

MERYL: Welcome back everybody. The Rebel Nutritionist podcast. I have with me again, Melanie Hunter. Hello. Certified Holistic Health Counselor Coach Consultant — right now, sorry I just messed up that one.

It doesn't matter. And, and Breathwork Specialist, right, I don't think we said that last time. Breathwork Instructor, yeah. Instructor.

Okay. There you go, so we'll talk a little bit about that. Since we're going to be talking about craziness over the holidays today, right? The conversation about how to keep your cool during the holiday season, I would say it's probably all the time.

I think people are especially like crazy now, but you know, I think it bears, I mean, telling for the forever. Yeah. It's all year long. Exactly.

Yeah, exactly. Exactly. So. ——— You've got your own consulting business. Yes. And coaching business. And so what would you, I mean we, this time of year, we talk about these kinds of things and the habits and the behaviors all the time of how do we keep ourselves from really. — You know, in a time, **I always say this time of year should be celebratory, and it should be about family, and it should be fun, and it should be all these things that we would want it to be, and it doesn't always end up being that way.** So, like, what are your thoughts on, on that?

MELANIE: I mean, it's something I've been thinking for myself, too.

I was, like, checking in recently with myself, because I have three young boys, and I'm working, and Threeboys, okay.

Yeah, and **life is so busy, and then you add all the expectations of the holiday season, and I can easily Get myself into a tizzy if I don't really do the things that I know that I need to do.**

Right. So, I mean, I think, first of all, it starts with an intention, just like everything else, but it's like, what am I actually trying to accomplish here? And and recognizing that when you think about the holidays, you think about being a kid. And I could probably tell you one or two presents that I got like my whole childhood, but I could tell you like what I felt and like the warmth of the feeling.

Yeah. I can talk about like we sang Christmas carols and we did these things. And so anyway, **it's like the intention is not really to be this perfect mother and get everything done and everything has to look a certain way. It's really like, what am I trying to accomplish? I'm trying to create a healthy holiday season where I am present with my boys and we are creating that warm. Fuzzy feeling. that they will remember.** Right. I love that. And at the same time you have to, as a mother fill your own cup first. And so that's the stuff that I think is the practical stuff. Yeah. That is the, **the tools that we all need in our toolbox so that when you feel like you're about to lose your shit, you have somewhere something to rely on.** Yeah. — And those can be a variety of things. I think you know, meditation, obviously we shared that for me, my morning meditations are almost non negotiable because I am such a nicer person and I have to do that first to be able to have a clarity.

MERYL: Absolutely. And I think, so part of the conversation is right. we, again, if you guys, if you haven't listened to our last podcast, please go listen to it. It was really, really amazing. But

meditation, I think. And, and what that means to people in different ways, right? You and I really go into that meditative stuff a little more deeply, right?

We're doing it a half hour, 20 minute, 40 minute, whatever it is. **But I want people to really think about. Wake up in the morning and create a mindset, create an intention.** Like you just said, right? How do you even want to start your day? Like before I started the whole meditative thing, I would still get up in the morning, right?

Because I also have three kids and. — The mornings got insane, but I would get up a little earlier. I'd have my cup of coffee and that was sort of meditated. So even if that, if you, if you're new to meditation and you don't really even understand it and you can't, right. How many times do you go say, I mean, I can't sit and listen to your meditation.

You know, well, that's a whole other thing. If you can't do that, we are going to have a talk about that. Because you can, it's just a matter of what you tell yourself. And maybe we, we address that, but Find a time to be mindful, to, to look at nature even, right? I find that — somehow embracing nature is, and there's studies on this, right?

When you are either out in nature and if you're in somewhere in the country where you can't embrace nature because it's freezing cold, right? Then **find a way to look at nature**, right? Look outside. Or bundle up and go anywhere. Exactly, or go anywhere, right? And, and, and take Even five, 10 minutes to, to breathe in the air because that does create a physiologic shift. A hundred percent. In your body. Yeah. Literally the, the energy of being outside and the sun. Yeah. Creates a literal energetic shift in your body.

MELANIE: Totally. I'm so glad you said that though, because I think that the point is two things. One is as a mother. **For too many years, I let my kids wake me up and you are constantly chasing the day. And then finally I realized like, no, I have to start my day filling myself up first.** And what that means doesn't have to be meditation. Right. It also doesn't have to be long process. Right. So it's deciding you have to really sit with yourself and ask what you, how you want to set up your day and your morning ritual, but it's, it can be five minutes of. Walking in nature. It can be having your coffee. It could be journaling. It could be doing breath work. Yeah. It could be literally walking in the sun. It could be looking at something that makes you happy. It could be singing to one song, moving your body and dancing. I mean, you could do 10 minutes of yoga.

It's really just setting it up the framework of whatever feeds you and your soul to set off your start your day on the right foot.

MERYL: Oh my God. So true. Yeah. So true. And you know, it's funny, I look back at this, like, I wish I knew. That's right. When my kids were little, I always felt like I was stressed.

MELANIE: It's so stressful when they're already like, mom, mom, mom, and you're like, You have to fill yourself up first. You cannot provide for someone else from an empty cup. No. And I did it. You know, for a little bit too long to

MERYL: Yes. Yes. You know, and it was funny because you said something in the last conversation.

