

The Body Intelligence Summit

Thriving Bodies, Thriving World™

“Body Conscious, Earth Conscious”

Sophie Chiche

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Lamara: Welcome to **The Body Intelligence Summit**, a production of The Shift Network. I'm Lamara Heartwell, and I'm so glad you're joining us for this season with a fabulous woman named Sophie Chiche. Sophie is a French-American entrepreneur. She is the founder and CEO of Shape House, Los Angeles' premier Urban Sweat Lodge. She is also the founder and curator of Lifebyme.com, an inspiring online community. Sophie has also written for several renowned international publications as well as served as an executive coach for many high-powered corporations. Sophie, thank you so much for joining us. Welcome, welcome.

Sophie: Thank you for having me. Hello, hello.

Lamara: Well, I'm very excited about this particular topic. The title for today is "Body Conscious, Earth Conscious." And the topic that Sophie has been very involved in in her life that is a significant part of body intelligence is self-love, the ability to be able to give loving attention to our self and to care for our bodies and to know how to care for our bodies. So yeah, thank you, Sophie. Is there anything you would like to say about our topic as we dive in here?

Sophie: No, I'm ready to dive. I love the way you really see this parallel between how I treat myself with how I'm going to be able to treat the planet and those around me and how reflective that is and how I am with me will be demonstrated in how --

Lamara: Yeah. And Sophie, I'd heard you say, until we take better care of our bodies, we won't be capable of taking better care of the planet. Will you elaborate on that?

Sophie: Absolutely. It started from my personal experience, which is often a good place to start because I have more understanding of this than anything else. And in my journey, I've lost almost 180 pounds, which is more than I weigh now, so I've lost an entire self, half of what I was. And in the journey of that, there really was a lot of how-to and what to eat and what not to do, and there were a lot of outer tricks and things. But when people ask me the deepest way that I lost all this weight, and I released all this weight had more to do with how much I loved myself, and the more I was in this quest of self-love, the more my choices were self-supportive and just self-tender. And when I was ready to have a meal, I

would literally ask myself, well, how would you like to feel after this meal? Like I would say to a young child to understand the effect that my food was having on my energy. And I would literally identify different foods. If I wanted to have an afternoon where I was dynamic and alert and alive and aware, I wasn't going to go for a lot of bread and pasta and cream and sugars. I was most likely to pick salads and vegetables, things that really nourish my body and give me energy. So that was kind of the beginning for me of understanding how self-love was really related to the choice I was making, and because I was making these choices, I would be more serene, I would be more peaceful, and therefore I would walk around the Earth with a very, very different consciousness.

Lamara: Mm, thank you, beautiful. I'm curious as you were in that process of losing all that weight, how did you build that muscle of loving yourself and loving your body?

Sophie: No pun intended, but I would say it was a bite at a time. I learned to eat more slowly; I learned to eat doing nothing else. That was a big thing for me, like eating was kind of a shuffle between other things and not done very consciously, and that wasn't very caring. Like, I would realize that I had gone done and gulped down this enormous amount of food without -- I mean, I wouldn't do that to a child, I wouldn't shove food down their throat without pausing and breathing and chewing. And so there was this sense of every bite, like, can I chew this more consciously, can I make this choice more lovingly, can I go to places where I'm going to be serene eating as opposed to my car shuffling around places?

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So every bite was a bit of a decision and a choice and a crossroad. This meal -- do I want to be healthy, do I want to love myself? And to be honest, it took me a long time before most of my choices were loving. Sometimes I would be like, yeah, I want to be half-fainted this afternoon, and I would eat the pasta and I would do those choices because it was a journey. I wasn't ready to be full-on energetic and full-on alive like I am now at the very beginning. Part of the overeating was to slow me down and was to numb me. And so as I was becoming more and more aware of my eating, I became more and more aware in my life. I had to feel my feelings, and I had to get used to some of the things that I was trying to avoid, like my loneliness or my sadness or my feeling disconnected from the world and all of that that I would drown in food. I no longer was drowning in food, and so I had to feel them, I had to feel all those things. It's also in the journey of loving myself -- it's like oh yes, I do have anger; oh yes, that really does irritate me, as opposed to oh, I'm irritated, let me have some Nutella; it's going to pass, which I was doing a lot of.

