on something that she did, was that she put on a playlist in the morning. And that that helped her morning situation, getting her teenager out the door and getting her to school so much more than you would expect. Like, it's these tiny little shifts that can help. And the reality is we don't have control of everything, of course, when it comes to our kids, and, of course, getting them out the door and, like, finding the right pair of shoes or the right, you know, t shirt to wear that matches the wet shit.

Kate Northrup: Yep. Again once again, it's getting dressed every single freaking day. Yes. We are getting dressed again.

Sue Van Raes: I know. That's so hard.

Kate Northrup: Every day, brushing teeth, brushing hair, socks, shoes, water bottle, snacks. I'm like, why is this so hard?

Sue Van Raes: But It's so hard.

Kate Northrup: But I love that. Yeah. And there are the small things that we can do Yeah. That help us feel more resourced, like adding in a playlist.

Sue Van Raes: Yeah. I love that. And, I mean, also, I as you said, you're aware of balancing your blood sugar in the morning and knowing how to do that with, like, good quality protein and fat, most likely, I'm assuming. I mean, you can turn up the volume on that too. You know?

So tell me more about that. Just if we were thinking of and I don't prescribe to any eating style and any specific thing that we all should be doing, so just to be clear. But I do believe that if we turn up the volume on the fat and protein almost in, like, a slightly ketogenic fashion, whether that be plant based or whether that be from animal protein or whatever works for your body and your metabolism, it helps because it's calming.

Kate Northrup: It is very calming because it helps our body feel safe. Right? It's calming.

Sue Van Raes: It helps our body feel safe.

Kate Northrup: It helps yeah. So good.

Sue Van Raes: Yeah. And it really does just completely, like, take that blood sugar spike that is, you know, possible for us at any point, whether it be because of food or because of stress, and it blunts it.

Kate Northrup: Yeah.

Sue Van Raes: And, you know, so for me, it's like the difference of, for example, a smoothie in the morning where I have protein and greens and maybe maybe a little fruit, not always, versus one where I add an extra table tablespoon of coconut oil to the smoothie. I mean, it just changes it.

Kate Northrup: Like, you can tell the difference.

Sue Van Raes: Yeah. I can tell. And I mean, it's years of being the witness in my body. Yes. But I often, when I was taking my kids to school, they're both in their twenties now, but when I was taking my kids to school, you know, that was kind of the I would drop them off, and then I would go do some kind of exercise most mornings. And I remember really tracking the difference between the extra fat in my smoothie and my morning hike. And without it, I would, you know, I would need a snack partway through the hike, or I would notice my energy drop off a little bit. That extra little bit of coconut oil or MCT oil or something like that that I tend to use, definitely, you know, kept me satiated longer, kept me more even longer, and my exercise, whatever that was, was more balanced. I could feel it.

Kate Northrup: I love that. So as a child of the eighties nineties, you know, I grew up in the low fat era with, like, SnackWells and thinking that fat was the problem. Obviously, like, we're super far beyond that, but the programming runs deep. So for people who may still be thinking that a low fat diet, that they should be watching their fat intake and that they should feel all nervous about it. Talk to me about the beauty of adding healthy fats to your diet and why we don't need to be eating a low fat diet and why that might be a problem.

Absolutely.

Kate Northrup: And I mean, honestly For those of us who got super brainwashed.

Sue Van Raes: We got so brainwashed. And, Kate, you wouldn't believe how many of my clients come into my office today

Kate Northrup: It's so misunderstood.

Sue Van Raes: Still completely fat phobic. Yeah. And it's such a shame because when we look back at that research now, it's actually been shown by more recent research that the research wasn't even, like, done well. I mean, the data wasn't even really solid data. So the whole fat free era was kind of a big hoax, and it left us all feeling like crap.

In fact, I remember driven by the processed food industry. Sure. When I first moved to Boulder, Colorado in the early nineties, you know, there was that whole health food movement was really strong, and I was, like, really into it. And also vegetarianism was really popular at that point. So my poor little hypoglycemic body went into low fat vegetarian for, I don't know, a couple of few years, and it was so bad for me.

I felt so imbalanced, and then I started to really suffer, like, more depletion over over time. When we have the ability and the fat burning. We are stabilizing our blood sugar. We are burning more fat for fuel. It's more even.

