

Done with Dieting Podcast #19: Clean Slate Habits



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With your Host
Elizabeth Sherman

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You are listening to the Done with Dieting Podcast Episode number 19

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.

Hey, everyone, welcome! So, today I wanted to talk a little bit about habits because I when I was recording episode number 17, I mentioned habits. And afterwards, I realized that I really haven't been talking about habits at all in this podcast. And, it's kind of interesting, because for so long, I was so into habits.

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I thought habits were the "thing" that was going to make me and all of my clients successful. And, I certainly still use habits with my clients today. I mean, habits are so freaking powerful. And, I do call myself a habit based coach.

But habits aren't as easy as set it and forget it. And, I don't want to discount the fact that habits aren't helpful, because they certainly are, I wanted to revisit that. And then, also talk a little bit about the best time we can create a new habit. Because there are these things that we called "clean slate events" that make habit formation and habit breaking so much easier.

And if you can identify when that's happening in your life, you can harness it. And think about it and plan how you're going to take advantage of that.

Okay, so before we get started on this, I have a story to tell you. Years ago, I read the book called "The Power of Habit by Charles Duhigg". And, it's an amazing book, I highly recommend it.

But in the book, he talks about this situation were back in 2002, Target stores, you know? Target, which I so miss, we don't have a target here in Mexico! and I still miss it anyway. So, target got in trouble, because they started noticing that when women bought certain things that they could identify that these women were pregnant, you know? that's not really that big of a deal, right?

But the thing is, is that the things that they were buying these women were buying, were very unassuming. It wasn't like they were buying diapers. What they were doing is they were buying things like vitamins, so calcium, magnesium, and zinc. They also found that women who were pregnant, were buying lots of lotion. But usually the lotion was unscented.

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And then, they figured out that these women were also buying cotton balls and unscented soap. And so, what was happening was that target started sending flyers, specifically about baby products to these women. It really kind of freaked the women out because they hadn't really announced it, they were still pregnant.

Target figured it out because they had done a bunch of data mining for women who had had babies and figured out like what they were buying preemptively. And that's how they were able to figure out that these women were pregnant and going to give birth within the next few months. And

Tara was able to pretty much predict to the week of when these women were going to give birth. It was really kind of creepy. And so anyway, target got in trouble for it. And the reason, that target was targeting these women was because they figured out that if they could capture and get loyal purchasers before these women actually had their babies, they would be able to then become the place where these women did all of their shopping.

And so of course, as a retailer, target wanted to capture these consumers. And of course, it's so much easier to go to Target to buy everything, because Target has everything, which is why they miss it so much. But, rather than going to lots of different stores in order to purchase what it was that they need it, they were starting to build up that brand loyalty.

Now, you're probably wondering, what does this have to do with me, Elizabeth, what does target targeting women who are going to have babies have anything to do with me and my wanting to lose weight? There's this idea of what's called a clean slate moment. And clean slate moments are times when our schedule just naturally gets disrupted.

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Having a baby is one of those times when our schedules get disrupted, because we then have to start doing things that are differently, right? Let me back up just a little bit. And talk a little bit about what's called the habit loop.

The habit loop consists of three different parts, there's what's called the cue, the routine, and the reward. Now, our brains rely a lot on habits. And the reason why our brains rely a lot on habits is because, there's actually a part of our brain that is dedicated to habits.

It loves routine, it loves having a process kickoff, and it executes that just like a computer. Think back to when you started driving, and when you started driving, it took a lot of thought process. The teacher went through all of the steps that you had to do, you had to think about it like. Okay, I put the key in the ignition, I turn the ignition, I make sure that my foot is on the brake, and I start the car.

And then, I have to put the car into gear, and so on, and so forth. We don't have to do that anymore, now do we? And so now, think about if you have one of those cars, that you only have to have the key in your pocket. If you were to have to get into like an old timey car that actually had a key, you would totally be able to do it. Because you are so used to it, we did it as programming for so long.

The more that we do a certain set of behaviors, the brain automatically sees the connection, it sees the pattern, and it starts to put that into the habit center of the brain. This is really great, because when we actively have to think about doing something, it takes a lot of energy, it takes a lot of brainpower, it takes a lot of thought and process.

But, once those processes are put into the habit center, we don't have to think about it anymore. And, as a general rule of thumb, we humans don't like to think very much for much of what we do. This is an amazing thing, like, I recall driving home from work on many occasions, and not really remembering the ride home, because I was doing it all on autopilot.

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And, I don't know if you've ever done this before. But, if you've ever switched jobs, you may have found that you were on autopilot back to your old job, right? We do that stuff, we get in the car, and we just like go on autopilot. We don't have to think about it.

And so again, this is an amazing thing. It's something that we really, really want until we want to change the habit, right? Once we want to get out of a habit, then we have to start thinking about it again.

Now going back to the habit loop. Again, it's a three part process, the cue, the routine, and the reward. So, let when we put this into perspective of like eating or exercising or our daily routines, the cue could be many different things, right?

Oftentimes, we will come home from work, walk in the door and do all of the same behaviors. Maybe, we drop our stuff off at the table that's right by the entryway. And then, we'll walk into the kitchen and see what's there. Maybe, we will get a glass of water or eat a little bit of food. And then, go into the bedroom and change and start our whole evening routine.

Another habit loop might be you finished dinner and you start cleaning up. And after you clean up, you pour yourself a glass of wine, and then you sit on the couch and watch TV with your family. And again, these habits are fantastic.