Lamara: Wow, so many rich pieces in what you just shared. I was hearing how the practice of being present, that you literally going okay, one bite at a time and

asking yourself questions -- how do I want to be with this now and again now? And it's such an important aspect there around -- that really, it's only in the moment that we make choices. It's not, okay, I'm going to take better care of myself tomorrow, or, okay, I took really good care of myself yesterday so then now blah, blah, blah, versus no, it really is a right-now practice, and that it called you as you continued, even if you fell off the wagon as we say, you got back on and recommitted, that you kept coming back to that practice of presence, and the result was that you became more aware of what you were actually experiencing and feeling what was happening.

Sophie: Absolutely, and you can see right there why it's related to self-love. Because let's just imagine on a scale of 0, I'm ready to jump off a bridge, and 10, I could not love myself anymore, I'm so loving, it's like I'm oozing my own love, or whatever. Well, if that was kind of a momentum, when I was a 2 or a 3, I didn't want to be happy all the time, I didn't want to feel my energy joyful all the time. It was matching my 2 on my inner scale of self-love. I would sabotage myself. I could only be that happy when I loved myself only that little, if that makes sense. So I would find myself -- I remember this one time being in my kitchen, and I was taking these supplements and not the kind that you can tell if it makes a difference or not, like one that really made me feel a lot better when I was taking it. I'm actually at the moment forgetting what it was, but that's irrelevant. It was not the kind of supplement that whether I take it or not, maybe when I'm 90 years old I'll feel better. It was like in the moment I would feel better.

And I looked at those pills, they were sitting on the counter, there was a glass of water next to it. So it's not like oh, I have to go downstairs to get water, and I'm going to forget. No, it was all there -- the pills, the water, it was the right time, it was also not I have to be empty stomach, or I have to eat something before, which, those things can get in the way. No, it was the right moment, the right water, the right pill, everything's sitting there, and I looked at the whole thing, and I walked out of the kitchen without taking it. And I remember having this moments of like, whoa, I literally do not want to be happier right now. I do not want to be healthier, I do not want to feel more energy, probably because my level of self-love was lower, and therefore I'm not going to do all these things that make me all better because I only love myself that much, and it replicates everywhere for me -- in the way I drive. If I love myself, I'm not driving like I'm going to kill somebody. If I love myself, I'm not going to eat food that I know is hurting the people who are planting it for me. The more you love yourself and the bigger that consciousness is, the more every single choice becomes, like every inner action you have, that could be a loving moment, that could be a way that I express my love to you, to the planet, to the food I'm eating, and it really became a story of love for me through this quest of bringing my body back to a place that was healthier for me.

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I really saw that in the journey, that it had more to do with my health, that I just was not feeling well at such a heavy weight. Like, I would go upstairs and run out of breath, and I would try clothes on, and I would be sitting there with nothing fitting. You probably remember that I was born in Paris and being 320 pounds in Paris, it's like being a thousand pounds somewhere else. It's like, we are thin, it's the tradition. I mean, you go to a restaurant, and there's a chair, and you look at the chair, you think, whoa, am I going to be able to sit without breaking this chair? I grew up just like that. There was a lot of consciousness around my body cannot do these things, and my body is limited in those ways. And at some point it was like, okay, enough -- enough of limiting myself and making it so punishing and sabotaging.

Lamara: Yeah. It sounds like you have had a fierce commitment to your health and well-being and to having energy and to feeling good, and it's not something that can happen overnight. It's something that was a process and a journey for you of continuing to be devoted to that outcome that you wanted of really feeling good in your body and also having energy and feeling joyful. I'm curious, what else did you learn about yourself in this journey of learning to love yourself and losing all this weight?

Sophie: One of the biggest things for me was I'm going to choose how I relate to this world every single moment. So it's my choice -- like, I could choose to not have a happy communication right now or a joyful one or the most loving one that I can, but why? I would ask a lot of questions of myself, like, why am I making the choice right now that is not leading me to something good? Let's simplify -- it's either I feel good or I don't feel good, and I wouldn't make choices often that would lead me to not feel good, and that just became such a tracking mechanism. Like I would start watching what I'm doing, and I was saying to myself, hmm, okay. So right now you're not wanting to feel good or make yourself feel better, and start tracking that as why? Like, who else is responsible for this right now? Like, in this moment there are things I could do that would make me feel better, many choices, not just my food. And yet before, I would find myself often in a position where I would see myself make a choice that was less loving, until it became a daily quest, an hourly quest, and honestly, a quest of each second, because each second can ruin the rest of it.

