

Done with Dieting Podcast #16: Want to be Happier?



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With your Host
Elizabeth Sherman

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You are listening to the Done with Dieting Podcast Episode number 16

Hi, I'm Elizabeth Sherman, former corporate high tech executive turned life and weight loss coach. But it wasn't that long ago that I was searching for that perfect diet, the one that would finally be the golden ticket to lose the weight that I so desired.

Fast forward past tons of failed diet attempts, exercise fads and painful lessons learned, and although I still have not reached the state of Nirvana, body love, my relationship with food and exercise in my body is infinitely better than it was not only when I started this journey, but even as recently as three years ago.

The journey that has allowed me to ditch my scale, stop logging my food and exercise, eat food that I didn't prepare and easily maintain my weight - something that I never thought was possible for me.

I created the Done with Dieting podcast to give you simple, easy to do and sustainable strategies to help you do the same without all of the drama that I went through.

If you're a woman who's looking to create a better relationship with food and her body, get off the diet roller coaster and free up a bunch of headspace spent on calories, how you should look what you should eat and beating yourself up for not doing what you think you should be doing. You are in the right place.

Let's get started.

Hello, hello, hello everyone! welcome to the show today, we are going to be talking about how to be happier today.

And not just how to be happier overall, although that's amazing, but also how to be happier in your relationships and how to be happier with your body. I mean, who doesn't want that? And how we are going to do that is through a gratitude practice.

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Now, before you're like, yeah, Elizabeth, I've done a gratitude practice, and it doesn't work or a gratitude, whatever, I want you to have an open mind in this case, because I had the same exact reaction when that was proposed to me, however, my bent on this is a little bit different than most people's. So stick with me,

I have to tell you that for the longest time, I really struggled with creating a gratitude practice. I always asked like what was wrong with me that I had a hard time feeling grateful for what it was that I had, I knew that I was so that I am so incredibly fortunate in my life, like I knew that I had everything that I could possibly want. And yet, I really felt like it wasn't enough that I felt guilty for not only wanting more, but not even like really appreciating what I did have was always really confusing to me. And yet, whenever I tried to start a gratitude practice, it always felt really forced. And it always just felt flat.

And I talked to women all the time, who give and give and give, right. That's what we do, we give to others, we're told that we need to be giving. And so many of us don't receive, we don't give to ourselves. As a result, we feel resentful, because we're not taking care of ourselves. And when we do take care of ourselves, we feel guilty for doing it.

And I should totally do a whole podcast about our ability to receive, but that's totally for another day.

So we give and give and give we don't receive. And as a result, we feel resentful, and we feel like martyrs, like no one else is gonna do it. So I may as well have or this is all everything that I have to do like this is all on my shoulders. No one else around me can take care of themselves, I need to do it all. And not only that, but no one appreciates everything that I do.

And this thought process is something that starts slowly, but then it starts to pick up steam. And it's a really, truly destructive path that we really want to get out of. And the idea is that if they're not going to recognize me and everything that I do for them, I'm

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going to start withholding, I'm going to start withholding things that they want, I'm going to start withholding love, I'm going to start not giving them what it is that they want or need. And therefore the problem begins. And it creates a huge rift within our relationships.

And so when we feel unappreciated, we attempt to comfort ourselves. And we do that with food, with alcohol with buying things on Amazon. And we do that because we're trying to create a pleasant experience for ourselves. We're trying to create joy in our lives. Because no one else it seems, is willing to do it for us. So we feel like we have to do it ourselves. And so these are the only tools that I have food, alcohol and buying things that is going to make me feel better.

And we know that these techniques don't work, right. We know that eating an excess amount of food or eating brownies, cupcakes, or Oreos doesn't make us feel better. It might make us feel better in the moment. And same thing with buying things on Amazon, the excitement of what we've ordered is just amazing. But then once it comes in the mail or kind of let down, right. And the same thing happens after we've eaten the food. Our problems are still there, but we don't know what to do instead.

And so I'm going to suggest and I do this from experience that starting to do a gratitude practice can help us with that. However, let me state that as I said before, that I used to try to do gratitude practices and it never worked until I found a new way of doing it and that's what I want to share with you today.

So So let's start out with what gratitude is one of the definitions that I found, and I wasn't able to find out the source of this definition. But the one definition of gratitude that really resonated with me is a social emotion that signals our recognition of the things others have done for us. And I think that that's part of it. It can be things that other people have done for us. But it can also include things that we have done for ourselves as well.

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And so in prepping for this podcast episode, I was remembering that there was a quote that I really loved a lot about how some sort of emotion couldn't exist in combination with gratitude, that when we feel grateful, this other emotion wasn't present. So I went searching for the specific quote. And what was so interesting was, I found this same quote, with so many other emotions substituted in. One is if gratitude is there, fear does not exist, grief, and gratitude cannot sit at the same table. And the same thing is true for anxiety, worry, hates, and anger, that if we have gratitude, all of these negative emotions that we also have can't exist in the same place. And so I want to offer that when we're feeling negative emotion, if we can even contemplate feeling some sort of gratitude, it can kind of kick us out of that.

