

Andy: For the rest of you thanks so much for tuning in

I'm really excited about this conversation because it's not something that is easily accessible to have a meaningful conversation around. So first I'm going to introduce our guest

So tell us a little bit about what you wanted to talk about today.

Willa Moore: I mostly wanted to talk about my experience of semi starvation in a wilderness setting as well as recovery from that which took place in a non wilderness setting and kind of used that as a jumping point to talk about semi starvation in general. Because I found that after I left that the program where I was experiencing starvation, I couldn't find very little resources about it, which was surprising. But well I want to create a resource or at least start creating more resources around this.

Andy: Could you tell us a little bit about where this process came from, or what's the starting point? Did you want to tell us a story about your experience or were you planning on going more deeply into the subject matter itself?

Willa: I guess I'll kind of tell the story a little bit. There's different kinds of..different ways that you can be starving. You can be eating no food, you can eating food but very little, and you can be eating food but it's still not enough to meet your needs of expenditure. And in my case it was mostly the third one because this was at the Teaching Drum outdoor skills school. It was like a nomadic year long wilderness immersion. So we were very physical every day like at least gathering firewood twice a day and we didn't have containers for water so like walking to the water just being very physical and when it got colder the body has another task of staying warm. And you don't have by that point I didn't have nearly as much insulating fat so all the heat just goes away even with like six layers of wool. Like insanely heavy clothing.

But yeah when I talk about that school people say like oh did you have to like forage for all your own food is that why you were starving and I was like no actually they brought us food. They brought us like vegetables and wild rice from the previous year's harvest and like they had a big walk-in in for roadkill and they brought us bear fat and one of the things that I noticed through that experience was like bear fat was by far my favourite thing. Good things. Just calories, just condensed in this extremely delicious package. But also you can get sick from eating too much fat and I did once. And I think that's harder to gauge when that 's going to happen like when you're super super super hungry so like it really changed my experience of my appetite. And I guess I now that I've established the container for this situation, this school is known for just starving people like it's a thing. Like previous years students talk about it like people have called it like the starving drum. It's just a thing in general. A lot of wilderness programs and you'd think that because it's such a thing in a lot of wilderness programs there would be more information. That those cultures are producing for how to recover but there's not you're just kind of abandoned. To figure out how to get back to a healthy weight without hurting yourself.

It's a struggle too it's really hard but I'll get to that I just wanted to talk about what happened to me and the people around me. While we were experiencing that calorie deficit there were three women in the program when we started and six men. And one of the women left like after a month. because it wasn't what she like thought it was going to be so then there were just the two of us but we both we both only menstruated like once and then didn't menstruate for the entire rest of our time there and so that is a really common and well-known side effect of being in a calorie deficit for too long is that if you menstruate you'll stop menstruating to conserve energy .i just i have this like whole kind of list of things

Andy: Sure. Those are paired with psychological things as well

Willa: I mean particularly like the the psychological aspect of not menstruating just like knowing that like oh like my body feels like it has to conserve energy right now like I'm not in a state that i could be like producing future generations like if we were like an actual culture. Living this way we would be dying like this would mean things were very bad and the human body is like built to withstand those things but it it takes a toll.

And the the like mythos of the school, it was weird at the time but it just gets weirder and weirder the more that i look at it they like appropriated a lot of like Anishinaabe and Ojibwe cultural things and they appropriated a lot and they also made things up and one of the things, was like like women in those tribes just would spend like half the year not menstruating because there was like not as much food during those times and that's not actually physically healthy or sustainable but they had all these mythos to like justify the starving to be like oh well this is like natural and good you should be [all] right right but but it wasn't.