I'm going to address it here. But um, you talked about how **you take the time to set your day up for you because you want to be a good example to your children.** And I think that was so important because I always said. You know, I **wanted to feed my children and nourish them in the way that I knew was important,** despite all of the fun that people made.

I mean, I still get made fun of. I'm the brunt of everybody's jokes. Oh kale this. And then I'm like, kale's my favorite vegetable. That's a whole other story. Right. But, but I felt like it was so important to. Set my kids so that they saw, right, we were eating dinner as a family when a lot of their friends kids were not eating dinner because they were running and going and, and we ran and did, and they were all in sports and whatever.

But I felt like at the end of the day, it was really important for us to come together as a family and communicate and talk about the day. And to this day, my kids will still say their favorite time of the day. was dinner time when we all went around the table and said how was your day? What would, right?

Like it's, it's, it's so important to have that connectedness with your kids. So important because the days get crazy. And **if you are living in that crazy and you don't take time to regroup with them. Where is that connection as a family, right? How do they get grounded?**

MELANIE: Right. A hundred percent. And you know, spending time with someone, being in the same space and connecting are completely different.

A hundred percent. You know, so if you're not intentional, you can go through your whole day with your kids, your partner, your husband, whatever, and not actually connect ever. And it's super interesting, but like **in conscious discipline. You know, you learn that you have to have connection before discipline. And it's interesting because when you have a connection with your kids, if you build into that and you really build that up, they will do what you ask much easier.** And it's like, if you think about like your partner, if he's like loving to you and then he asks you to do a favor, you're more likely to do it.

Yeah. If you guys are fighting and you're like — but the same thing happens to your kids. And like, it's also just like, that's like the foundation of who they are. What we do is so much more important than what we say.

MERYL: Exactly. Right. 100%. Right. Do as I say. Do as, right, not do as I, not do as I say, do as I do.

The old way was different. Yeah. Right. You know, and And I, look, I see it come to fruition. My kids are much older than your kids. And It's kind of interesting though, because you can kind of, Compare and see. So keep doing that because what happens is, is They actually you know, my kids all cook.

And they look, they don't make the healthy decisions 100 percent of the time, but they, but they, now that **they're getting older and they're realizing like, wow, if I don't make this healthier choice, I don't feel well, a hundred percent.** You know? I mean, my son was saying he's going to be graduating from medical school in the first two years.

He's like, wow. — He gained all this weight because he was studying and he wasn't paying attention to his eating and yeah, stress and all that. He's like, now I really I pay more attention. I

mean, even though he was cognizant, but now it resonates a little, it hits a little different as they mature.

And my girls are now in an apartment together and you know, they'd rather cook any day of the week together than go out to dinner. And again, the same thing when we are doing holidays, like Lindsay, my daughter came over, she was studying. She came over the other night and I said, do you want me to take you out?

She goes, no, let's cook together. Right. So we cooked and being together again, right. Being together in the kitchen, cooking together. Had a sense that we were able to talk and connect. Right. So it was all about that connection. So yes, keep doing what you're doing because it does pay off.

Right. In the long run. I always say I'm going to be a much mother, much better grandmother, even than I was mother. I like when you, when you see, like, I finally learned, I realized, right. That. — Your subconscious mind, like your children are so permeable till they're about seven. Like it's all subconscious. what are you doing to that mind until they're seven? And so I'm like, now I can play with that.

MELANIE: But if you think about the holidays, even if you're running around free. Right. Like, yes, we need to go back to the holidays. **If we're running around frantic and we're stressed, like that's actually the feeling that they're going to remember.** Yes. Like that's, and that's not what we're trying to give them. That's, that's more important than anything that we can actually do or buy them.

MERYL: A hundred percent. Right. They still want the things, How do we, like you said, right. You don't really remember the gifts that you got. You remember the feelings that, that they had. And I think that that that's so important. So first tip is find a way to set yourself up that you're filling up your cup and not, and not others. And I, so I think the other part that comes into play, especially in the work that we do, right.

So that's the mindfulness piece, but I feel like some of the other thing in terms of things, let's movement, because I want to get to nutrition and we're going to spend a little time on that. Right.

We're going to go off with the five pillars. Yours are six. I am five. Right. But let's start with like movement. Yeah. Again we come into this season and people are like, well, I'm busy. I'm doing this, whether it's work, whether it's gift giving, like **find a way to move your body.** A hundred percent. Right.

MELANIE: It doesn't have to be go out and hit the gym every day. And if you have kids that are my age, I mean, my kids are 11, nine and five, like some days my exercise is literally playing soccer with them. Right. And it kicks my ass. I'm like panting. And like, if that's all I have time that day, but that's like also like their favorite thing. I mean, my 11 year old is so filled up when I play with him.

Yeah. So it doesn't have to be traditional. And it also doesn't have to be long. Like I did a 20 minute Peloton ride today.

Like that's all I had time for. Right. Awesome. Like I'm also naturally busy and moving. Right. But like, we don't have to put these, these Restrictions on ourselves or think that we have to have or the constraint. Right. Yeah. Right. I see an hour at the gym five days a week. Like let's work in movement through our days.

