



SNR #06: Amy Kubal – Overcoming an Eating Disorder & What it Teaches You

Danny: Hello Amy, how are you doing today?

Amy: Not too bad how are you?

Danny: I'm very good, so I'm actually really excited to get you on today because this is just such a huge topic that I think literally kind of changed people's life, so just hopefully that I do justice and I get this thing down. So before we get into any of those topics at all, perhaps just give people a really, really quick intro to who you are, what type of work you're doing, that sort of thing.

Amy: Ok, hi, my name is Amy Kubal, like Danny said, and I am a registered dietician and have been since the last 3 to 4 years of my career in the paleo scene, being a paleo dietician for Rob Wolfe, and just I do a lot of writing online and I am kind of known as the paleo dietician. And recently I came out about my history with eating disorder that started when I was 11 years old, and now I'm focusing...I'm still working with all types of clients, but I'm very much interested with helping those that are dealing with food

issues on any side of the spectrum. And obsession stuff. So that's kind of where I'm at and who I am.

Danny: Yeah and it was that post that you mentioned back on rob's site, I think it was maybe February time or something like that, that when I read that I think I just contacted you straight way, I was like, this is amazing, and recently at paleo effects a couple of weeks ago, that was obviously a big weekend for you because you were doing a talk on the subject here, which was obviously a very personal story, and I know just gauging from the reaction there, you just touched so many people with that story. So for those people listening perhaps that's the way we're going to frame probably the rest of the conversation, and if on this whole topic. So I suppose you mentioned that it was going back to when you were 11 years old I believe you said, so just how did that actually start and I suppose how long was it before you even realized that you were doing something unhealthy, or something that was even problematic?

Amy: To me, it started completely innocently. I remember I got away...in school we always got away in the fall and then the spring...and in the fall of that year, I was about 5 feet tall and I weighed 90 pounds, and I was healthy, then when we got reweighed in spring, I was the same height, but I weighed 85 pounds, and I was like wow, I lost 5 pounds and I didn't even have to think about it. And I had been having some thoughts from time to time that my legs were a little chunky, my legs are kind of fat, because I had a cousin that was like stick thin and I was like; I want to look like that. So when I had lost those 5 pounds and didn't even try I was like, well that was easy. So over the summer I made it my goal to get down to 80 pounds, and once I get to 80 pounds my legs will look exactly how I want them to be and I'll feel good and I'll be happy. So my plan was just to not eat snack and stay outside more and just be a kid and nothing, nothing major, nothing earth shattering, so about mid way through that summer I

hit my goal, I weighed 80 pounds, awesome. But then that became not enough, and my goal was oh I can just keep going. And I remember I got a book in the mail that summer called girl talk or something, and it showed 3 body type frames, and one was a thin, very thin girl, one was an average sized girl, and one was a larger girl. A larger boned framed girl, and the amount of calories each of those body frames, the amount that they should be taking in, and I was like, well I want to look like that small one, so I only need 1200 calories, and that's when my calorie counting started. And pretty soon I was like 1200 is good, well then a 1000 is better, or 800 is better and it just fed on that, and it finally...my head started...in my 6th grade year and I was 12 years old I started school and I started...when we got weighed, then I weighed I believe 72 pounds when school started and I was thin, I was now the thinned girl in the class, and I was kind of proud of that. And by end of October of that year, it was World Series time I remember, the twins were playing the World Series, I'm a twins fan, I was at the time, and my parents...they were very concerned. All through that fall they thought I had cancer, they were taking me to doctors, trying to figure out what was happening, finally they just...my grandma came home one day cause my mom was at work and we were going to the hospital, they were going to admit me, they took chest x-rays, I ended up having chloral C, so they admitted me for that and while I was there they started monitoring my eating and stuff, and of course I did, I ate more there than I did at home, but it still wasn't much. And that's when the doctor diagnosed me with anorexia. My mom was a nurse at this hospital and when the doctor said I had anorexia I looked at my mom and said, mom what's that? And they said, you don't want to eat. And I was like, I had no idea what it was at that time or anything, but I knew it was right, I didn't want to eat. So that's kind of how the diagnosis got put on me and it's not something I set out to get or to have, I never said be anorexic. It just happened.

Danny: I think one of the things that strikes straight away when you hear this is that people have this stereotypical view that when we hear that anorexia and eating disorder that everything is very extreme or that its very obvious to someone on the outside, whereas what we're kind of seeing here in your situation its just something that slowly was creeping up that didn't seem too extreme, just gradually progressing towards this diagnosis.

Amy: And, it's just a phase my mom thought, the first couple of months, and then I got sneaky about it. So it did start to become more extreme. They thought I was eating things I wasn't eating, I'd throw stuff away on the bus. I would just not eat, I remember dumping my cereal down the drain, and it just got more and more restrictive and lying more about food and what I was eating and in my weight, it fell fast. When I decided that I was going to just do it. So I was admitted into the hospital at the beginning of November, and I weighed 68 pounds when I was admitted. So I went from 90 to 68 in a pretty short amount of time. So it was severe to people on the outside looking at me, but in my mind it wasn't.