I kind of always struggle with fatigue and like varying energy levels but it was like way exaggerated with the food scarcity. Like sometimes especially like on there were times where like we just didn't have food for a few days. or like only had one or two food groups for a couple days. like oh we just have like greens and meat and there's no fat and there's no carbohydrates and like that doesn't actually give you a lot of energy especially when you're doing a lot and moving a lot and learning a lot of new things like your brain is expanding and that also requires a lot of energy and calories. But like i would just remember times where it was just like physically difficult to move my body because of like how fatigued i was.

Andy: It brings up an interesting point around like the fact that they're having you do these things and you're new to them so you don't have that expertise like somebody who would be living there and like traditionally and would be able to do things more efficiently, burn less calories. And all of those things and yet it's expected that you could do these things on a calorie deficit

Willa: Right right exactly and it's it's also kind of an insult to those cultures like oh we don't need hundreds of years of knowledge passed down orally through like thousands of years of generation, we can just take random people and just throw them here and not even give them enough food and they'll be fine and we were not not fine

The strange thing is though that sometimes like i think people kind of talk about this more in the like realm of like fasting. that like suddenly it seemed to come out of nowhere i would have like really euphoric experiences and like having a lot of energy and just feeling like light and a sense of like ease in movement that like i historically had not felt

13 often it was like after like a day of like dragging myself like trying to do things and then all of a sudden like not even necessarily when i needed it, I'd just be like boom like euphoric and filled with energy and it's just like my body just tapped into an energy reserve and gave me some endorphins and was just like go go get food or something like remedy this situation. this is your time window.

1 it's interesting like you don't you don't get to decide when you have energy. It seems like you'd that would be a good thing to be able to control that but also i guess like the body is desperate at that point

1 and there probably are some people who maybe have more of a sense of control over that like people

who fast a lot and kind of have honed in on their metabolism or like those breathing exercises and stuff and the school kind of like threw a lot of like concepts like that at us. The talked about breath work stuff some and were talking about that some but they didn't actually teach us how to do it they were just like here's a concept. if you just like spontaneously figure out how to do this that that's great and a lot of the stuff was like that. They'd just be like here's a concept go teach yourself and it's like okay this is more of a container for self learning than it is at school. i guess that was kind of the point.

Andy: so tell us a little bit about how the group dynamics played into this starvation.

Willa: Well because of the psychological changes i just feel like we're already like a group of people who have never met each other in a difficult situation and put starvation on top of that so like everybody has like wildly varying energy levels and there's often like somewhat of an obsession about food. You think about food a lot and develop weird habits around eating. I remember one time they brought us enough bananas that everybody could have seven and i decided to eat all seven of my bananas that day and it felt great. I loved it. I never thought eating seven bananas would like be a nice experience but like i felt like each one just got better but then when they found that out like because i did that while i was alone the group got mad at me. And i was just like, I don't get it. I'm not taking it away from anybody else, like, what?

We'd have these talking circles which is also an appropriated concept and like a lot of it would just be like weird compulsive food notions of what order do you eat food. There was kind of a guru guy and so people would ask him like food type questions and it was it was all just so like neurotic it was bizarre. In spite of the fact that you're like at this wilderness school. i feel like you're ideally you want to get in touch with your intuition and be like oh my like body knows what to do. But a lot of it was like no the school knows what to do and so you have to listen to this guru person who's also not gonna teach you anything. All that's to say is that i have a conspiracy theory that they starve students intentionally to make them like more vulnerable to like that guru dynamic.

Andy: that's interesting .

Willa:i mean it wouldn't be wouldn't be the first group to do that

Andy: No it wouldn't be

Willa: But you know that brings up an interesting point though and it makes me think about like where religion came from and it's like you get like hyper fixated on things then you have to logically justify like why you're eating the banana you know once every three hours versus seven in a day or one a day or whatever it might be and you come up with this like like basically random structure that you use to like justify what you're doing. And like eventually that can get like codified and i feel like that like speaks to like how things that don't make sense like become like a part of a community. And that's absolutely what happened at that school because by the time i was doing the program they had done a lot in the past and they had like their own culture it was like a religion specific to that school or like a code or a set of rules or whatever, whatever it is.

and like there was something about walking into that that was like i didn't really have a sense of like culture growing up and so it was almost like, oh wow like that exists in the world but then it's also not good and I've heard other students say like teaching is a cult but it's like a it's like a super healthy cult because it like promotes these like healthy habits and stuff. it's healthy but it's within an unhealthy structure and i just don't think that that can be healthy in it.