MERYL: Yes. You know, **we are much too sedentary as humans. So however you move your body. More than you did the day before, or differently than the day before.** Like, that's what I want you to think about, right? I want people to think about what is realistic for you to do now. What is sustainable for you to do now?

Like, stop putting off Today. Like, Oh, I'm going to start in January.

You're not going to start. Or if you do, it'll last for two weeks and then you'll be done for the rest of the year. That's your excuse that you're going to tell yourself. Like, stop with the excuses.

Because what's the difference between January 1 and tomorrow?

Guess what? It's a new day. The sun is rising. It doesn't matter. The date on the calendar is meaningless, right?

MELANIE: Stop telling yourself bullshit stories.

MERYL: It's weird. Right. It's trying to, the only one you're bullshitting is yourself. 100%. No one else cares. Right. Exactly. Nobody else cares.

Nobody else cares. Do you hear that? Nobody cares.

MELANIE: Nobody cares. And I mean, **I work out for myself because I feel good because I'm a better person when I do.** Right. It's like, that's what keeps me going a hundred percent, but yeah, I a hundred percent agree with you. **I think It's such an interesting time of year because people often are like, I'm too busy to exercise.**

They eat horrible. Yeah. Drink more alcohol than normal and you end up completely depleted and fried and also stressed out. And then it's like, yeah, well then it's going to take you months to get out.

MERYL: And then you've gained five pounds. You're like, what the hell happened? Right. So. How do we avoid it? Okay, so we talked about moving.

We talked about mindfulness. Let's talk about **I'm going to insert sleep here** because I think sleep is really important and then we'll end on the nutrition. Okay. Because I always say **everything backs into sleep** in the work that we do when you're looking at someone's biochemistry, when you're looking at someone's biology, **the only way our body has time to recover and rejuvenate is. Through sleep,** right? That is, that is when our body becomes this little worker bee of healing Yeah What we did to it and taking the immune system and revving it up and you know Going around and cleaning up all the crap right dead. So if you're not sleeping, yeah You're not doing cleanup, right?

MELANIE: A hundred percent. **And it's throwing off so much of everything else that you might as well stop with whatever you're trying to force yourself to do.** And prioritize that because if you're not sleeping, first of all, you're going to eat shitty because your hormones are all out of whack. And you're also, I mean, your cortisol is going to be high anyway. It cascades, right? Yes. It's like, start there.

MERYL: It does. It does that whole stress sleep cycle. So what I always say to people is. Yes, **it's important to get seven to eight hours of sleep.** The research shows that, right? There's empirical evidence across the board. You need to be getting seven to eight hours unequivocally. **But the other part of that is get to bed early,** right? I see too many people, both men and women. And even younger kids, right, who are going to bed really late and thinking, I get seven or eight hours. You need to be like **melatonin, which is our best anti aging recovery hormone, is made between 10 p. m. and 2 a.m.** Right. And if you are not sleeping in sort of that window of time and trying to dampen cortisol, right, **melatonin actually dampens cortisol.** That's part of its job. And — if you are not sleeping and giving your body the time to bring that cortisol down. Your cortisol is just going to be revving and your mind is going to be racing and you're not going to be recovering and you're not going to be feeling better. You're going to wake up that person who's feeling exhausted.

MELANIE: A hundred percent. Yeah. In an already really busy time when you're overwhelmed.

MERYL: Exactly. Right. So I know there's wrapping to be done and there's gift giving to be done, but try to, again, it doesn't have to be every single night of the week. If you're that person who's going to bed really late. Find two nights. Find one night. So true.

MELANIE: Start somewhere. I think that's key. And I think not to take us totally off, but as far as the to do list is always going to be there. I always say that. Your to do list is there when you're dead.

It's 100%, right? But **I think there is something to actually having a to do list. So you're not going to bed feeling like you're frantic and you work your way through it. And like during the holiday season, it's like a very practical thing, but you work your way through it and you have to prioritize what has to absolutely be done and do those things and everything else. You're going to have to let some things go to prioritize sleep and exercise.**

MERYL: Absolutely. Yeah. I don't know. I'm like, I'll take care of that tomorrow. Like no big deal. Like this, we've got again, getting off of that perfectionistic, like, yes, like somehow that. I have won the prize if I check everything off of my to do list and killed myself in the process. 100%, yeah.

You know, like, why?

Totally. It's still gonna be there tomorrow. Yeah. Tomorrow's another day.

MELANIE: There's plenty of people who, like, can't go to sleep unless their whole house is, like, perfect. And I'm like, oh, you know? Oh, yeah, that's deeper. That's a whole other deeper issue.

—— Yeah, let's go to sleep and that stuff will be there for you in the morning. ——

Let's talk about your childhood. Yeah, that's it. Yeah.

MERYL: You know, I mean, look, I don't love leaving dishes in the sink, but my house does not need to be spotless when I, when I go to bed. I hear you. So yeah, so sleep is so important and again, right, we can go, we can spend a whole podcast on sleep, but I think if we're trying to really help people organize, how do we keep ourselves healthy and balanced? — We have to look at all of these things.