Danny: So with that, what was your I suppose thought process in your mind when obviously you had these people saying these things to you and trying to help you and trying to look out for you and then, but to you it wasn't the problem there making out, what was then kind of going on in your head then at that stage?

Amy: I was angry, very angry. It was how through lots of therapy, and my eating...I had come to the conclusion that my eating disorder was my way to...it was a cry out for attention, and it was my way to control something. And they were taking away my control, and I didn't like that. Not even a little bit. And I fought it. And they didn't know.

Danny: So there was obviously...and we kind of see this in a lot of things in life, when there is people that mean well to try and help, when you tell someone that they're doing something that they shouldn't be doing for example, there's always this resistance, push back. So did you find yourself like the more people tried to say that this was not right, so to speak, that you would resist against that? The more that they did that?

Amy: Yes. Yes. Definitely. Being 12 it put me in a tough situation because your parents are kind of in control of everything at that point, but anytime I could manipulate the situation, I just did it, did it more or did I bigger when I wasn't able to control it. I was a very unhappy and...yeah I wasn't the easiest person to live with most of the time.

Danny: So then if we kind of fast forward on a bit from that, you obviously then started getting later in life involved with health and fitness. Did that even compound the problem more did you find or how did that tie in?

Amy: So after I got admitted into an eating disorder program when I was in 6th grade and when I got un admitted, when I got discharged from that program being healthy and they started to let me exercise again, I started like ok, I have to exercise for an hour a day and It was innocent kid playing stuff but it was intentional in my mind. So it wasn't I'm having fun it was like, all right I have to kick this ball and chase it for an hour. And I still go in the exercise stuff started and I remember I had a therapist and right before I got to start exercise she said, well we're going to let you start exercising now and that way you wont feel like all the food you're eating is going to fat, and I was like Whoa! If I don't exercise all the food I'm eating is going to fat? So that was my bad time, then I was like now I have to exercise, otherwise all this food is going to fat. And I never really...my mind really never got well. So I was back in hospital in 7th grade, I had ups and downs all through high school. I started running track

in junior high and I was not good at it at all. So one summer I was like, ok, I'm going to run everyday so I can be good at something and its exercise. So the summer between my 8th grade and freshman year I decided I was going to run 6 miles everyday, and I did. And that's when the exercise thing really started to take toll, and it started just progressively got more and more and more. Through my high school years and when I originally...my original plan was to get a degree in exercise science or sports medicine, so it definitely my past was screwed, and exercise helped me choose the career path that I took, and I ended up in nutrition. I ended up changing my major during my second semester because I took a nutrition class that I really enjoyed and did well in it, so I changed my major to nutrition and that is how I got to where I am today. And did it hurt me to be in this field? You know I don't think so, honestly I don't think being thin in nutrition field has done anything, its made me very aware of my problems, in that I can see them in other people, and I'm like whoa! That was like me. Like if I tell this person its ok to eat this or do that or not exercise, its probably ok for me, where things get shady is when I went from...I'd always been high cover high drink, low fat. Never, from the time I was 11 until paleo time, which was about 5 years ago, and so then I got into a more paleo swing and then its like ,oh my gosh now I'm eating to much carbs, and I can't have gluten, and I'm still scared of fat. So it added to my restriction instead of treating up something, because in my mind adding fat was not something that I was going to do in a large amount, and I had to some how get rid of my carbs, so it added to the fat and the same can be said for me into what's (inaudible 16:46) it was ok, I'm enduring, I run marathons and now its supposed to be good, but I don't want to quit running so I'm just going to add this to it, and so it grew, the problem just got bigger for me, so in that sense it did feed.

Danny: Yeah, so I think when you just said it there that while paleo is obviously great for so many things and you were able to twist that and turn it into a

way to justify the restriction or just another way to do that, so and I was actually chatting with someone recently, one of my friends, around this topic, and she actually brought up the similar point, she see's a lot of her and her friends when they first kind of go, paleo everything is working great but then for certain people they can almost use like the foods void, or these rules as a way becoming a bit more neurotic about food. And the reason I mentioned health and fitness industry is that it tends to be more of a problem in that area where people are dependant on the certain images or ideas around fitness and like you mentioned these self imposed rules we can sometimes plot on food, and is there any way that you found that we can best balance this idea of avoiding poor nutrition, with at the other end avoiding becoming neurotic about everything you eat.