Andy: So I'm more curious about this group dynamic component and like how did you guys work together? Was it you relied on one another or you just there together, and like how either of those situations might have played into your relationship with food and one another?

Willa: I mean we did rely on each other but also there definitely like was there were like moments of joy. But there wasn't a lot of , like i didn't feel really connected with these people. It felt like that we would all work our best to like make fire happen, but i didn't feel really emotionally connected.

Andy: so I'm assuming you didn't stay in touch with anyone, did you stay in touch with anyone?

Willa:

no no i tried for a short time after after the program was done. This was like seven years ago now. I tried for a little bit I tried to stay in touch but also like four of the people who like were in the core group that stayed were from Germany and so there was kind of like always a language barrier and i feel like that might have been part of like feeling less connected but i didn't stay in touch with the folks who were from America either so

it's just like that psychological impact would leave like lasting impressions on like relationships and things like that i mean the other woman who did the program she said that like ever since leaving like when i was last in touch with her which i think was like a year after we the program was done a year or two after she said that like she just doubts herself all the time. Like, if she has an emotion or a desire like she doesn't know whether that's coming from herself or not, because of the way that the school treated her which was super awful

I remember feeling like i mean all of us had less patience because like when you're starving that's one of the things it's just like you're you have less emotional resilience and i mean like it's different from controlled fasting situations because sometimes i feel like when I'm in a controlled fasting situation i have more emotional resilience or like it's totally different but like in that situation less emotional resilience less patience also like no like sex drive or any kind of interest in that kind of thing.

And i asked the other people in the group and they were all like nope it's gone. Necause that's energy. you have to conserve your energy. Like that's a waste according to your body and it's like 1 what this isn't a time to be like doing anything that might make a baby.

I feel like normally like being in outdoor spaces of people and working together to like set up camp and stuff is like this incredibly bonding experience but I can't help but feel like that was disrupted. I think part of it was it was disrupted from starving for such a long time and i think it was also disrupted from the way that the guides kind of were manipulating us basically and the there was this whole concept of like we're trying to like heal our patterns and like develop like a group consciousness and work together really well but i felt like so much of their interference actually worked against that.

It worked against us like being able to just naturally do what h ans do so i want to ask as this this like year went along how did that starvation broccoli stems that offer like no calories
2like why i don't know i feel like as things went on and it may have also been because like it got colder and like winter set in but like there were definitely we just like weren't like kind and nurturing to each other,

Andy: Do you think that was because of the dynamics at play or because of the starvation itself?

Willa: Both i think but i think because of the starvation after i left the school and like was trying to figure out like what just happened to me and how do i like recover and gain weight i looked up i tried to do a lot of research and one of the only things i could find was the Minnesota starvation experiment where they put a group of people who objected to the war on a moral basis and refused the draft because of that.

They put a group of those men through a semi-starvation process that was like very controlled and monitored like they were constantly like weighing them and and stuff and when i was reading about that experience like i noticed so many things that resonated with my own experience including like in the in the beginning of the experience people were talking with each other a lot and it was much more social and as it went on the social interaction just decreased. Like they'd be in a room whether during meal time or not and people just like wouldn't talk to each other because they didn't have energy. And it was similar in our program.