It's like slow burning. You know, whereas glucose is a little more fast burning. And there's times when that's needed, and that can help if you're running a marathon or on a really long bike ride or something that we need endurance. But on the average day, we don't need that fast burning fuel as much as we would have thought. And this I mean, if even just the word slow burning, it just sounds better to me.

Like, more even more consistent, keeping our energy stable, keeping our mood stable, all of those things. And we eat that to feel how we wanna feel, which is most of us are wanting to feel calm and stable and slow burning rather than that up and down spike and crash roller coaster that, you know, doesn't feel good.

Kate Northrup: No. It really doesn't. So adding in healthy fats is, like, really one of the best ways to do that. Now you talked about and we we spoke about it just a minute ago, with the continuous glucose monitor and my blood sugar spikes, the nervous system. I absolutely love the way you know I love the nervous system.

But I love the way you spoke about the nervous system in Food and Freedom and how you talked about the way the nervous system impacts our appetite, our satiety, our blood sugar. So can you paint us a picture of the okay. Your description of the nervous system, our folks have probably heard me talk about it a 1000000 times, but everyone talks about it differently. So what is the nervous system, and what does it have to do with the way we eat? We'll just start there.

Sue Van Raes: Okay. So I was actually thinking about this prior to our conversation because it's such a juicy topic, and we both love this this subject. But one thing I wanna say is I believe that we toggle back and forth. Imbalanced blood sugar is dysregulating. Yes.

Okay. So that's number 1. Like, I've seen it, and, you know, our kids are often our greatest teachers. But we see what happens to our kids if they eat sugar. Right?

They become dysregulated. Yes. And so number 1 so many feelings.

Kate Northrup: And not that there's anything wrong with feelings, but imbalanced blood sugar really, like, adds it's like pouring gasoline on a fire. A 100%. Yeah. A 100%. So there's that.

And then there's the opposite, which is our nervous systems can impact our blood sugar. So when we go into a fight or flight response, let's just pretend that's you on a morning taking your kids to school, and you get that adrenaline rush or you're running late. Like, running late can just stress me out without any other factors involved. And so that also will once again release that extra glucose into the blood and give you that sort of rush. That's helpful in a sense, like, on a

primal level, but not really helpful when it comes to, like, managing our lives well, being calm and centered for our kids.

And, I mean, luckily, there's lots of ways we know that can help us regulate, but there is just so much dance between the 2, kinda like the chicken and the egg, which came first. But I really find that the nervous system also informs our eating in, like, more on, like, a grander scale, I would say. So, for example, if you're going through a really strong period of stress, and your adrenaline's way high and off the charts and you're not sleeping well, you're probably gonna not feel hungry that much. And once again, we don't really wanna be hungry if we're getting chased by the grizzly bear. That's not a great time to be like, I just need a snack.

I'll I'll get back to running in a minute. So we get flooded with adrenaline. We get flooded with stomach acid. We actually shut down digestion altogether. And so if we're going through a really long term period of stress or acute stress, like, yeah, that's when we might literally have no appetite, and most of us can think of a time when that has happened.

Right? So that would be more of, like, the fight or flight response in extreme. Mhmm. But when we have sort of a more subtle fight or flight response going on based on, you know, day to day kind of stressors and stories in our minds about ourselves and things that we have that are kind of stressing us out as a whole, and so many of us do as our in our culture, we also will notice these other type of more subtle responses with the fight or flight response. For example, if we are feeling, like we are, you know, choosing between how like what we're going to order at a restaurant

Sue Van Raes: Mhmm.

Sue Van Raes: And we're under a fight or flight response, we might feel like we are kind of having extremes with our boundaries or feeling a little bit, like, rebellious around our food or feeling a little bit confrontational around the choices we make or being judged for what we're eating. And I find that a lot, you know, that happens a lot. I've seen it with so many of my clients where, the fight or flight response is more subtle, and it brings up a lot of feelings around food, a lot of sort of, oppositional feelings. Yes.

Kate Northrup: That rebellious I can really track some friends and clients where I witnessed that kind of, like, I'm not gonna follow the rules and, like, this is my way of breaking free, and I don't, you know and and, like, yeah, eating in a way that's almost this, rebellion that's not super disruptive for your life, but it needs to get out somewhere. Totally. It's so interesting that you said that. Yeah.

Sue Van Raes: Well, I mean, if you think about, like, fight Right. Just the word fight. Like, we're fighting something. What are we fighting? Are we fighting the food itself?