MELANIE: 100%. And actually, not to, again, cut in, but I think that just when **we talked about the morning routine, like, your evening routine is equally important.** Thank you so much for bringing that up. —

Elaborate. Yeah, I mean, I think that it's the same thing. Like, **your intention needs to be to create an atmosphere that is conducive to sleep.**

And so, like, and **what does that mean? You have to give yourself time to wind down** that is not on a screen, that is not a TV, that is like, that's really like being in bed and Or sometimes I'll meditate and then crawl into bed, but whatever it is Yeah. You're dimming the lights. **You're allowing space and time for your body to have the cues to know that it's time to sleep.**

Yes. And otherwise you can't just go from one screen to jump into bed and No. And go and, and expect that you're gonna be able to do that. Yeah. And people are like, well, I'm mindlessly scrolling. I'm mindlessly . As you're scrolling, you're, you're judging, you're making thoughts. Getting upset. You're getting whatever. Oh, I have to send this to my friend. Right. Right. Like, like, no, it's not mindless.

There is nothing about being on your screens that is mindless.

MELANIE: And it's actually interesting when you think about like, **if you think about your, your day and your time and your energy, if you could protect your energy in the morning and the night, that's probably the most. Important times to protect them.** I love that.

Protect your energy. That's so important. What are you letting in? Right? Like, I'm not going to let that stuff in first thing in the morning because that's, what's going to start my day. Like one bad email and your day's on. Same thing at night. Like that's, that's going to ruin your sleep.

MERYL: Right. Well, I always say, right. Don't watch the news at night. Oh God. Don't watch the news ever. Right. Don't watch the news ever. Yes. I don't. I call Howie in the morning. I'm like,

what happened? Can you just give me the footnote version? I really don't want to know. You're like, I'll go turn on the TV. I'm like,

Like, I go to the gym and I'll turn it on. I'll listen there. I'm like, okay, that's my blur news. Or I'll read it but No. Going to bed with the news on it was funny 'cause Ashley, I, I was talking to her the other day and I think it was Tuesday or whatever, and I'm like, how you doing?

She's like, Ugh, I'm so tired. I didn't sleep well. And I said. Why? Because Ashley's usually pretty good about going to bed early. And she's like I was watching my show. She's watching some stupid, like, it's like a drama. Yeah. Why are you watching this at night? That's the only time I could watch.

I said, you know better. Stop watching it. I know.

MELANIE: I mean, my poor husband. I like. We'll not watch TV with him because we used to watch movies and I'm very sensitive. So I would say in bed. Oh my God. I do the same, right? So I literally just stopped. I'm like, I'd rather read a book. I will do meditation. We can have a conversation, right? I'm not letting that in.

MERYL: You know, it was so funny. I'm so much like that. I always, cause people are like, well, why can't you watch this show? I'm like, I'm like, I am so empathetic. Like I. So I was late to the Game of Thrones series. Right. So I was trying like, maybe it was a year ago, maybe it was more than that to kind of catch up. And I would watch it at night. It was so violent. It was so disturbing. I had to stop watching. And I'm so drawn to it. I'm like, Oh, but I really want to know what happened.

And. I don't know, everybody died, and they were killed in these brutal ways, and it was horrible. I was so intrigued by it, but it was horrible, I'm like I gotta stop watching. So I finally found someone, I'm like, did you watch Game of Thrones? I'm like, you could just tell me what happened. I can't like give me the spoiler and then I'm like, Oh my God, that one died. — They just killed off everybody in some way, shape, or, and that really bothered me. I watched one, I think. And I was like, this is not for me. Yeah. It was so disturbing. But I love those kinds of period. Those pieces. I'm like, yeah, I just can't do that. So. You know, so the moral of the story is don't watch stuff at night. That's going to get you all hyped up.

We need to be relaxing even reading on your tablets and stuff, like not good, that blue light does really you want to talk about energy. It messes with your brain energy.

MELANIE: Honestly, the circadian rhythms are strong and like, we don't honor those in our culture.

And so, I mean, I go to my house and I'm turning lights off. Like, please dim all the lights. Like you're confusing our bodies.

MERYL: Like, yeah, Amanda does that too. Amanda's like eight o'clock shut down. I'm a little less. I mean, I like lights, but I do yes, I want to sleep in a dark room and I can't have any lights and I can't have anything blinking.

MELANIE: and that's hard. I mean, I have blackout blinds, blackout curtains, and I still sleep. One little light that you can't avoid.

MERYL: That's so funny. Yeah. So, so getting a good night's sleep, a restful night. — And because we do want to really make sure that we are not producing that cortisol people say, well, I get up at two in the morning.

I get up three in the morning. Guess what? That's when melatonin stops being produced and cortisol starts coming up. **So if you are that person that is inevitably waking up at that time, there is definitely. That's a hint that there's a dysregulation in your circadian rhythm and in your stress response.**

Yeah. So paying attention to that and not getting and not going to bed so late and making sure that your mind is not racing. How do we calm our minds down enough? And that's why when you said your energy we're holding onto your energy at night. And and realigning yourself. Yeah.