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Andy: So i guess you've kind of covered the the starvation process especially within the group setting so let's talk about kind of the aftermath

Willa: So the aftermath started like when i decided to leave the school and i decided to leave this school because i had almost no control of my bowels anymore and i was cold all of the time and like it felt like my brain like 3 wasn't working and i was all i wanted to eat was frozen broccoli stems and i had an infection on my thumb and the treatment protocol for that was ... like i was watching another person in our group go through that and also you're just more vulnerable to infections again when you're in a deficit of calories and when you've been in a deficit of calories your body like de-prioritizes healing things i think but also like weird stuff gets healed or shifted like my teeth got straighter during that experience. I have no idea. Like only i would have noticed but i was like this definitely happened and i don't know why that happened

But i decided to leave because i was like I'm dying and i was like trying to ask the guides and the other people there like how can I stay warmer what's happening with my bowels like and just no support, no support

Andy: so how long were you there

Willa:

seven months seven months

Andy: that's a long time

Willa: it was a long time

Andy: do you mind me asking if how much you lost i mean you have to say your weight or anything I'm just curious

Willa i think i lost 25 pounds but i was already on the low side of like what's normal for my weight when i entered the program. And they did this like they would like do like a caliper test to test like our fat versus muscle ratio and i remember toward the later months they were saying like oh like you're increasing in muscle and decreasing in fat that's cool and I'm like i know that's like what athletes or

like bodybuilders or like particular people like want to do but I'm in a survival setting and that's actually not good not to mention i was not stronger because of that like in some ways i was i was lighter so like doing things like running or walking long distances was kind of easier but i remember we got a deer they brought us just this like massive frozen road kill deer and so we like tied the deer's legs to a stick where like one person could get on each end of the stick put it on their shoulders and stand and walk and i couldn't stand. i just couldn't even like get from a squat to a standing position with that weight on my shoulder which i could do now no problem so i wasn't actually stronger i was weaker.

that's i I'm sure you put on some muscle but not nearly enough to offset like what you probably lost you probably put muscles on in weird places or like maybe i don't i don't know exactly how it works i just know that i was like less physically strong

it was it was weird and i was also just like i just less resilient in a lot of ways like i was just less resilient to the cold too

but so i i left and i remember like going to i like stayed in Minneapolis for a few days while i was like trying to arrange for a plane ticket and stuff and i remember like going to the grocery store being extremely disoriented and just like getting like a hundred dollars worth of food but like trying to get the kinds of things that we were eating at the program because that was what i was used to and then just like arriving back at this like i did i like was staying with a couch surfing person being like i don't really even know like what I'm gonna do with all this I'm like leaving in a few days it was just like i couldn't make decisions like especially in that setting of being at a grocery store.

i think all of this is so important as we like look at kind of what's happening globally is understanding that there probably will be at some point these experiences for more people you know and the news today china dropped its I'm not sure if there was a trading import ban or whatever it was with Russia so they're going to be taking in Russian wheat and they've also recently closed up their fertilizer outputs to the US so like they're definitely trying to starve us out. How serious they're trying to do that is another story

but but it's kind of frightening and I'm surprised it's not making bigger news and that's why this stuff i think is so important we have to know kind of what we're in for. Not to say it's gonna be that severe but we don't know exactly and that's the thing like you don't get you don't always get to know when it's gonna happen you don't get to like prepare and that's why I'm just confused as to why it's not common knowledge.

And not only is it not common knowledge it's super hard to find resources about what happens when you're starving and what happens when you're recovering and like how to do that in a in a safe way

Andy: so like you've brought up this like very immediate impact on the way your brain works the way your physicality.. how long does that last? does it change? like what what's kind of the next steps

Anonymous: it took a really long time. i had a lot of trouble focusing and making decisions and i had a really hard time reading which was especially challenging because i was like trying to do research to figure out like what's happening to me like what do i do, why do i feel this way, why can't i read? i don't know because i can't read for more than like a paragraph i just like read the same sentence over and over and over again and just like not and I've always been like a super reader I've just always like you know i would like binge read as a kid.