Are we fighting the person talking to us about our food? Are we fighting our mother who's asking us what we want for lunch or our partner or, you know, our friend? And there's so many ways

that can show up. The flight response, I think, would be a little different because that might look like more avoidance.

Sue Van Raes: Mhmm.

Sue Van Raes: Fleeing is kind of, you know, checking out in a way of that situation that's right in front of us. We might not run away from the table. But if we're not physically running away from the table and fleeing, what does that feel like in our bodies to be in that flight response? And I think it can feel like, you know, we just are completely avoiding dealing with what's in front of us, avoiding the situation. I've had, you know, clients get that get into the freeze response, which is obviously a different part of the nervous system.

But freezing around food, I mean, obviously, that can be so common because we just, like, shut down around making a decision. Or we go to the grocery store and we wanna create, you know, a healthy dinner, and we get in there, and we get so overwhelmed by all the choices. And we're just, like, And then we just I mean, yeah. Exactly. And then we can find ourselves, like, leaving.

Kate Northrup: It's too much. It's too overstimulating for so many people. When I'm in at, like, binge grocery shop behavior where I suddenly I went in for, like, eggs, and then I spent \$400.

Sue Van Raes: Oh, yeah. And that's, like, for me, if I go to the grocery store, like, a little overly hungry, forget about it. Tired.

Kate Northrup: I also have this behavior. I'm curious where you would now I'm just gonna do a session with you. I have this thing. I've tempered it a little bit or I've moderated it a little bit. But oftentimes, when we are about to travel, I do a very big unconscious grocery shop, and I'll, like, stop our fridge.

And I watch myself do it, and I'm like, what the fuck? Like, why would I just do that? What do you think is going

Sue Van Raes: on with that? Just trying to, like, take that in. And the first thing that comes to mind, actually, and knowing you a little bit and your sort of, you know, ways around food, and I feel like it's safety. Yeah. I feel like it's like this makes you feel safe.

Right. Having an abundance of options, having an abundance in your house that feels well, it's like plenty. It's plenty. Having plenty is safety.

Kate Northrup: Plenty is safety. And when I travel, I'm in a transition, which makes me feel unsafe. So I'm loading my refrigerator, as illogical as that is, to feel safe. It's fine if we're going on a 2 day trip, but it's a problem if it's like Yeah.

Sue Van Raes: Well, I think we're For a week. And so we have all this food that goes bad.

Sue Van Raes: Traveling is so dysregulating. Is dysregulating. Especially pre traveling. Actually, I do better when I'm in the airport and I'm on my way. But Ahead of time.

Prepping and the thinking of all the things we need and the thinking of what we're gonna be doing and where we're going and if we don't know where we're going. And there's uncertainty in the new place or the place we're staying or, you know, the adventure we're going on, then, like, all these feelings come up, and we're all of a sudden noticing dysregulation. Yeah. And for everyone has a different way of regulating kind of automatically. But if you're a foodie

Kate Northrup: Yeah.

Sue Van Raes: And that's something that makes you feel safe, that would make the most sense to

Kate Northrup: me. So when you're talking about travel and dysregulation, I start thinking about food and control. It feels related. One of the things that I've seen in myself is when I feel unsafe I mean, yes. Maybe I stock my fridge.

I agree with you on that one. But, also, I have a history of getting controlling around food. And I know that something we know about some people with eating disorders is that it's actually, about control. Mhmm. And so talk to me about food and control and the nervous system.

And what part of our nervous system is that sense of trying to control things, trying to regulate, does it work, does it not work, and what might be other strategies?

Sue Van Raes: Yeah. Well, the first thing that comes to mind for me when you say that is it's a subtle but fight response because we're trying to fight for some kind of control and some kind of certainty within the uncertainty. And that can be subtle, like what you're describing, or, of course, it can be so, so extreme. Like, when women that I work with or women in general, and I primarily work with women, so that's why I'm saying saying it that way. But there is this desire to control what we can.

And when everything else in our life is falling apart, that can very well be the thing that we hold on to. Our bodies, what we put in our bodies, where we do have some agency is food. And yet at the same time, it can feel completely out of control because we have to eat food to survive. And so Eventually. Yeah.