Amy: You know that's where it comes to why are you doing this? Why are you not eating this food or that food or the other food. Is it out of fear? Is it because you're afraid that it's going to make you fat, or if you're avoiding something, you're avoiding a food because you're afraid of it is something other than a true health related condition. So I am celiac, so I can be scared of gluten because it makes me feel very sick, but if you are scared of eating out at a restaurant because you're going to get some canola oil or something and oh my gosh! That's going to maybe give you a little bit of inflammation or make you not be able to see your sixth abs or something, that's when it's crossed that line to obsession. And giving yourself permission to eat things that aren't 100% paleo all the time is ok. And not to feel bad about that, you didn't fail if you said I'm going to have ice-cream and cake at the birthday party. That's nothing wrong with that that is a normal thing to do. If you are eating cake alone at home and you're eating the entire gallon of ice cream and the entire cake, then that's another problem. But ultimately allowing yourself permission to enjoy the foods that you like, its ok. If you want a doughnut have a doughnut, but enjoy that doughnut.

Danny: Especially, I've found this myself, its so easy to get wrapped up in everything, the more knowledge and insights you accrue on this sort of things that you can easily start talking yourself into worrying about every single little detail just because you have that...you've heard something about that type of food, so just keeping that boarder spectrum mindset that you just mentioned there, I think just is so important for people to keep in mind.

Amy: Right, and its just going to kill you, what's going to kill you is a little bit of cheese on a salad, going to take you to your grave? I doubt it. I doubt it. Unless its really rotten cheese. But alternately in the grand scheme of things its not a big deal, its not a big deal and you might hit a bus walking outside in the next five minutes, you're chances of dying at that are better than your chances of dying from a sprinkle of cheese on your salad.

Danny: The other thing I wanted to pick up on is, I've just found it so interesting the whole exercise piece to your story, because for so many of us, its very easy to think of this as just a food only related issue, just how big was your attitude towards exercise in this whole story for you, and do you think that this could be as much as a problem if not sometimes more so for some people than actual food side of things?

Amy: Oh most definitely. You know like this last relapse that I had was primarily exercise focused. That is how I coped with everything. I was still eating, but I was not eating anywhere near enough to support the amount of exercise that I was doing and why exercise? Why exercise? Why did I do that? Because it was the only time I didn't have to feel, it was my stress reliever right? How many people do people say, he relived my stress. It relieved my stress to a point that if you're doing it 2 – 5 hours a day that's not healthy, you need to find another stress reliever. If you're cancelling

appointments or spending time with your family because you need to go work out, that's a problem. And you know, like I got really, really good and manipulating my food around my exercise. So if I don't exercise then I don't earn this food, and I think that is more prevalent than most people will care to admit, like oh I didn't work out today so I can't have any starch. Right? No! You want starch have some freaking starch. Its we set all these rules around it and its all...we stop tuning out to what our body is telling us. We workout when we hurt, when we're tired, we work out with an injury. We don't eat when we're hungry, or we eat when we're not hungry. And its that whole trying to cue back into what our body is telling us and stop being smarter than them and stop trying to control them and just be. Just be. And that I what I'm working so hard on right now.

Danny: No its just awesome and I'm sure there's loads of people that are right now just identifying with this story. And on that same topic, while your specific diagnosis Amy was anorexia, I think really the principles that are coming from the story every time you share it is that this related to any form of disordered eating if we can use that term, from bingeing to constant overeating, to just having strange impulses with food, and its really just any kind of relationship that's not healthy with food. What are the common kind of themes that are common to all those different things that you think we could summarize this as?

Amy: Control is the big one. We're all trying to control something, and to feel...that control gives us a sense of comfort, or safeness, but alternately its just isolating. It's a isolating habit regardless of what side you're on. Because when your food starts to isolate you, you can't eat in front of people, or you have a ritual that you need to do or you know like, I for a long, long time would not eat a whole lot during the day and then eat at night, and then I had certain foods that I ate and in a certain order, and it became my life. And I thought I can't go to that because that's when I eat.

And I don't know what food they're going to have there and that doesn't fit my pattern so it becomes ritualistic, isolating again, and its just, its control. Like I am in control in my little bubble. And ultimately it's a need for something in life...its bigger than food. Its something deeper than the food that is causing this behavior, and until you figure out what that is, and get angry about it and get real about what that cause is, the food stuff is not going to fix itself, and if it does its for some reason you're able to not address any emotion or any feeling behind it, its likely that you traded that for something else. So its like we're an alcoholic and they give up alcohol and they smoke. And so I traded...for a long time I traded food for exercise. Like I was eating, but I was going to work out like a freak. I had to have something that I could control, something that let me numb out.

Danny: Yeah makes so much sense and its like when you say, what is the reason, why? Why are you doing these behaviors and if someone doesn't ask themselves this question then you're never really going to get to the bottom of it. That's just amazing the way you framed it there Amy. Now I'm certain there's going to be plenty people listening that identify with at least something here in some way and what bottom line advice can they take from your story if they do feel that they have an unhealthy attitude or relationship with food?