MELANIE: So yeah, I think it's all just has to be intentional, right? You decide you're going to set time side for yourself in the morning and at night and you're going to prioritize that time. It doesn't have to be a long time, right? No, it doesn't have to be long, but it needs to it needs to be incorporated.

MERYL: And you're and you're kind of allowing your mind to just Calm down. 100%. Right. Yeah.

MELANIE: Because so many people will say I have racing racing thoughts, right? It's like, well, we're over simulated all day long. And then we lay down and expect to fall asleep right away. Like you need a transition.

MERYL: You do. And, and so some, one of the things I'm going to tell you, I have, so there's two things that help me because I find **sometimes I'll wake up in the middle of the night and I'll be startled, whatever doing the deep breath work. The, so for those of you, I've talked about this all the time the slow inhalation. But the slower exhalation.**

So like **Andrew Weil, go YouTube, his 4 7 8 breathwork**, right? It's so easy. It's so easy. You just do four cycles of that. But like I was up, I don't know why I was up at four in the morning today. I can't tell you why. And I did the 4 7 8 and I want to say I fell back asleep within minutes, right?

And, and doing that and **then a gratitude practice**. Oh, I love that. Yeah, Howie and I, so Howie and I live we're, he's in Highland Beach, I'm in Plantation, we don't see each other all the time during the week. And so we got in the habit of doing like these gratitude what are you three Three things you're grateful for today.

That's beautiful. And so we share that and it's been great, right? But it allows you to kind of reflect on the day. 100%. **What were you the things that you were grateful for that day, right?** Because we, we throw around gratitude, I feel like, very loosely. It's just like, oh sort of matter of fact, I'm grateful for my health.

Like, no, — really intentionally, what were you grateful for, right? And so I, I find that that also at night, like then I kind of ponder on that. And yeah. And I'm like, Oh, okay. You know, so I feel like those kinds of,

MELANIE: I love that we do that at dinner. We go around and talk about what we're grateful for. And yeah, at bedtime, actually I have **I've been doing two things. I lay in bed and I pray. And then I have been working on just doing visualizations** like, and yeah, I don't, I honestly, sometimes I fall asleep, so it's like whatever, but it works either way. But I was like I do that during my meditations, but I'm like, it's so nice to fall asleep with this beautiful image and you feel you have all the feelings and all the things, and it's, it's a really nice way to drift off too.

MERYL: Oh, I love that. Yeah. **Visualization is a big technique. I, we talk about a lot, especially when people are trying to. Manage sort of their habits.** That's a whole other conversation because I feel like when you're visualizing what you're going to be doing, it does changes that again, totally sidetrack on that.

So I don't want to spend that time, but visualizing is very powerful. Yeah, totally. So thank you for sharing that. Yeah.

So stress. And then we're going to get to nutrition. I promise we'll get there. Yeah. But stress and sleep and all **stress goes hand in hand with everything else, but it is a stressful time for people.**

Some people are work stress, some people, — whatever, life stress, like you said, right? The little kids, they're running around this, that maybe they're home from school. Maybe they're, you know.

How do you help your clients? You personally what, what is stress management look like for you?

MELANIE: Well, I think I'm somewhat of a broken record, but it always comes down to awareness.

It's like **Really being able to feel what you're feeling and stop and ask yourself why? Because sometimes I think that I'm mad at my son and I'm actually upset because of something that I said to my husband or something else that has nothing to do with my son,** right? And so I think that it's interesting when we can actually stop and sit with ourselves and say, what am I stressed about?

And then it's **can I do anything to change it? — And if so working on that plan. And if not. Then how do I let it go? And for me, that's often breathing through it. Sometimes it's just ways of shifting my energy**, which is moving my body or singing or, which I'm a terrible singer, but you don't want to be around me anyway.
But allowing that energy to really go.

And I, I know also sometimes you really Like **sometimes that requires me to literally remove myself from my kitchen where all the chaos is happening, all the stress is happening.** And I will tell my kids, like, I need, I need a few minutes and I will go walk in my grass and I will be thinking through this process.

Right. And, or I'm not ready to think about it yet. Cause I'm just sucking it. Yeah. And then I'm just breathing until I'm able to actually go through the process. Gosh,

MERYL: I think that's so important. Awareness, awareness, but it comes down to awareness.

MELANIE: Because I think half the time we're mad and we don't even know what we're mad about.

No, you're right. And we're stressed and we don't really stress about what we think we're stressed about, right? So it's like, let's get down to what it really is so that we can actually get to the root.

MERYL: So one of the things that you said, you, you're a breathwork teacher. Yeah. Counselor, whatever.

Instructor. Yeah. What? — So what does that mean? Like cause I think that's an important conversation. We're talking about stress. Cause a lot of people are like, well, and we talked about the four, seven, eight breath and all that, but really there's more to breath work than just doing a four, seven, eight breath so much.

MELANIE: So **I was trained in what's called conscious connected breathing or transformational breathing. And it's a, it's like a big breath work session, right? It's like you breathe in through your belly and through your chest, you release, you don't force exhale, but you release it. And it is a continuous cycle.**

And so I love, love, love it because it's so powerful. Yeah I had done it multiple times but My husband and I went to a class together in LA years ago, and we got into the class late. And so he ended up behind me and after we were done I'm a crier. So I cry all the time. It's like nothing, no one cares.