Eventually, we do. And it is also you know? So there's both. Like, it's something we can control, and it's also something in a way that we can't control. But so I think there's a spectrum there, but I would absolutely say for you that when you're noticing that kind of gripping down on food and having what you need, especially around travel.

Yeah. Because, I mean, when we're going into the unknown I mean, I just did it coming here for a few days. You know, it's like, I'm gonna have this in my backpack. I'm gonna make sure I go to

the grocery store when I get there. I wanna make sure I have a few things in my room to feel comfortable so that I don't need to change too much too fast.

Totally. Because I don't wanna change too much too fast Because and not know how I'm gonna feel. And there

Kate Northrup: is that spectrum, which is grocery store, getting your snacks. Like, that's a very mothering self mothering behavior all the way to the extreme of control. You know, sometimes it's actually, like, a really beautiful healthy behavior.

Sue Van Raes: Mhmm.

Kate Northrup: And then sometimes it's gone really far on the end of of just being too controlling and inflexible.

Sue Van Raes: Yeah. Yeah. And learning to recognize where it tips. Right? Where it tips into that extreme side of the spectrum, and what are those, triggers, really Yeah.

That that do that. And it it can be, you know, just something like going on a trip, or it can be moving to a new city, or it can be your parents going through a divorce, or it can be moving into a college dorm and having a roommate you've never met, or, you know, it can be so many things. Anything.

Kate Northrup: Do you think this is just occurring to me. Do you think it's possible that food insensitivities could be linked to the nervous system and could be healed in some way through nervous system work?

Sue Van Raes: Do you mean, like, allergies? Or do you mean, like, just the sensitivities of going back and forth with that kind of spectrum of control?

Sue Van Raes: Like, let's say

Kate Northrup: somebody doesn't have celiac, but, like, is in it has a a gluten sensitivity or a dairy sensitivity. Mhmm. Do you think it's possible that that might be connected to nervous system dysregulation?

Sue Van Raes: Percent, especially if we've amplified the story in our mind. So if we didn't ever hear of celiac and we were just noticing we had a stomachache, that would be more, like of a less likely scenario where that would be true. Right? Because we're not really exacerbating it. We're just kind of, you know, noticing a symptom and noticing a symptom.

And maybe at some point we link the symptom with the food. Maybe. But when we're thinking about it and we're out there in the world, like reading the the news or the blogs or watching

Instagram or doing whatever we do to get our information about food, And then we have now decided, oh, like, gluten is bad. So every time we eat gluten, we're bad. Why am I doing this?

I read it that it's bad. And then, yes, the nervous system can absolutely respond to that depending on the extreme of the situation and completely shut down digestion. And then, of course, you're gonna have a stomachache. But is it because of the gluten or is it because of the story in your mind, hence the nervous system reaction? And then we can feed the fear by overly researching on the Internet and seeing that there's, like, everything across the spectrum saying eat dairy, don't eat dairy.

Eat gluten, don't eat gluten. Eat meat, don't eat meat. You know? Like, you're bad if you beat meat, but you're bad if you don't get enough protein. It's just it's constant.

Kate Northrup: It is constant. And we have to, like, deepen our relationship with our own body

Sue Van Raes: Mhmm.

Kate Northrup: And with our own way. Because if we are constantly looking to experts, we will be forever confused. Forever. Which is one of the things I love about your philosophy. You're not like, okay.

Here's the exact number of grams of protein. Here's how much fat here's the the the you're Right. It's like a beautiful philosophy of health and deepening your relationship with self, which is, of course, going to lead you to freedom with food.

Sue Van Raes: Absolutely. So Thank you. Yeah.

Kate Northrup: It was so good. So one of the things that we spoke about before that I had it had come to my attention about a year ago, this connection between disordered behavior around food and disordered behavior around money. Mhmm. And many of the clients that I work with who have had a history of disordered money behavior also have had a history of disordered eating. Yeah.

You're the only book so far that I've read where that is discussed. So what is the connection you see between disordered behavior with money and disordered behavior with food per in your practice? Absolutely. So the first thing I wanna say about that is that how we do everything is how

Sue Van Raes: we do anything, or how we do anything is how we do everything. I believe Janine Roth actually was someone who said that back in one of her books. I believe it was how we do anything is how we do everything. How we eat is how we live.

Kate Northrup: She did say that. Women, food, and God.

Sue Van Raes: Yes. I believe so. That's the one. She's such an inspiration.

Kate Northrup: Oh, yes.