So it was just really different and foreign to me and it's not like i didn't read at all while i was at the school like we were able to send and receive letters and the school like had some materials that you could read like little booklets and stuff about their like made-up concepts

so like that is one of the things that like sticks out to me so much it's just like i could barely read also initially i had trouble like keeping physically still like i was so used to being so mobile all the time that like i felt like i had to continue doing that

also i guess because i couldn't focus on anything like immediate to me like physically going somewhere felt more like something that i could do but after there was like a point after a few weeks of being back at home i stopped wanting to move all the time and i started wanting to rest a lot and that was also when i started being able to like focus more and read more and that's also when my cravings shifted from things that were similar to what i had been eating to like extremely dense foods

and it's it's really important not to shift dramatically like i think it's good that i was like craving the kinds of things that i was eating at the school for a while before i like shifted into eating more calorie dense things because i think it would have been really shocking to my body to just like immediately start eating really calorie dense foods which i hadn't had access to for months

like for people who have starved like for people who do that show naked and afraid I've met some of those people and went some of them are eating a little bit the whole time and some of them are eating absolutely nothing the whole time. And if you've been eating nothing and then all of a sudden you're like back in civilization and you go and you like eat a whole block of cheese and like, i don't know, like bread and really calorie dense stuff it can actually, depending on how long you've been starving, it can actually kill you.

They call it re-feeding syndrome but even if it doesn't kill you it can be really bad for you it can be scary you can get like a lot of bloating you can get pain you can get severe edema which is like parts of your body retaining water that can also happen deeper in the starvation period. The Minnesota starvation experiment guys started getting a lot of edema at their ankles and i don't really know why i got a little bit of edema when i was like a month or two into eating like really calorie dense foods but I'm also really lucky that i had access to really calorie dense foods when i started craving them

Andy: It's funny you bring that up because my grandfather was in world war ii and he was a pow and he had escaped and this was in Italy. And my great-grandparents still lived there at the time and when he finally made his way back home. The story goes that he came home and had a bowl of soup and then went to bed and I'm like how could you have gone like a month trying to travel by foot and then come home and had a bowl of soup and been like I'm gonna go sleep. It makes more sense like as you're kind of talking through this and like but some people like want to eat a whole lot and it's it's it's actually not good to do and I'm imagining for him like they lived in southern Italy and it was pretty poor so i don't think like the experience of starvation was like totally foreign so they probably I'm guessing he probably knew a little bit or was more intimate with it than like the normal American in 2022

Anonymous: Totally totally it's it's odd how like we don't know how to deal with it even though like a lot of people also i don't have enough food generally like some of the most at least calorie dense foods are also

like really cheap so like even if you're starving in every other way you can often at least get enough calories here but it's still not good

Andy: So at what point was it that you switched to wanting those calorie dense foods?

i feel like it was a it was a few weeks and i feel like it was pretty sudden it was like within a few days i was like oh i can't eat apples anymore because they taste like just horrible fiber like i didn't i couldn't eat anything with fiber i was like oh this is like being a kid again like i we had eaten so much like cabbage during the program and like i i didn't want to touch cabbage with a five foot poll like i didn't want fruit i still wanted a lot of fat i also like felt so weird about like being like back in civilization and so i was like dumpster diving for most of my food but i found some really great stuff like i found a lot of cheese and cheese was something i wanted a lot because that it's such a dense food there's and it has fat and it's just like that was that all of that was exactly what i was wanting and i was just like drinking heavy cream as well and i couldn't i couldn't drink milk anymore milk made me super sick and to this day i can only drink milk if it's like local raw unpasteurized like higher fat milk like from jersey cows so that's just like a permanent change

That happened to me because when you know when i was a kid i drink milk all the time but cheese heavy cream chicken skin was like the best i remember one night i found a bag of uncooked rotisserie chickens and a whole duck and like i could only carry home so much so i like put a whole duck and two chickens in the oven and like ate all of the skin in like one or two days and just had all this like meat left and i was also i was because i was dumpster diving i was doing all of this at midnight and it was good because i didn't want anybody around, like i didn't want anybody to like see me eat because i would just like sit at the table and just like slowly eat for hours and, again, like with the Minnesota starvation experiment.