And after that, there is what happens in life and how you respond to life and whatever, like, his is not a black and white thing. But it was very much like every day I would try simple ways to get closer to this. And for me this was happier, healthier, never not doing something because I don't have the energy. I don't know what it was, but it was my nightmare. Like, someone would say to me, hey, do you want to go on this trip? Or, hey, do you want to write a book with me? Or hey, do you want to -- and I would have to say, I don't have the energy to do

that. That was like, no, I don't want my life to be led that way. I want to not choose to write this book because I don't want to, not because I feel like, oh, that's just one more thing on my plate, and I'm so tired. I want to live a really meaningful life, and for that you've got to not run out of gas by noon -- all of that. And there were simple ways -- I know you and I have often talked about these ways that we can actually incorporate that stuff in our life. But some of it for me was I want to be the last one to end my food at this particular meal. So I would be sitting with four or five people, and my consciousness would be on, I'm going to slow down so much that I am the last one to send my plate away. And it would become a game. It would become like a simple, practical, little way, and honestly, to this day, I'm the last one at the table always. Like, I'm always like, oh, sorry guys, I'm slowing down this train here. And then people would match me. They'd start saying like, oh no, no, you're doing better. This is better. I eat way too fast, and it makes me slow down together.

Lamara: It's a way of being a food and eating activist. By eating very slowly, it helps others eat slowly. I actually have the same thing goes on in my world. I'm regularly the last one to finish my plate and have enjoyed having the practice of eating be a meditation and a pleasurable meditation -- the willingness to receive pleasure and to allow myself to be nourished. So, yeah.

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And it's interesting to hear what you were just saying; that is, sharing those polarities that are within us of self-destruction and self-regeneration. A part of us is drawn to self-destruction and is drawn to all those habits and behaviors and taking action from that place, and then the part of us that is drawn to perpetuating life and to thrive and to regenerate and how that's being mirrored on the outside on our planet right now, that if we take a look at the level of destruction that's going on on a planetary level, to me it's very much mirroring our personal process and what's happening on the inside.

Sophie: Exactly! And the truth is it's a matter of habit. What do you do when this particular thing happens? You're stressed, you speed up the way you eat. You eat different kinds of foods to calm you down. It's all a matter of how do I respond, like, literally, like respond to what happens, which by the way is the same root as responsibility, my ability to respond to what is? But I remember tracking my habits and hearing somewhere along the line that you cannot really stop a habit -- you have to replace it with a better habit. Like even the idea that when you walk in a room that's dark, you don't make the dark go away -- you turn on the light. And the light in the room is what changes the color of what's in the room, not the getting rid of the dark. And I started looking at my behaviors as this is not about eating slower, eating slower, eating slower. It had to do with right now this choice I can make, like I can turn on this light. I can make that choice right now, that instead of eating fast, my habit now is going to be that I

eat slowly, as opposed to don't eat fast, don't eat fast, which is not a great way -- I mean, I've raised a kid. I don't think it works. I don't think it ever works to make people not do what's not good for them. I think it's a lot better to inspire people to do what's better, and then you do it a little bit, and you see that it's like, wow, okay, nothing fell on my head, I was actually happier from that choice, yay! No, seriously. Sometimes it happens quickly, like big things can happen quickly, but most of the time -- I mean, you should look at my trajectory. It's funny because I just spent some time with a friend of mine I've known since literally our mothers were best friends. She could be a sister. She's not, but she really could be. We've known each other our whole lives. And now that I've lived in the States almost 25 years, when I see her, she literally won't have seen me in so long that she'll still pin me; she'll meet me, and she'll be like, oh my God, you're on time. I'll be like, why are you saying that? I've been on time for 30 years. And she's like, yeah, but when you were a teenager, my God, you were the worst.

And she kept bringing me back to this old behavior, which made me remember where I came from. Like you should take a picture of me when I'm 20 and a picture of me today, it's literally like when people tell me they can't change, I'm always, like, laughing my head off, because yes, you can. Like I said, if you saw me when I was 19, 20 in such destructive behaviors -- I mean, obviously being 320 pounds and then three packs a day and then sleeping with people who I don't remember the next day. And then all across the board it was just behaviors that were just really hurtful, because why would I not treat myself like that, that's how I didn't like myself?