Now, let me put a caveat in here that I'm not trying to have some sort of toxic positivity, where I'm suggesting that if you're feeling a negative emotion, that you should just be grateful and ignore whatever it is that's bothering you. Okay? I'm absolutely not saying that.

But what I'm suggesting is, if in general, you are feeling resentful, irritated, angry, or just with everyone around you, it's possible that gratitude can change your experience.

Now, gratitude did not come easily to me, before I really got into the groove of having a gratitude practice. I was constantly irritated. Resentment was a feeling that was just normal for me, I was consistently resentful, generally unhappy, I felt taken advantage of and unappreciated, and just a general discontent. And so if you identify with any of those feelings, potentially starting to notice, what you can be grateful for, can really actually be helpful in helping you to become happier. And when we become happier than we naturally take better care of ourselves.

So now, the first question is, why does this happen? Why are we so negative?

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And so I think the answer to that is actually very evolutionarily, our brains have always been negative, our brains are constantly on the lookout for things that are going to kill us, or that are going to cause us harm. And so it's constantly looking for the negative out there.

Our brains are also very narcissistic. Everything that we take in, we make it mean about ourselves, our brains will always ask, how does this apply to me? How is this going to kill me? How is this going to negatively affect me?

And so if this is happening to you, or if there's someone near you, who was constantly negative and very narcissistic, be aware that just your brain, their brain is working perfectly fine, that this is something that happens to all of us? And what we get to do we get to quiet those negative and narcissistic thoughts.

Now, here's the thing is our brains are also liars. You know, I say that tongue in cheek, but at the same time, it's also very true. So for example, our brains are constantly comparing ourselves to other people. It's totally normal to do this.

And so when you're living in a household, or whether you're at work, you're constantly evaluating how am I doing compared to the other people in my household or at work? If you're doing the same job as someone else, you will start to notice whether you are producing more than this other person. It's totally our brains coming up with bullshit. It's totally our brains starting to notice something negative, either about that person or about us.

And we see this a lot in families as well, right? That I'm doing all of the housework and my partner isn't pulling his weight, my partner isn't keeping up my partner isn't doing their fair share. And first of all, that's just not helpful. But second of all, what's the point in doing that?

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Now, when we start to notice these comparing thoughts, our brains have something that's called cognitive bias. Cognitive bias is the brain's desire to be correct. The brain is constantly looking for evidence to support its position.

And so have you ever had the experience where maybe you're shopping for cars, you decide that you're going to get this one particular car, and then all of a sudden, you start seeing that car on the road all over the place? That is cognitive bias. So once we become aware of a specific belief, or a specific concept, then we start seeing that same thing, repeated over and over and over again.

So going back to comparing ourselves to other people, or comparing other people's work to ours, if we start out noticing that that person is not pulling their weight, our brains are going to start looking for more evidence of that person not pulling their weight, okay? If we look for negative things, we're going to find negative things. That's cognitive bias, we seek out evidence of the things that we believe now, the opposite is also true.

And that's what doing a gratitude practice is going to do for us, when we start to appreciate the positive things that other people are doing for us. And when we start to appreciate those things in our lives that are positive, then our brains will go out. And they will start seeking more evidence of those things that are good. And so this is the crux of why we want to start a gratitude practice starting to be grateful for things.

So starting to have gratitude is going to make you happier. And if that's not a reason to want to do this, I don't know what is because we all want to be happier, right? We all want more happiness in our lives. And this is a way for you to give it to yourself. But there are also health related issues of why you want to start a gratitude practice.

For one research has shown through creating a gratitude practice, you can strengthen your immune system, meaning you're not going to get sick as much, it's also been shown

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to lower your blood pressure. No one wants to be around someone who is resentful and irritated all the time. Therefore, having a gratitude practice or feeling grateful for those things that are around you, of course, it's going to help you build and strengthen relationships, which will then boost your social ties, and reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation. And right now, during COVID, that's something that a lot of us are struggling with, when we feel grateful for what we have, it also decreases our feelings of wanting something else.

And so it's also going to decrease our cravings of something new to fill the void, right? Whether that's shopping on Amazon, or feeling like you need to be filled up with food or alcohol, gratitude also leads to increased feelings of satisfaction and fulfillment, we also know that gratitude is going to reduce our stress. And when we have less stress, we are less likely to eat in response to that stress. So these are all amazing reasons why we should have a gratitude practice, right? And you don't really need me to tell you that.

But I know for a really long time, having a gratitude practice felt really uncomfortable for me. And I was actually resisting it.

And I think that there are a couple of reasons for this. One is it felt forced. Generally when we think about having a gratitude practice, we're like, oh, I should be grateful for my house, or my car, or my partner or my kids or all of these things. And it didn't feel really genuine. Like Yeah, I know that all of these things are amazing. And that, you know, if I had a crappy car, or if I had, you know, less of a nice house that I might not feel grateful for it, but it didn't give me the feelings of gratitude that I felt that I really should have.