Other other people had described that shift of wanting really densely caloric foods and not wanting to be around other people while they ate because they had developed like very strange habits, basically, about like how the food has to be and how they have to eat it and again that like social degradation component because food is supposed to be something that you share with people but not coming back into having access to all kinds of foods.

i just knew that like the way i was eating wasn't compatible with other people and also i was hungry all the time. Like even if i ate until i was completely full and couldn't eat another bite physically, i was still hungry and that was like worse than the starving part it's like your brain is just paranoid that that's going to be your last meal

i guess I never quite .. I would wake up in the middle of the night and i wouldn't be able to go back to sleep until i like went and ate something which has never been my style because I've had like acid reflux since i was a teenager and so eating anywhere near bed was like a no-no. I've never been a midnight snacker but i would just sit in the kitchen alone in the night eating slowly for hours. it was ridiculous.

and it took like also my toes like felt weird for a really long time and i don't know if that was like i had gotten frost nip or something but like over several months they kind of like, I went back to feeling normal and, as i said before, i did get some, like edema when i was like re-feeding. One of the resources that i found other than the Minnesota starvation experiment was i had read about at hikers experiencing their trail appetite even after they got off the trail which like i felt i was kind of relating to because i was like well I'm not living outside anymore why am i still so hungry

But it's like you're in a deficit of course you're gonna be so hungry

But the other resource i found was like people recovering from eating disorders like anorexia type stuff and how they were recovering and like that was what i could find the most of. And those were the only people i could like be in dialogue with like through internet for

And so it was a different experience but it was 1 also like very similar like all of the things that they were describing i was just like that's

oh but you had asked about the shift in the way and i did want to say when i got home and like finally could look in a mirror with no clothes on i was i saw myself and i was a skeleton like i didn't look healthy at all.

And i also realized like wow like growing up in america1 like in my high school years like this is what i wanted to look like and that's so messed up because I'm so unhealthy now and i kind of was like i'm1 never going to be in this state again if i can help it like 1 now that that horrible fantasy has been realized i want to run in the other direction.

49:26

so this is not healthy and it was also like it was hard psychologically to allow myself to eat as much as i needed to, to be able to sleep and focus better and there wasn't any like not feeling hungry but just like it was just like i just had eat and I had to eat the things that were palatable to me which were like those really calorie dense foods I remember over cooking some eggs I fried a couple of eggs and I cooked the yolk too much and I cried and I broke the plate because I was so hungry and the yolks only felt nourishing to me when they were runny I was so deeply devastated by just overcooking eggs which like now if I did that I'd be bummed out but I'd be like ok I'm make some more eggs like I don't need to cry and break a plate.

Yeah

SO when did would you say that the impacts of the starvation started to wane, like how long did that take ?

Like how long did it take physically regain the weight?

And normal obviously kind of a loose term because I'm sure there's some things that have still stuck

yeah hand also you initially just put on water weight because you're able to eat salt again and stuff so like a lot of that initial weight that you[re putting on is like not body fat it's not like tissue at all it's just like there's more food in your body and there's more water in your body and your body has to do a lot of cellular repair and stuff And that requires flooding areas with water because cells can pass through and do the things that they need to do more easily when there's an abundance of water for them to move through. So people always we have this cultural thing of I gained ten pounds from eating big meal and it's like no that doesn't happen, that 's not how it works. It takes a lot of time for your body to make adipose tissue that's like a complicated energy storage process and what's typical for a lot of people who starve almost everybody who was in the Minnesota starvation experience so many people who had eating disorders and me say that you overshoot your initial weight because your body needs to store enough energy and adipose tissue to feel like comfortable and secure to begin the cellular recovery work If you've starved long enough your body has stripped fat from really weird places like it demylelinates your nerves so there's like sheets of fatty tissues around your nerves that like the rubber thing around an electric wire. It insulates them it protects them and your body will eat that to keep you alive to keep your basic body's functioning so it makes so much sense that it feels like your nerves have

been stripped.

