

Done with Dieting Podcast #21:
Discomfort Now or Discomfort Later



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With your Host
Elizabeth Sherman

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You are listening to the Done with Dieting Podcast Episode number 21.

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 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 to the Podcast.

I am so excited to chat with you today because we are talking about discomfort. We are going to talk about the idea that we can have discomfort now, or we can have discomfort

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later. I know it sounds fantastic, doesn't it? Because we are so used to being comfortable all the time.

We go from our climate-controlled houses to our climate-controlled cars, to our climate-controlled offices, and then back through the whole process again, and we don't like it when things are too uncomfortable. But we know that growth comes from being a little bit comfortable.

And, you know, when I say that, I can't help but think of those cheesy memes that say something along the lines of growth comes from living outside the comfort zone, so silly. But, as much as I don't like that platitude, there is some truth to it.

And I remember when I started my process of personal development, I too was someone who didn't like to be uncomfortable. I didn't like running because it was hard, I didn't like being hungry because, well, who does? And if we're comfortable all the time, then we don't really have any motivation to change and move forward.

Because think about it, when we want to change our behaviors, the discomfort of changing, doing something different has to be more appealing than the discomfort of staying the same. And so, because of that, that's what makes us go out and decide that we're going to start becoming healthier, that we need to eat better, and that we want to lose weight.

We're like, I think that we should probably be eating better because if I did, then I might not feel this way. And so, we're already experiencing some discomfort, right?

But what I want to talk to you today about is actually being uncomfortable on purpose. I know it's a little kind of crazy, right? Like, who does that? But I'm going to suggest that it might be something that you might want to do. If you want to do all those things that you want to do, right?

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Like get consistent in your exercise habit or eat healthy foods and generally become the type of person who doesn't procrastinate and has all those qualities that your future self has, right? Like you're going to have to get there. Allowing some discomfort helps us become more advanced and more evolved versions of ourselves.

So, here's what I want you to think about today. I want you to think about something that you want to do, but that you also don't want to do. I want you to think about those habit changes, or those to-do list items, or those goals that you've set for yourself. That part of you really wants to accomplish.

You want to be good at doing it. You want to have it done. And you want to have the results that doing it would create in your life, right? But the actual doing it part is another story. I want you to pick something that it's hard to get yourself to do, something that it's uncomfortable to do, or it's overwhelming, or you just don't enjoy it.

So, for myself, this podcast has been the most recent thing that is completely challenging that I've been working on. And I totally 100% love it, but it also makes me feel a little bit vulnerable. Like, who am I to tell you all of these things? Who wants to listen to me? And so, it was really uncomfortable to publish my first few episodes and some days, quite honestly, it still is, some days the words just don't come out, right?

And while other days I feel so overwhelmed with everything that I have to do. Talking into the void is certainly not my strength. I'm not dissimilar to you when I think that no one wants to hear what I have to say. And so, it requires a lot of focus, it requires a part of my brain that I'm not used to using all the time, and it requires a lot of energy.

And I was recently putting an episode together and it just wasn't coming out right. And I was getting frustrated with myself thinking I just want it done. I don't want to go through all of the work of thinking of ideas to talk about. I don't want to prep all of the episodes and have to get my facts right.

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And I don't want to have to get all of my thinking straight and come up with examples and lessons. I just want it to be done, and I don't want to put in the work, but I want the feeling of having the episode finished. Have you ever felt that way? I want to want to do the work, but I don't really want to do the work. Do you know what I'm saying?

So, whatever that is for you and your life. I have many other things like that, like yoga. My podcast is just the big one right now, that is on my brain. But sometimes it's just as simple as I want to have tasty food in the fridge so that when I'm hungry, I can eat something healthy instead of what's easy, which usually isn't the healthiest thing.

I want to do that, and yet, sometimes most of the time, I don't really want to do that. But some days, when it's time to exercise, and I don't really want to exercise. And I know myself well enough that if I put it off until after work, it just isn't going to happen. So, we all have these things in our lives.

So, here's how I like to think about it. And I have clients that bring me the same situation. They'll say, Elizabeth, how do I get myself to do this thing that I can't seem to get myself to do? And where I always go in my head as a coach anyway, is I notice that this person is sort of in a battle with themselves in this situation, right?