Lamara: I'm so honoring your story. Yeah, it's really touching, Sophie, to hear how you've transformed yourself literally from the inside out and on a very cellular level. And how a lot of it has happened by you focusing on what you want and taking your attention away from what you don't want. And I'm curious about some of the self-destructive behaviors. I think it would be helpful to our listeners to have you elaborate on what are some of the ways when just even the self-destructive voices start to come up, what are the ways that you're able to shift and as you said, turn the light on in the room?

Sophie: The closest I know to describe it is when my daughter was born, and it was so easy to love her. It was just this little being that I was put in charge of and every choice I would make was one of loving. And so I started learning -- and I'm not saying you need to have a child to do so -- but that to me is what awakened it is I would find myself do something towards myself and I would think, okay, would you do that to her? Would you put that energy towards her, that kind of word, that kind of, like, demanding energy or judgmental energy? Inevitably the answer would be, no way! No way! And then I started thinking why am I treating myself not as good at least? I mean, I know how to do it; obviously, I'm doing it for her. And I started tracking all these parts. You know the famous expression,

like, if you treated your friends the way you treat yourself, you wouldn't have friends at all. Your friends would run away because -- the way I was treating me those years was very unkind and very disrespectful.

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And so to just have a reference point of someone we love, whether it's our kid, our dog, our friend, or mother, whoever it is, but it's this idea of would I do that to them? And the answer is no. Okay, what would I do? What would I do? In this moment, my daughter's frustrated, she's angry -- okay, what would I do? Would I shove food down her throat? No. Would I smack her in a closet and force her to be quiet? No. I would sit there, and I would speak to her, and I would ask what's going on, and I would listen and I would hold her hand if she was willing to let me, and I would just find ways to manifest my loving towards her.

And so personally that's how I learned, I started learning. And so I was 27 when she was born so that gives you a little reference point of how many years I've not done that and I've not done the kindness option towards myself. And to this day -- I'll do something that's not very kind, and I will stop myself in my tracks, and I'll be like, okay, wait. Would you do that to her? And inevitably, the answer is no, still, even after she went through being a teenager and all of that. I would still not do any of those things towards her. And so that's how I started building the muscle.

Lamara: Yeah, to treat ourselves, to literally have that attention towards our bodies as if we're for caring for a child and to have that sort of loving voice with ourselves in the same way we would with a child. And it's interesting because the more we are loving towards ourselves and actually at home and present and aware and in our bodies, the more we are available to really connect and share and give and receive love with other people, more or less how we take actions as we move out into the world. It's so interesting how our learned behavior has been to take our attention away from ourselves and be very much outward-oriented. And how everything is completely different when we are really present and have our attention in with ourselves -- it's the home base. It's a little backwards. And I'm grateful for these practices and any ways that people can start to bring their attention in towards themselves and recognize to really love ourselves and be present with ourselves how everything else ripples out from there. And I'm wondering, do you have a practice you could share with our listeners right now that would support their building of their love muscles?

Sophie: Yes, I do, and it's very connected to my breath for me personally. So I meditate in the morning. I sit for a few minutes, and I connect with my breath. Because my breath is when I know it most connects me to being alive. I mean, obviously, the difference between being alive and not is our breath. So I typically will sit there and just watch my breath go up and down in my chest. I'm just taking it in, and

letting it out. And literally, five or six breaths of that will connect me to me because that is the closest to my bones, that is the closest to who I am is my breath. It's like my blood. So I do that. And in a more fun, kind of a playful kind of way, I have a list of things that I've written, and I'd add to it all the time. I remove stuff from the list as well. I have a list of things that bring me joy. So some of it is like ice skating and spending time with my daughter and cooking a meal for people I love and sitting there and breathing. So some simple things, some longer-term things, some that take a little bit of my energy.