And so of course, I felt like there was something wrong with me that I couldn't appreciate what it was that I had because I was paying attention to all of them. People who are like, Oh my gosh, I have this amazing gratitude practice. And once I had my

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gratitude practice, I now feel like so happy and joy. And I was like, What is freakin wrong with me that I can't get into this gratitude practice.

Now the other way that this can manifest is when we feel resentment to other people in our lives, because they're not pulling their weight, like partners or children or things like that.

It's often the advice that we should catch people being good, right? So if you want your partner to wash the dishes more, let's say, and they do the dishes on asked that we don't feel like we should have to praise them for doing the bare minimum, right. But I want to ask you the question, what's the harm in that? Like, why do we not want to give appreciation to someone who's doing something that we want them to do? Why do we not want to praise someone for doing that?

And it's usually because we're not getting that gratitude back, I want to offer two things. One is that the more we praise other people for showing up and doing what we want them to do, chances are, they're going to do it more and more frequently. But the other piece to that is that if we feel resentful that we are not getting acknowledgment, maybe we look for validation in ourselves, versus seeking validation from other people in our lives.

And so historically, what I've seen is that if you're resisting having a gratitude practice, it could be for one of those two different reasons. One is that gratitude practices just feel very materialistic, or number two, is that we don't really feel like other people deserve our gratitude. And that's a whole other issue, right?

So I have a fix for you. I have two different approaches for you that you can take when creating your gratitude practice. And I learned these techniques from two other coaches. The first one, I was kind of complaining to another coach about how I didn't feel like gratitude practices, were really, I was really jelling with it. And I was talking to her about

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how it just felt very trite and materialistic. And she gave me this just incredible gift that has completely changed my approach to gratitude. And so I am going to share that with you.

Now, here's how I completely changed how I practice gratitude. The first thing is, at the end of the day, what I started doing, I would reflect back on the day, and instead of thinking about things that I could be grateful for, what I started doing is I started reflecting back on the day, and I chose three not materialistic things. But three experiences that I had within the day that I wanted to see more of in my life, I was able to look back on the day and notice, like, Oh, these were three really good moments in my day. And I want more of that.

And you can also think about when you look back at your day, you can think about what happened today that went well. What would you like to see more of, or what went better than expected.

And so what this is doing is it's, it's sharpening that skill of cognitive bias in the positive bent. It's making your brain aware of the good things that are happening in your life, it's making your brain pay attention to the things that you want more of in your life.

And then what will happen is you will start to notice more and more of those things, more of those events, more of that feeling that you want to cultivate in your life, and then you will start to create it as well.

And, again, this practice has completely changed my life. I no longer feel resentful. I no longer feel irritated all the time. And I've actually been able to create more happiness, and even in the moments not even just reflective but in the moment, I can appreciate what is happening, which leads to better happiness in the moment. Now the second piece is something that I was only recently enlightened on.

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So I was sharing this first option of gratitude with another coach. And she was like, Yes, once you can observe the impermanence of everything that is around us, then we can be grateful for it. And I think that this is really profound.

Before COVID. And before we started sheltering in place, we had certainty, we pretty much knew everything that was going to happen. We had general certainty about pretty much everything except for the weather. And then once COVID hit, all of a sudden, we all had anxiety, because what we were certain of before, we no longer felt certain, when we can appreciate the impermanence of everything that we have in our lives, when we can appreciate that this house that I live in, isn't going to be here forever, or that it could go away at any time that my partner could go away, everything can change for the better, as well as for the worse, that in an instant, life can change through injury through whatever.

And I don't say this, for you to freak out and feel anxious about what's going to happen in the future. It's about being present in the moment, and appreciating the now. Because that's all that we can really do. When we can appreciate the impermanence of life as it is, then we can completely lean into the practice of having gratitude. Now, I'm 52 years old. And as a younger woman, I did not appreciate my body when it was 20 years old,

I expected it to perform, I expected it to be healthy. I never really struggled with not being able to sleep, I never really struggled with my health. So I expect that my body is going to be healthy, right?

Only when we start to get older, do we realize that health is a gift. And because health is a gift, we can then start to appreciate and be grateful for not only our bodies, but then the health that we do have, when we get injured, we can see that in an instant.

Where before, even if it's just like an ankle sprain, right, where before we were able to walk without pain. Now we can't. And we wish that we would be able to do that, again,

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if you can even create gratitude around your body as it is today. And know that we're only getting older, right? And in another 10 years, our bodies are going to be in a completely different states, we get to choose whether that state is the same, whether it's better, or whether it's worse, and appreciating our body. Having gratitude for what your body can do can only make you feel healthier.

So I just wanted to leave you with those few thoughts. You know, whether you're having trouble being grateful for things in your life, for the people around you, or maybe your body. Hopefully one of these two practices, or both of them together can help you to feel better about who you are, what your body can do, and start paying attention to the amazing person that you are.

That's all I have for you today. Have an amazing week everyone and I will talk to you next time.

Bye bye

Hey, thanks for listening!

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See you next week.