And so I go to him and he's literally crying. And my husband is like a very masculine man. Right. He's worked a lot on himself. So those tears come a little easier. But anyway, and I was like blown away. And so there's a guy, John Paul Cormini, and I took his course to become a breathwork instructor.

And it's something that I utilize in my personal life. And I'll do at retreats or for neighbors. Honestly, I do more for free than I do for paid. ——— But **it's a powerful way to move energy.**

And I mean, literally like you have huge sensations in your body that are just mind blowing just from the breath. Yeah.

And it is such a massive release. Yeah. And I also encourage other types of breath work because that is work. I mean, work to it. So even for myself, I'm like, I do it when I'm called to it, but it's not a daily practice. Got it. Yeah. So what is daily practice box breathing for 70 breathing, which I teach my kids and I do it at bedtime.

And those are things that I do daily, but those. Yeah, the big sessions are like really powerful.

MERYL: : Yeah. Is that like somatic breath work? It's similar, yeah.

MELANIE: There's so many names for 'em. Okay. A lot of 'em have just slight differences.

MERYL: Okay. Very, because I did the somatic and I was wailing. Yeah. It's powerful.

Right? Like I was like, whoa, where the hell did that come from? I know. You know, crazy. I mean, I don't mind cry. I was crying. Yeah. I mean, I was like, and, and I was with my team and they all heard me and they're like, you okay ? Because you know, I'm pretty stoic when I'm here. I mean, and I cry. I just don't always.

Try I mean, I'll cry at a Publix commercial, . I'm like, I love those holiday Publix commercials.

They're so, they're so sappy, But yeah, it was, it was pretty, it was pretty powerful, intense so that was so, but yeah, so I, **I love that like everything. There's different ways to do it and it's beneficial no matter how you do it. Just start doing it.** Start doing something.

MELANIE: I mean, Wim Hof, it's also beneficial it's like, and you can find his work though, too. I feel like his work a hundred percent agree to me because you hold, I guess it depends on how you feel about the holds. But yeah, I was like, the hold is a break.

Cause when you're pushing, you're pushing — sometimes I'm like, I don't know, I'm willing to do Wim Hof, but I'm not.

MERYL: this just reminds me, I just like had a flash. So at the Joe Dispenza retreat, he did that breath work at night, that thing. And yeah, that was. I ended up like shaking. I had a whole like out of body body experience after doing that breathwork.

MELANIE: It's so interesting. I think I like mentally like was somewhere else and I was like, wow, so it's so interesting that your breath that we, but that's so, that's just what I love about breathwork andro dispensa is that **you realize that we have this power when we're in a.**

Right. Yes. Like that was just your breath.

That was a free tool.

MERYL: Available to anybody. Right. Like, and, and he kept saying, I think it was a five, I think it was a full five minutes. I don't know if it felt long. Of this weird, like it was this. Yeah. Right. Like this in, in, in it was so profound when we were done. Like, and I just remember her saying, we're almost done.

We're almost done. I'm like thinking, okay, I can do this for another second. Right. And then it's like, but it kept going and I'm like, this is going to end. And then I'm like, I kept thinking in my head, I was still in my head. Like, is this going to, are we done yet? I don't know if it's ever going I had to get through it.

I kept doing it as I was doing it. And then I was done and I had this experience. I was like, that was really cool. I don't know that I really want to do that again, right away.

MELANIE: You know, why as an instructor, all it is is holding Yeah. It's work. And so even when I do it on my own, I'm like, maybe I should be done. No, like you need to keep — telling yourself to keep going.

MERYL: Exactly. So, right. No matter where you're at, it's always, it's always a work in progress. So, all right. So, so the stress piece again, and finding like, like those tips, I think it's great. It is. It's being, is the awareness. I think that that's so important because again, Almost like a badge of honor, the more we're stressed.

But you know, it's so interesting because I finished, I just finished an immunology course and I'm working on wrapping up a certification course from IFM and everything comes back to stress. — Like inflammation, right? I mean, it really **everything starts with inflammation because it triggers the immune system and that's where the beginning of every single disease happens**, right?

And again, we throw around inflammation. People don't really understand what inflammation is like when you start really getting in a cellular level and I you dig deep and that's the work that I love to do. I always say I think science is sexy. Not everybody does. Yeah. Because I find the body fascinating and if I can help you explain like what is going on in every single little itty bitty cell, right?

And, and you can articulate that in a way that makes sense for people. So like **stress literally affects every cell in the body in the most negative way. Harmful of ways**. That is the best way that I can say that. Right. So the more stressed we are, it's, it ages us. Right. it promotes disease.

It promotes disease in the brain. It shrinks our brain. It drains your energy. It's everything.

So we need a certain amount of stress. Right. Certain amount, small amount. Right. Right. Like we evolved with a certain amount of stress, but what we experience on a day to day. is so not human. Right. Yeah. You know, it is so counter to our humanness.

Yeah. And this is why we're so sick.

, stress is big and, and let's pay attention to that and find ways to, to be aware. And find ways to de stress. Exactly.