And literally when I don't feel at my best, I will look at the list and I'll say okay, do one or two -- all right, let's just do it. And I would do it like I would do with a friend, kindly, not like hitting me to do so. It's kind of a gentle, okay, let's look at the list. What can we do right now that would kind of -- and I'd call a friend or I'd sit there and I'd breathe five times. It doesn't take as much as we think to get us in a loving place, like it's not a giant mountain to climb. It's right now making a choice, focus on something that brings you joy, possibly do it. If it's something internally, just think about that thing. And all of a sudden it's like your chemistry literally changes, it's like, it slows you down. It kind of lets you look at things a little bit differently, it gives you more perspective, it gives you more creativity.

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Just like if you're all tied up in knots, and you're not breathing, and you kind of like shorten your breathing, you're literally cutting the flow of everything that could help you in that situation. So I start there. I start with my breath, and I put myself back in a more connected way so I slow down, and then I look at the world, and it's beautiful. There's so much that's beautiful that somehow it puts me back on track.

Lamara: Thank you. I love it. And gratitude practice is giving attention to what you appreciate and what you enjoy. And yes to the breath, absolutely. We, speaking of, have another session on this Summit that is a whole session of guided breath work that I recommend checking out as getting connected and knowing how to breathe in a way that not only sustains us but supports our thriving is really key. And if anyone wants to listen to other sessions, and they don't have time during the Summit, I highly recommend, the Upgrade package, which will give you all the recordings and that's at bodyintelligencesummit.com/upgrade. And Sophie, I'm wondering, is there anything you would like to leave our listeners here with today?

Sophie: The whole conversation of loving ourselves sounds like a mission or something that's really big. And really, I'd love for the listeners to have picked up in anything we said today one or two things, even if it's just slowing down that one bite -- one thing. Because the minute you start moving the boat in the right direction or the more loving direction, we get used to it. Like, I started to really

develop being with myself so lovingly that anything but that is no longer feeling good. But it started with one bite or one very small moment, so I would say start there.

Lamara: Yeah, and that deep knowing that when we're loving ourselves that way, it really does ripple out, and it really does make a difference. I'm curious, I know you've been really connected in the Hollywood industry, and I think it would be interesting to share, as so many people admire and look up to, and there's such are so enamored of the Hollywood folks. I'd love to have you share a little bit about that on this topic of self-love. What have you noticed in the Hollywood community around this topic of loving ourselves and loving our bodies?

Sophie: Since we're not talking about anyone specifically, I can tell you that in general, not very much. Like, I'm finding that a lot of people I work with very closely and very intimately about their struggle or about what they might be going through that is less than what you see on their Instagram or public life, they struggle with it as much as we do. And they have to do the journey as much as we do, and the fact that millions of people adore them and really admire them without knowing anything about them often does not help. It's not like, okay, I have 60 million people following me; I must be a good person -- it doesn't translate that way.

Like, it's still -- because my version of, like, for them having 60 million people follow them on Instagram has no more value than for me having written a book - - it doesn't work for me either. And for someone else it may be, I made a good meal. It's like, none of that stuff is exactly what's going to bring us to love ourselves because it's all external, and it's all based on other people validating us and that never works; it's never worked. And I've had to those things, I mean, not the 60 million followers, but the writing the books and the building companies and the doing all these things that are like, okay, they're cool, especially because I do things because I'm interested in them, so I'm always involved in interesting things. But I always end up with the same sense of like, it ain't that. It ain't that that's going to bring me -- it's really not what's going to bring me what I'm looking for because what I'm looking for is really, really close to my breath, honestly. When I'm in that flow, when I'm in that dynamic, all that I want and all that brings me joy just occurs because I put myself in the flow of nature when I'm in the flow of my breath. And so to answer your bigger question of people that are celebrities that are admired in the world, they do the same work. They do the same work, from what I've seen.

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Lamara: Thank you. Yes, we're in it together. There's no one that gets a special ride.

Sophie: Not that one, nope.

Lamara: Yeah. Well, that's an important one, to take off the mask of. I want to let our listeners know, if anyone is interested in connecting more with Sophie, her website is www.sophiechiche.com. And I highly recommend if you're in the LA area to check out her Shape House, a fabulous Urban Sweat Lodge and go rejuvenate yourself at one of her homes there. And Sophie, thank you so much for this time. It's been lovely to talk to you and everything that you shared. I really appreciate it.

Sophie: Thank you. Thank you for having me as your guest. I really appreciate it. Thank you very much.

Lamara: Absolutely. And thank you all for joining us. Stay tuned for more.

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