And so, we have two different parts of our brain. We have our rational thinking brain, and we have our emotional- immediate gratification brain. Now our rational thinking brain is the part of our brain that wants long-term results. It creates the goal, and it creates the plan.

Our rational thinking brain is the part of our brain that decides that we want to lose weight and it figures out how we're going to do it. It knows that we're going to eat these

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foods, at these times and in these quantities, and we're going to exercise X number of times a day for X number of minutes.

That's the part that decided a podcast would be a great way of adding value to my clients. And that wants a podcast in order to put my work out into the world in a different way, to help reach more people and help more people become healthier. And it's the part of my brain that decided it's not going to be difficult.

That's also the part of me that wants to feel energetic all the time and to have a strong athletic body. It's the part of me that wants a healthier body that I get when I exercise regularly. So that's the rational thinking brain.

Rational thinking, meaning that we're able to use reason think critically and draw conclusions for our actions. We weigh out the costs and benefits, and we think about the pros and cons. Now, there's another part of our brain, which is the part of our brain that wants what it wants right now. And that's called our emotional- immediate gratification brain.

The emotional brain doesn't care about our plans, it doesn't care about fitting into our genes. The emotional brain just lives in the moment, and it wants to experience pleasure and avoid pain. It's the part of our brain that wants to experience pleasure and ease right at this moment. And it doesn't want to experience discomfort right now.

At the end of the day, when I have things that I need to do to follow up with my clients on, this is the part of me that doesn't want to think anymore. It's tired and it just wants to pack it up and go downstairs and have a glass of wine and relax. Because thinking is hard, and I don't want to do it anymore.

It's the part of our brain that is present to the right now, what we're feeling right now, what we're experiencing right now, and we don't want to do that thing if it's hard. We

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don't want to do the work to prepare the healthy food. Even though we want to eat the healthy food, we don't want to cut the vegetables and we don't want to clean the dishes. So, ordering out seems way more tempting. That's our emotional brain, our immediate gratification brain, and we all have it.

We don't always give into our immediate gratification brain, which is just, I want what I want, and I want it right now. So, these two parts of our brain are both constantly communicating with us. They like to be in competition with one another. It's kind of like when we see the angel and the devil on our shoulders, each telling us what we should be doing, which doesn't feel good to us.

This is why we feel this sort of dissonance within that clients bring to me saying, I don't understand why I keep sabotaging myself. So, what's the solution? Well, I like to recognize for myself that the solution is, that I need to own that I'm either going to choose discomfort now, or I'm going to choose discomfort later.

And knowing that is so very powerful, it's powerful because the emotional brain wants to keep us safe. It does that by keeping the status quo. It doesn't want us to do the thing that we need to do to have future happiness, because that thing is either hard, or it's going to rock the boat. We don't know what that's going to provide for us, and that's scary.

We don't like doing harder, uncomfortable things, so we avoid them. Except that if we don't do the hard things in the short term, we most likely will create a more difficult situation for ourselves later on. So, we're not actually avoiding discomfort at all, we're just postponing it.

Let's take exercise for example. So, every day, I get up at 6:00 AM and I do a little reading, maybe I do a little bit of work, you know, follow up with emails, do social media, sit on

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the couch and I drink my coffee, and then I do my workouts. And as much as I like, how exercise makes me feel? I really don't like to exercise every single day.

I procrastinate exercising. I don't like getting up off the couch, I don't like getting sweaty, I don't like having to figure out what I'm going to do, and while at the same time, I would totally resist if someone else told me what to do. And quite honestly, exercise is hard.

I get out of breath, my muscles burn, my workout space is outside, and most of the time here in Mexico, it's really freaking humid and sometimes it's even raining, and there are bugs. So, it's not always a ton of fun. I would much rather drink my coffee, take a shower, not be all hot and sweaty, and have to cool down afterwards before I put on my clothes.

I would love to go days without washing my hair and not having to dry it because it takes time. And quite honestly, the hairdryer is hot, and it makes me sweaty as well. And then there are my clothes, which quite honestly don't smell too great afterwards and having to commit to washing them regularly so that they don't really stink.