when you've been starving like you just don't have pain. You're on edge in a lot of ways

That was one of the things I learned when I was researching about people who had eating disorders like there was one website where I found like a lot of information and I also once I started being able to read I was like obsessed with learning all those things it just became my new I'm going to hyper focus on this so that I feel like there's hope for me not to feel hungry all the time

Andy: Yeah. We've got a comment I don't know if you have some input on it, someone says that their body has been stuck in starvation mode and they have fluid retention and they still struggle with eating from getting sick and vomiting so much I don't know if you have any thoughts on that process

I don't know because I don't know why they're, like, are they having trouble eating because they're getting sick and it makes them vomit? Or it's unclear to me. It can take a really long time for your body to not be in starvation mode anymore. Like even though it only took four or five months for me to like regain enough weight to start menstruating again, I was started not feeling hungry all the time around then, but it took years for things to normalize. I really do think that the damage that's done while you're starving takes years to heal and I still go through sometimes days or hours within a day of suddenly I'm really really hungry and I need to eat really calorie dense foods and I feel like it only happens like maybe once a year now but I never know when it's going to happen and I just have to give myself full permission. [it's] Like oh ok like it's that time. I know why this is happening. I had this experience.

You just have to trust in what your body's doing. Which felt scary to do especially because I grew up with a lot of like fat phobia and really internalized that but a lot of people don't feel like hey can eat whatever they're hungry because they just keep gaining weight. I sometimes that's you just have to gain weight. The body has a set point that it wants to be and it has reasons that it wants to be that and that can change

It's not going to just you have to go on that journey you have to overshoot and maybe it'll go down on its own and maybe it won't but you can't start restricting your calorie intake again or being like oh well I'm really craving ice cream so I'm gonna freeze a banana and eat that like you know you have to eat the thing that your body is wanting but I don't know about experiences where this person is asking where their body is in starvation mode and they're having trouble eating. I have a friend who just recently finished I don't know if I'll say finish but finished the bulk of getting treatment for cancer and over the summer she starved really badly like in the hospital because of it but because of like the chemo and stuff so I don't know about the more medical types of stuff. It looks like this happens I can't see the whole comment but I would get nauseous from not eating too.

That sounds really hard. Sometimes when you're making too much stomach acid it means you need to be eating more food because when I would wake up in the night I would actually be having acid reflux and when I ate it made the acid reflux go away. Which is like the opposite of how it usually works for me. But I can't read the bottom of the comment because of the way that my screen is and I can't scroll I actually can't see myself in the little video frame but

Andy: where does your reading end I can finish it for you

Willa: it says but I also make too much stomach acid I did manage to lose half of it when I started

getting better now I plateaued again

I mean i don't know and I will say too that unfortunately like most doctors on the side of losing weight is always good, like I went to a doctor after the when I left the school I went to the doctor who I had been seeing before that and I was just like I'm really confused I'm really hungry all the time I'm experiencing a l these weird things and all these weird cravings

and he was like well you're not underweight according to the bmi anymore you gained like 5 or 10 pounds so don't worry about it you're fine. Like, good enough. I was not fine! You know and but some of what I've read has indicated that if your body is trying to gain weight it needs that for some reason to heal whatever's going on.

I can't really speak too much to that because I haven't had that personal experience. I do want to ask you've talked about the fact that this takes years to recover has it changed how you relate in terms of groups of people from this experience at all or was that outside of the food component, has it stayed the same?