Sue Van Raes: And what I've noticed is that there is a pattern. Well, we all have patterns. Right? And we're just gonna sort of overlay our patterns on so many different parts of our lives. And food and money are so big as far as the places that we experience or that we think we experience power.

And it's so, it's sad because, obviously, we've been trained by our society and by social constructs and by the patriarchy, by the whole you know, that as women, you know, we have agency over a few things in our life, but a lot of them have sort of been we've been told that that they're not true. We've been told that we have to look outside of ourselves for power. We've been told we have to look a certain way for power. We've been told we have to have a certain, bank account size or a certain amount of income for power. And while there's truth to it to a point, like, of course, there's things we can do with money that we can't do without money, and, of course, there's, you know, abundance with food that can feel so comforting.

And when we don't have that, that is a 100%, like, horrific. It can feel like the scariest survival place we can go to. But what I'm experiencing with people that are basically have their primary needs met. Right? Like, they have food.

They have enough money to live even if it's simple living. Yes. Is that we're still caught in the same experience almost as if that weren't true. And so, for example, when we have the trending body size, we feel powerful, most of us. And that is manipulated by food, or at least it can be.

Exercise as well. We feel similar with money when we have, you know, that safety net. We feel more common centered. When we don't, it can bring up a lot of different kinds of stress. And so our response to the stress is metabolically and nervous system wise, like, kind of our go to automatic response.

So, for example, if we restrict with food and we feel like that's how we control, we're probably doing that in other areas of our life, so maybe we're restricting with money. Maybe we feel guilty for spending money on ourselves. Maybe we feel guilty that, you know, our budget needs a certain amount of money to be workable, or we feel guilty for having pleasure that we buy ourselves with the money that we have in our bank account. Like, sort of like calorie to dollar kind of thing. And, of course, you know, the calorie counting method of eating, which I'm a 100% not behind.

There's science to it, but to be restricting that way, and, I mean, then we would never eat fat. Right? Because it's like Yes. Very calorie dense. Very calorie dense.

So within that model, you know, it's it's a really tricky way to manipulate our calories and our eating because we're looking, once again, from the external.

Sue Van Raes: Mhmm.

Sue Van Raes: And, you know, same with same with money. Like, money, as you and I both know, has energy, and it can a little bit of money can go a long way. K. And a lot of money can just flow right out the window.

Kate Northrup: It really can. And so in a sense, the number isn't even real.

Kate Northrup: It's not. It's all pretend. And then when we work on the level of the quantum, like, if you've done any studying with Absolutely. You know, Joe Dispenza or, you know, many people who work in that world, then we also realize that our energetic interaction with food is actually the same. Like, one person could be eating one way, and one person could be eating that exact same way, and it could have a completely different physiological impact on them because of their energetic set point or their energetic, how would I say it?

Like, you know, the their just their energy around that meal and their beliefs around that meal and their nervous system Mhmm. And their whole their whole makeup. It's interesting as have a tendency to either get binge with food or restrictive. I can do both. Mhmm.

With money, I'm more of a, I'm I I don't have, like, binge behavior with money, but I'm, like, far more expansive. I'm like, well, there's more where that came from. Right? So it's interesting just to look at these patterns in ourselves and to see I can see myself go on both ends of the spectrum food wise Mhmm. And money, not as much.

But anything I I wanna I wanna ask you, where how do we know when we've crossed the line from healthy consciousness and awareness to control and disordered behavior? What are the signs?

Sue Van Raes: That's such a good question, Kate. I think it's subtle at first. You know? Like, if we think of it as a spectrum and we kinda wanna be somewhere in the middle range of the spectrum to feel, you know, like we're we have certainty, but we're not gripping too tight and all of that sort of experience. I think it's gonna actually be sensation.

I think as we move to one end of the spectrum or the other, we're going to experience something. Now, what that is for each person is gonna be very different. Like, what I experience when I go into kind of like a constricted state, For me, it's sort of like mostly in my chest and mostly in my throat, and I can notice my heart rate pick up, or I can notice, like, just a tightening, where somebody else might have, like, major digestive distress, or someone else might get a migraine.

Kate Northrup: Right. Like you said before, we're all gonna have a different body system that's gonna be our barometer for when something's off.