All right, so let's, **let's get into the nutrition piece** with a little, with the time that we have remaining.

Cause I think it's so important because we both preach very much the same thing. And you know, what is your philosophy on, on nutrition?

MELANIE: I mean, I really talk about. I mean, in the space of how we get them through the holidays, there's a lot to talk about, but.

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, **I think my biggest message for everything is really about balance.**

Yeah. You know, well, and awareness goes with it too, I think so many times people aren't even aware of what they're putting into their mouths, like, and people, it's so interesting, but everyone that I work with tells me they eat pretty healthy, you know?

I know.

What does that mean? I eat healthy. Yeah. I love you healthy. —

So I think that really paying attention to what you're eating and if you're actually conscious of what you're eating, you're making choices, right? And so then you just make good choices and they're not going to be perfect choices.

It is not. The goal is not perfection, right? My family and I eat really well. We do not eat perfect. And that is never my goal. Right. I think that's like unhealthy. It is. Boundaries.

And it goes back to pay attention to how you feel, right? So it's like, eat, eat the Christmas cookie or whatever with your glass of wine, but pay attention.

Maybe you don't want to drink that or eat the cookie because you don't feel good, you know?

Yes. And so then make a better choice next time.

MERYL: And I think that is so true because when you ask people to eat mindfully. And they're like, what? it's not something that we're, we're brought up with.

It's not something that most people don't think about what, what am I eating? Right. And how does it make me feel? Right. How does it make me feel? I feel like so many people eat and they're, they're counting calories, but **instead of counting calories, like maybe we should figure out how is this nourishing my body?**

100%. Right. Because how many times you count calories and they're empty, nothing calories and it's chemicals and it's doing zero for your body. As a matter of fact, it's taking away from, from your, it's depleting you. And yet. — Oh, but I only ate X number of calories. Like we've gotta get away from that.

MELANIE: Oh, this. I mean, I grew up with that and Yeah. Yeah. I grew up with you. Yeah. My family. Yes. Always dieting and like, even now, like, I'm like, oh my gosh, yes. Like, can we, I remember when my mom was like nuts are high in calories, but then I'm like, but the potato chips are okay. .

MERYL: Yeah.

Right. There's no fat in that. Yeah. There's no, yeah. Right. It was, I mean, I, I grew up in the eighties with all the snack. Well, zero sugar stuff. Oh gosh. Right. So it was like, Oh, no fat. Sorry. It was **zero fat. It was all sugar.** Right. There's snackable cookies. I'm like, no wonder I was blown up like a balloon. Right. I'm like, wait, but I'm not even fat, but I'm like so heavy. Right. Yeah. So part of it is how do you nourish your body, which is very different than. the calories that you're consuming.

MELANIE: It's like **we should actually count like how many real whole foods did you eat today?** Absolutely. You know, like, I mean, vegetables, like I think so many people also do really well, like a dinner that we eat, like a really good dinner, but they won't have a vegetable all day prior to that.

Or Not even a food that you eat and it's like, yeah, you have to like thinking throughout the day, what real foods can I eat to nourish my body. And it's and it's consistently making good choices.

MERYL: And again, **it goes back to the consistency with everything.** Right. And I think, again, I always talk about the reductionistic way that we look at things, right.

Because especially on social media, it's eat this, not that right. It's do this, not that way. We're sort of saying, well, this food, well, blueberries are good for you today. And then this is good.

Like it, that's so reductionistic and that, and that's where, that's how we get into trouble. Yeah. Right. You, **we can't be looking at one food.**

It's not one food is good for your brain health and one food is good for your heart health and one food is good for this. It's the collective of how we eat.

MELANIE: I always say **it's never one thing, right? People are looking for the one thing. I was searching for it for years and you realize like, that's why I talk about a hundred things because it's never one Thing.**

Meryl: what resonates is different for everybody. 100%.

And, and I think a lot of it too, when we're talking about food, we go with a, **I should be eating this. I hate should. Yeah.**

Right. I always say, don't should on yourself. So, right. It's not what you should be eating. It's what do you desire to eat? Yeah. Right. I mean, it's.

MELANIE: It's not supposed to be, it's not supposed to a diet and you're not supposed to be restricting yourself. Right? Like I legitimately love like healthy food. It's nourishing. I feel good. Like you're giving me a great salad. Like I'm so happy for lunch and that's my mom for years that I was dying.

I've always been thin. So it's like, this is not a diet. This is the lifestyle. And this is just and yes, I you know, you can have the salad for lunch and if you want to eat a burger whatever, it's not going to be perfect.

MERYL: But well, but I mean, but a burger can be part of that perfect meal, right? Like it is, it is about balance.

And I think the other part of that and what you said, right, how does it make you feel? And **so many people when they're eating processed food and you're eating quickly through the day and you're not sitting down and having a meal and it matters because if you're not consuming a robust enough meal, Hey, you're not getting the nutrients and the nutrition and the vitamins and the minerals and everything that you need, but you're also not. Satisfying your, your body** in a way that it's like, that was that tasted good, right? Like the feeling that food elicits, like you should enjoy your food.
You should enjoy your food, right? If you're not enjoying your food, why are you eating it? Yeah.