Amy: For them to know that they are not alone and that there are people out there that understand and help, and not try to isolate and figure it out yourself, because I did that for a long, long time. I can fix this, I can fix this. And guess what it was always tomorrow, tomorrow we'll start, tomorrow never ever came for me. Never. So just know that you can stop. You can stop the obsession and there is a life outside of the obsession and that food is a gift, it is a gift regardless is it is a doughnut or a steak and enjoy everything you eat, if you're not enjoying it, why are you eating it? And if you tell yourself that you can't have something, you're taking away

form your enjoyment and you're...how many times have you been eating something and thinking to yourself, I shouldn't be eating this, I shouldn't be eating this. I shouldn't be eating this, this isn't part of my plan, you're missing out on the whole enjoyment piece that. So let yourself enjoy it, let yourself enjoy, give yourself permission to have it. Its ok, you did not fail, it will not kill you, there will be tomorrow. And just put things into perspective, I have to do that all the time, like ok! Seriously this is not that big of a deal. You know like, I will tell an embarrassing story like just a few weeks ago I kind of had a breakdown because I decided with my room mate that I was going to put hot fudge on some ice-cream, and I cried. Because I was like, I can't, I can't do it, because its going to make me fat, oh my gosh! And did it make me fat? No it didn't. I was so embarrassed that I even got into that moment where its like why am I crying about hot fudge? This is dumb. In the grand scheme of my life is this going to make it different, and that's what I think with a lot clients that I have, I just need to lose these 5 pounds and I'll be happy, if I lose these 5 pounds I'll be a happy if I can see my abs. its like, no you wont. You wont. Your life doesn't all of a sudden get better when you click off that last 5 pound, or if can see your abs, nothing changes. The outside appearance, unless you address it from the inside you're not going to ever be happy. In fact you may be less happy.

Danny: Yeah and I think its so often easy for us to think that if we address these kind of external things, so like our body image and or how much stuff we have, that those things will in turn make us happy, and then we can start living life, whereas really its probably like you were kind of thinking out there, its probably the other way around. You've got to get your head right and you got to start being happy with things, and then that in turn will allow you to do those other things you mentioned.

Amy: Amen! You need to like catch and stack right there, cause that is gold and that's it, we're all waiting to live for the perfect moment, and while we're waiting for this moment, life is passing us by, so enjoy every breath you take, because you never know if you're going to get hit by a bus the next time you walk outside.

Danny: That's it, and that's why we really do all these things in the first place. That's why we eat right, that's why we train, we want to look a certain way because we want to be happy, but why not just start being happy first, which is so easy to miss out on, and I'm very guilty myself as well and I probably stole those ideas from someone else smarter than me.

Amy: That's so good.

Danny: One more topic Amy, you do have a book possibly in the works? Details on that?

Amy: I am working on a book, my publisher dropped me because he didn't know how to market a book like this, so I'm without a publisher, so therefore I have put writing on a back burner but I would love for it to get out in some way safer form, and I've got about 20,000 words in and if all else fails it will just be a series of blog posts I guess.

Danny: Oh you got to get this stuff out there, this is amazing stuff. Go self publish it, do a James Altrichter. This stuff needs to be heard its amazing.

Amy: Yeah, then I'll publish it, I just need to take a little bit more initiative into finding one that will publish me.

Danny: Sure there will be. So before we finish up on the last question that I have for you, probably now is a good time for you to let people know where

they can find you online or contact you on social media and that sort of thing.

Amy: Ok, well I live on Rob Wolfe's website on the services page for anyone that would like to work with me. I also do consulting for the paleo moms, so I live over there too, and I am on twitter @amyKRD, and if you want to send me an email, my email address is amyk.rd@gmail.com and I would love to help as many of you as I can. Just know that I understand, I understand, I've been there, I am there and there is hope.

Danny: Awesome. So the one question that I ask everyone that comes on the show Amy, and this doesn't have to be related to anything we've talked about today, doesn't even have to be to do with nutrition, but if there was one thing that you could tell people to do each and every day that would improve their life in some way, what would you choose that to be?

Amy: I would say smile and just be you. Be you, don't be who the world thinks you should be.

Danny: Love it, that's amazing. So I think we're just coming up on time here Amy, so I just want to take this moment to just say thanks so much, it really is such a inspiring story and to know you're helping so many people by letting this information out and sharing your experiences, and especially when its such a personal story, and so I just want to say thanks so much for coming on and talking to us today about all these things.

Amy: Well thank you so much for having me and listening,. Because I tend to babble on quite a bit so I'm sure there's probably some people sleeping, so for all of you, wake up its over!

Danny: Ok, thanks so much Amy, I'm sure we'll be chatting again soon.

Amy: Ok, bye Danny, thank you.