Sue Van Raes: Mhmm. Mhmm. Tracking into the physical sensations is profound work, and it does take presence. And some of them are more subtle, so there's, like, you know, there's the more subtle sensations that are easily missed when we're really busy, when we're rushing, when we're driving really fast through traffic, when we're chaotically trying to get through our to do list, like, yeah, maybe we're not noticing subtle sensations because we're distracted and stressed and rushed. It's hard to be present.

Kate Northrup: Yeah. Which which is why we do it.

Sue Van Raes: Right. But but then it gets so loud. When it gets so loud,

Sue Van Raes: we're like, oh my gosh. Where did I tell you? This. It takes over our lives. So, you know, the the recommendation, of course, is to slow it down, to bring more presence to whatever it is we're doing, and, of course, you know, that's also a practice, and then we can start to queue into the subtle sensations before they get so loud.

And that could be with money. That could be with food. That could be with decisions. That could be with just listening to our intuition. You know, I overrode my intuition for at least the first 20, 30 years of my life before I even knew I could start listening.

I didn't even know it was possible. You know? It wasn't even it wasn't even in my MO. Yeah. But now, once I made an agreement with myself to listen to my intuition and wisdom through sensation most of the time, sometimes like, you know, knowing, but often in the body, it's a complete game changer.

Kate Northrup: How does your intuition show up for you physically?

Sue Van Raes: I think there's a couple different ways depending on, like, what the intuition is about. Definitely, when it's danger or something that might feel unsafe, I notice my heart rate start to go up. I notice my stomach tighten. I notice my throat tighten. And when it's more of, like, a positive thing, like, something good is coming and I'm like, oh, that feels good, I I tend to get like the full body tingles.

Sue Van Raes: Mhmm.

Sue Van Raes: And, you know, I've looked at them a lot and been like, I have the full body tingles. Is that good? Is that bad? What is that? And the thing is with that sensation for me is it's neither really pleasant nor unpleasant.

It's just a sensation.

Kate Northrup: Interesting.

Sue Van Raes: It's, you know, it's just kind of there.

Kate Northrup: It's just a sensation.

Sue Van Raes: But some of the ones where it's like danger or something isn't right or someone doesn't feel safe or that can be a little more, like, unpleasant.

Kate Northrup: Okay. A little more like it's but I have a question then. You know, here you are on this book tour. You're on the precipice of, you know, of launching your first book, which is so exciting. And I know you've, you know, you had a private practice in Boulder.

You've been doing this work for so long, but this is definitely taking your visibility to the next level. So what are the sensations that you're experiencing around being at a growth edge with your career? Because sometimes I think that we can mistake those same sensations for this is a bad idea. Because what you and I both know about the nervous system is anything that's unfamiliar, it will register as unsafe at first.

Sue Van Raes: Yeah. It's it's a very multilayered question, and I love it because it will help me as well as I, like, name it going forward into this new phase. So what I've noticed happening with the growth edge is, yeah, tingling sometimes. A little anxiety, but the kind actually, I read a book this this year called Good Anxiety. Wendy Suzuki, I think.

Doctor Wendy Suzuki. Anyways, I've been really just also telling myself, like, okay, a little anxiety, that's good. Like, it actually puts us into a state of a little heightened awareness and kinda keeps us on our toes, and that's helpful. But what's also been really helpful for me when I start to notice a little dysregulation within my system around growth and expansion is actually, like, talking to the different parts of my system. And, you know, I have imagined this many times with different iterations of the round table inside of my psyche.

At times, I've had, you know, different archetypal goddesses sitting around the table. I'd be like, okay. Yeah. You might feel a little bit like this one right now or this one has something to say. Sometimes it's just, like, different parts of the mind.

You know? Like, yeah, there's a part that would rather stay comfortable. There's a part that is, like, bring it. There's a part that would like to, you know, hide, and, you know, it just goes on and on. And, really being honest with myself about sort of what that looks like at any given experience, any given morning, you know, to sort of check-in with, and then remembering that there's this kind of higher part as well.

And that higher part, the true self, you know, there's so many ways to describe the true self, when I can anchor in there and be like, okay. I see you, anxiety. I see you, the one who wishes you were at home, like, cuddling your dog. I see the one who's like, wants to hide. It's I can have more self compassion that way from kind of my true self.

And that has really helped me to, like, reconcile with some of those parts and to feel a little bit more grounded. Yeah. Absolutely. But I mean, it's it's a process.