Until we want to change them until we decide that this habit isn't serving me anymore. And, I want to be clear that sometimes we start a habit for one reason, but we continue it for another, and sometimes we will outgrow habits. And so in those situations, we really want to figure out what is the best way of being able to change our habit.

In Episode Number 17, about urges. I go through the whole process of how to stop eating emotionally, or how to stop cravings. But, I really didn't talk about how to create better habits in terms of maybe exercising or creating better habits around meal planning, creating or preparing your meals.

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Like, maybe you're someone who eats out a lot, and you want to start preparing more of your meals. In those situations, when we want to start creating a better habit, what I'm going to recommend is that you harness one of these what's called the clean slate moments.

So again, these clean flight moments are times when our schedule naturally gets disrupted. Examples of that might be the end of the school year. Okay, so we're coming up to that right now, the beginning of the school year.

So, for those people who have kids in school, those two times you're not dropping off or picking up kids anymore. That might be a natural change of your schedule, maybe one of your adult children moves out of the house.

And so, everything's going to be a little bit different your kids go off to college, a marriage where a divorce could also be a change in schedule because you don't have to consider or you do have to consider someone else in the family. And then, clearly a job change or moving houses is for sure. Another way, because you're moving around that house very differently.

As I mentioned, with the target example, the birth of a child is also going to be a natural disrupter of our schedule. Now, these natural disruptors of schedules, these clean slate moments are why typically, when New Year's comes around, that New Year's resolutions don't really stick very well, because our schedules are really not very different in December than they are in January.

And so, what we're doing is when we create New Year's resolutions, and we're trying to adopt new habits during that time, it content to be really difficult, because we're trying to insert a new habit. And so, we're fighting against our normal routine, the routine that we've already established.

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I'm going to suggest that identifying some of these clean slate moments are going to help you if you want to create a new habit, knowing about these times in our lives. When Gary and I moved to Mexico from the US, I could totally see that this was going to be a time where our schedules were disrupted, right?

I mean, that's a huge change, we were going to be living in a new house. We weren't going to have a lot of our same stuff, we are going to be in a completely new country, with new grocery stores, new environments, everything was going to be new.

And so, I actively started thinking about how do I want to set this up so that we start out with a healthy environment? And, we're able to create those habits that we want to stick, and create the life that we want.

And so, one of the things that I suggested at the time, and I'm not exactly sure that Gary was totally on board for this because it's kind of crept in is. I said, I don't want to have large amounts of cookies or ice cream or things like that around, so that they don't really tempt us. We can go out for ice cream. But I don't want to have a tub of ice cream in the freezer. Because when we do that, and we get used to eating it, then it that becomes the habit right.

And, because sugar creates such an incredible dopamine hit. It's a habit that our brain just naturally gravitates to, it's like, "Oh, ice cream, I want some more of that". So, I was very deliberate when we moved here. That one I didn't want to go to a beach bar on Tuesday afternoon or a random weekday afternoon, because I didn't want to get into that habit. I wanted to make sure that our environment our kitchen was free of quote unquote "junk food" so that those foods that I didn't want to be eating all the time wouldn't tempt me.

It wasn't too long ago that one of my clients said, "You know, I've always been a regular exerciser". But you know, the weirdest thing happened. I stopped running and I don't

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know why we started coaching on it. And realized that the reason that she had gotten out of the habit, which he used to do was she would drop her son off at the bus stop, and then go for a run. Once that habit was disrupted once her son wasn't taking the school bus anymore, she got out of it. When something drops off like that, be aware that we are susceptible to losing that habit as well.

These clean slate moments are so incredibly powerful. If you are listening to this in real time, the reason that I'm talking about this today is because right now we are in one of those times when clean slate moments are going to be happening for us.

And, I say that because we are currently in the pandemic, like a lot of my clients are telling me that their schedules are starting to change, some their schools are opening back up, and they're sending their kids to school for the last few weeks.

Others are starting to go to work and deciding that they're going to go into the office a few days a week, as we get vaccinated as a society. And, as we start coming out of our shelter in place situations, we can use this opportunity to create the habits and lifestyle that we want.

Now, be aware that these clean slate moments do not make adopting a healthier habit or creating a new habit easy. But it certainly makes it a lot easier, or because we don't have to fight against the inertia of what the already established habit has been.

So, as we start opening up as a society, and start to do things that are more routine, when we start to create more routine in our lives. So, whether that's during the summer, or whether it's dropping our kids off at school or going to work or whatever it is, I want you to start thinking about what are the habits that I want to start adopting? And how can I start fitting those habits into my daily schedule.

So, that's all I have for you today. It's been a short one, but I hope this has been helpful. Start looking into the future, a month, a few weeks, and try to identify when it is that

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your schedule is going to start to change. And then, try to predict how you want your habits to change along with that. How can you fit everything in? Okay.

Have an amazing week, everyone. I will talk to you next time.

Bye bye.

Hey, thanks for listening.

If you're done with dieting, but still want to create healthy habits that are simple, easy to do, and sustainable, I've got an amazing resource for you. The eight basic habits that Healthy People Do Guide and Checklist has everything you need to get started.

And, if you do these eight things not only will your body right size, but you'll probably be healthier than most people you know. To get your copy of the guide and checklist. Go to [Elizabeth Sherman dot com slash habits](http://ElizabethSherman.com/habits) to get started today. That's Elizabeth Sherman dot com H A B I T S. See you next week.