MELANIE: And good, healthy food can be delicious. It is not. I say that all the time.

MERYL: People make people like, oh, it's like sawdust. I'm like, you know what? Come to my house and tell me that you've eaten sawdust.

MELANIE: I love people coming to my house. So lovely, right? Because people will be like, oh, wow. Right. And it's like, yes, this is not that hard. Right. It's really not. Yeah. But people have to, **you have to get over your, your beliefs that this is a diet and this is supposed to be hard and the food is going to be bad and all these things, right, that are really obstacles.** There's so many obstacles that are in your way, it's like, let's, let go of all of that. Come with an open mind and be willing. But I also think people don't even realize sometimes how bad they feel. And so it's so it's also like, **let's start with like really checking in, like how do you really feel?**
Is this your optimal living? You know, and if not, like, then let's change that.

MERYL: Well, yeah, I had someone in here and she says, well, if I do this and this and this, what, what, am I going to feel any different? I said, well, **let me ask you a question. Do you wake up every day feeling amazing, right? Because you should.**
And if you're not, then maybe this will help you feel that

So people don't even realize. No, they don't. Yeah. And so I'm like, wow, that is just mind blowing. We just walk around not feeling.

MELANIE: Not feeling yeah, and honestly, it's a very interesting cycle. I've watched people do it. **You feel kind of bad So then you drink coffee to feel better and then you're tired. So you eat sugar to feel a little better anyway But it never stops** like unless you get off of that train like you will ride that into yeah Yeah, and it's chronic disease exactly you will right because it's it's you're just trying to get by

MERYL: it's the band aid It's the band aid, right? There's no such thing as the band. I love what you said, you know people think That eating good food, right? It's about, I always say it's not about deprivation or starvation. It's not. You know, that you can make these really amazing choices and nourish yourself and feel good and enjoy the food more so than if you were eating crappy food.

MELANIE: 100 percent. I mean, honestly, I think 100 percent. Yeah. Yeah. So I want you to experience it. It's easy, but you just have to get there. You have to come with an open mind.

MERYL: Well, again, it's, it's, it's the excuses. It's the barrier. It's the my what people think. It's that it's there. Predisposing thought like, right, they think, right, it's the belief system. This is what I was told. This is what I see, but is that really the truth and it's the perception with which we go into that.

So I think it's like you said it from the very beginning, go in with an open mind, going it, go in with an awareness of, am I willing to change? And if I'm open to change and again, Joe Dispenza talks about this all the time.

The only way to change. Is for you to actually change your mindset, like change who you are.

MELANIE: Yeah. 100 percent your beliefs and like, and **that takes a lot of courage, right? Yeah. Like you really do. You need to look in the mirror and like really ask yourself some hard questions and sit with yourself and get to know yourself. And that's such a beautiful way of living once you do it.** Right. Like the rewards are just. I don't even have a word for it.

MERYL: Blissful, blissful, magical, magical, magical, all those great things. And absolutely. Anything else did we miss? We, I think we covered all those five pillars. I know one of yours is water.

We got it. **We got to hydrate people, right? Clean water,**

MELANIE: clean water, and you know, we use reverse osmosis. So then you need minerals. And yes, I think I put water just because I was like when you think about how many days you can live without. food, just quite a long time. Right. And how few you can go without water. I think it can be completely ignored.

MERYL: Yeah. It does get ignored. And I know, right. For me, I, I, like I, my body is so sensitive to when I'm dehydrated, like my heart starts racing. So it's like, Oh no, I did not drink enough water.

MELANIE: You know, **the awareness around that. I do a lot of times my, my oldest son will have a headache and it's cause he doesn't drink water.**

I'm like, but I'm like trying to teach him to pay attention to that. Or people are tired. It's like, or you think you're hungry. Dehydration. Exactly.

MERYL: You're right. Right. Well, we know dehydration mimics hunger. Dehydration mimics it's fatigue causes fatigue. And so, yeah, causes all those things. So yeah, water is important.

Great. I mean, yeah, hopefully these little tips and tricks we'll be beneficial to you guys that are listening, share with other people because this is a challenging time of year for so many.

But I always, I look, I always go into the holidays. I'm like, I'm excited. You know, I mean, we've got I'm looking forward to spending time with family.

I've got me the beautiful thing about being in Florida is that people come and visit, right? So we've got a lot of people who are coming to visit

MELANIE: Yeah. I think, yeah, I think it's such a beautiful time of year if you allow yourself to see that. — And if you allow yourself to be present and you take off all of these expectations that are, **I'm very aware that I self imposed so many expectations on myself that really don't really matter.**

They don't matter. So I think allow yourself to really be present with people and to really step into joy and and yeah,

MERYL: awesome. Yeah. Love it. Love it. This is, it's so much fun talking to you. I know. I know. I know. We'll go for a third round. Anyway thank you so much for joining, joining me.

Thank you for having me. So glad you came in person. This is so good. So good. And everybody wishing you all a really healthful, joyous, happy holiday season and a healthy 2024. And yeah, let us know what you're doing to keep yourself healthy and balanced with that. This is your rebel nutritionist signing off. Make it a great day, everybody. Bye bye. Thank you.