Kate Northrup: It is a process. In your experience, being with those different parts, how does that impact your nervous system?

Sue Van Raes: Well, when I can take the role of the true self Mhmm. And trust the process and comfort those parts, whatever they're doing. Some of them are definitely like fight or flight. They're like, get me out of here. Others are just, like, frozen in fear.

You know? When I can take that seat of kind of taking care and compassionately governing those parts, it down regulates. You know? I get back into parasympathetic. I can slow my breathing.

I can use visualizations. Regulating. Whereas if I didn't have that in my psychology and, like, that understanding, I feel like one of those could take over at any moment. Yeah. And then it's, you know, then it's like, woah.

Like and the other thing that's really helpful, Kate, and I'm sure you've thought this through in your own expansion and your own, you know, kind of visibility in your work. When I get stuck in this is about me, it really makes it worse. And it really does.

Sue Van Raes: And the truth for me, and I know, like, you well enough to know this for you too, like, this is not about me. This book is not about me. My work is not about me. I really feel like well, first of all, the book just came through very, very, quickly and sort of, like, you know, just kind of, like, appeared. Not the book proposal, not the, you know, not that part, but, like, the writing of the book.

You know, it just kind of, like, channels through for the most part. It was tiring, parts of it were tiring, but there felt like a really important mission here, and that is that we don't have time to miss our lives because we're worried about how we look in the mirror or how many calories are in our salmon or, you know, what have you. Like, that makes me sad. Yeah. That we spend, women, I mean, spend so much time worrying about these things and obsessing about these things that like the most magical sunset could happen right before our eyes and we don't see it.

Or we can't experience the joy of sitting around a table with friends and family celebrating or enjoying a meal because we're so stuck in the experience of the story. And when I hear how many iterations of that have occurred through my clients and how their experience is so tainted so often by food, and I know by money, this can happen so easily as well. It just it's like it just takes us out of the experience of the beauty of life. Yeah. And that is sad.

And so when I can come from that place in my work and be like, this is a mission that I have for us all to be well nourished with love and to be attending to ourselves with love rather than through punishment, self hatred, self loathing, trying to look a certain way, trying to, like, eat a

certain way so that we're accepted by our friends or whatever we have going on, it just breaks my heart. And that's why I wrote the book, and that's why I do what I do. That helps me to grow,

Sue Van Raes: Because then I don't get stuck in my own little small mind about, like, what people think about, you know, how I look on camera.

Kate Northrup: Yeah. I mean, honestly, I think that was the perfect place to end. Like, that was so good. I just I wanna I wanna just, like, let it be a mic drop. So soon.

Oh, so good. And I think we can all apply that to our own lives, to our own work. If people wanna connect with you, if they wanna get the book, where should they go? Where should they connect?

Sue Van Raes: So bouldernutrition.com, pretty simple to remember, is my website. Everything is there. Instagram is just at boulder nutrition. I have lots of free things on my website for people to experience my work. I have, you know, lots of offerings for people to see

Kate Northrup: what's What's one free thing that's on your website that people might want?

Sue Van Raes: I have I have a really great free download that's called, Make a Peace with Your Plate, cultivating daily practice for food and freedom. And it has some really fun recipes as well. Great. It's right under the free section. It's right on the home page when you, you know, put your email in and etcetera.

So that's one really fun little offering. It's like a microcosm of the book, I guess you could say. And I have a podcast called Satiated, and, you know, it's, a little bootstrapped podcast that I've been doing for fun for the last few years and just interviewing really interesting people and having fun with that. I lead lots of women's retreats, and I have my private practice, some online courses. So Beautiful. Lots of different things.

Kate Northrup: And the book is available wherever books are sold?

Sue Van Raes: The book is available wherever books are sold. Yeah. April 9th pub date.

Kate Northrup: Amazing. Well, congratulations on launching this beautiful book. All of your incredible work, thank you for being here to have this conversation with me.

Sue Van Raes: Thank you so much for inviting me and just for being a part of this journey. And, really, your work has influenced me for so long, and I really appreciate just getting to spend time with you.

Kate Northrup: Thank you, Sue. Thank you so much for tuning in for this incredible episode of Plenty. We really got to unpack some things around food and the nervous system and our control behavior and our unconscious and money and nutrition and just the way we eat and how

we move through the world and stress. I'm just I'm thinking about a lot of things. I hope you are too.

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