It's been a long kind of journey. I'd say now I'm in a place where I'm a lot more compassionate with other people and I try to be nurturing and nourishing in my relationships and friendships and offer warmth and connection. Even when people don't gave the time or the ability to be present and revive that or offer it back. I've just felt like that's something that 's really important to be able to do.

But It took a long time to get to that. I really struggled leaving the school because I felt like I couldn't really talk about my experiences there because I left that place and went to NYC and there's people just didn't have a framework for that like I couldn't be like we had a talking circle after the morning fire and we talked about the guardian exercises that we've been doing and I was saying I was having trouble with owl eyes. It was just that's an experience a lot of people have with leaving cults. In general is you leave and you don't know how to connect with people because they don't have that lexicon and mythos that you've been immersed in for so long and how do you connect with people anymore? I think that for a while I was pretty aloof like people who new me at that time described me as aloof or they felt like I was intimidating but I was just really struggling to connect . And I still experience that some, now. Definitely over the years developed more of a sense of how to start connecting with people again.

I still had a livelong thing of having trouble with group social situations like if it's a group of my friends or a group of particular people I can handle it but for most part I need to talk to people one on one. It's just overstimulating when there's too many people.

Andy: Sure. I think the big reason why we wanted to do this is because it's an important skill or at least I don't want to say skill but rather like a piece of knowledge given the world that is unfolding in front of us so I don't now if you have any particular thoughts of things that you'd suggest for people that are concerned about this experience in the future that whether they can do today to prepare for if this ever happens to them or like what do you think are next steps for people that are watching

Willa: I want to make a zine or something. I want to have a tangible piece of media that I could just offer people and say here: I do think that like anybody who wants to learn more about this finding anything you can about the Minnesota starvation experiment is probably going to be your best resource. Not that it's perfect or anything it's actually sometimes kind of hard to find good information about it. There's a little bit on youtube there some pdfs floating around but there's not a book or anything really definitive I'm going to put on my hat because I'm cold. I do think that reading if it's not triggering fro

you. Reading stories of people who have recovered or are in recovery from eating disorders can be helpful for the describing what it was like while they were starving and what it's like trying to gain that weight back. I do find that there's
it's probably true of the Minnesota experimenter so much but I lost my train of thought sorry.

Reading the comments that there can be so much of a focus on the number and I remember like in high school when I was like really obsessive about weight stuff again because of like fat phobia I was just like thinking it was always the numbers it was the numbers the numbers. Weighing 100 whatever. And then weighing 100 and like when I reach this number I'm going to restrict in this way and this has this many calories I don't find all of that super helpful. It's true like on the naked and afraid shows and the alone show they always are like. "This person lost 37 pounds which is 29% of their total body weight going into this challenge", and it's just like there's something about it that feels really sick and gross.

Andy: Yeah

Willa: I feel like it's hard reading about that experiment too and looking at the photos of the men. It was obviously like a really hard time and also just like medical stuff and experimenting on people weird me out so I feel like the best time to do this is when you're feeling really resilient and you have the support that you need to look into it. If reading about this kind of things is going to trigger disordered eating for you or anxiety or whatever, now is not the time but when you have a time where you're feeling resilient or you have a friend or family member who's also interested in that I think it's important to learn about it and to collect those stories and understand because some people really have to and some people really should it's not in our cultural pool of knowledge right now. Yeah and so not everybody has to know but hopefully like enough people

Andy: yeah it's a reality for many people across the world and unfortunately will probably be a reality more so in the future

Willa: Yeah.

Andy: We've got a lot going in through right now so for folks that have enjoyed listening to you talk, do you have a Venmo or something that could throw you a couple bucks

Willa: Oh. Um. I do have a Venmo. I think it's @willamooore and there's a picture of me looking uncomfortable with a giant cat on my shoulders

So now it's codified . so yeah this has been great it's really interesting to hear. It wasn't great that you went through this but it was great to have this experience and to hear your experiences and learn a little bit about stuff something I don't know anything about so I definitely appreciate it.