So, exercise is a complete commitment and it's hard to do. But I've also noticed that exercise helps me manage my stress. It helps me to sleep better at night, it helps keep my anxiety at Bay, it helps me to process my thinking and come up with ideas and helps me with other problem-solving issues. Maybe choosing some discomfort now and being able to do difficult things might save us some discomfort down the road.

So again, that's true with all of the examples I've given you so far. I can choose not to exercise, which some days I do, but for the most part I don't, and some days I think, you know what would be better than exercising? Not exercising, sitting on the couch, watching TV, drinking coffee, and just hanging out, and enjoying the morning.

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So maybe I'm escaping the discomfort of getting my exercise clothes on, sweating, or lifting heavy weights, and doing all that is super uncomfortable. But, if I don't choose the discomfort now of exercise, what discomfort am I likely creating later? Is it that my body won't be strong? Or maybe I'll have other health repercussions, maybe my mood will be lower, or my anxiety will return, or I won't be able to fall asleep as quickly. At some point it's probably going to catch up with me.

Now the further out the consequence of not following the plan, the easier it is for our emotional brains to talk us into whatever it is that it wants. Like if I'm actively trying to lose weight and someone offers me ice cream, then I could choose to eat it. But the consequence of eating that ice cream may not happen for a few weeks or months.

And we can't even draw a direct connection between the ice cream that I'm eating today and us not reaching our goal, right? So, it's much easier to give into the emotional immediate gratification suggestion that our brain offers us. So, we eat the ice cream.

But let's say that I'm lactose intolerant. If I like the taste of ice cream but eating ice cream makes me feel bad. Then I'm less likely to decide to eat it, knowing that in a few hours, I'm not going to feel so good. So that's when we usually decide not to listen to the suggestion that our emotional brain offers us. The closer, the negative consequence, the easier it is for us to not do the thing that gives us pleasure in the moment.

But again, I just like to recognize for myself that I either choose discomfort now, or I choose discomfort later. It's not that I'm escaping the discomfort because the emotional brain thinks that we are, right? And I just like to remind myself that, that's just not the case.

Now, this is also not to say that you should judge yourself when you're giving into the suggestions that your lower brain offers you. Sometimes, we like to give into them and that's okay. I think it has to be a mix, a give and take.

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I think sometimes we need to let go and allow the emotional brain to get what it needs. So, when it comes to broccoli or brownies, most of the time we're going to choose the broccoli, but sometimes we're going to choose the brownies.

But I think that sometimes we also want to think about and tap into our higher brain, the one who has our future selves back. So sometimes my clients will come to me and say, Elizabeth, how do I get myself to just follow the plan? Or they'll say I planned my food; I wrote down all of my meals. Of course, doesn't it always start that way? We have this perfect plan, full of organic vegetables, completely healthy, not a speck of sugar, flour insight.

It's all really super nourishing food, and we plan out our whole day for ourselves. And then, they say, but I just can't make myself stick to it. How can I get myself to do it? Maybe they do some of it, but more than often, maybe they do none of it. And of course, this is happening.

The emotional brain works on what's called the motivational triad. The motivational triad is the idea that our emotional brains seek pleasure, they avoid pain, and they do it as efficiently as possible. This is common for all of us. The emotional brain doesn't care about your plan, it doesn't care about fitting into your jeans, it doesn't care about your goal.

When we look at this behavior, not following the plan, from the point of view of the motivational triad, the part that seeks pleasure, avoids pain, and does it as efficiently as possible. It all completely makes sense. And the less comfortable we are with doing uncomfortable things, the louder, the emotional, immediate gratification brain is.

But the other part to that is, there are going to be times when I'm going to have to tell my brain, "Hey brain," I hear you, but we're not doing that today. And I'm going to have to then deal with the discomfort that I have as a result. That's it. I have got to be willing

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to be uncomfortable, but if I'm uncomfortable now in the name of comfort later, here's the other thing that's so brilliant about this.

The more you're willing to be uncomfortable, the better you are at feeling discomfort. I used to have this mantra that I would say to myself, I am comfortable being uncomfortable. The more we can allow ourselves to feel negative emotion, the better we'll be at feeling discomfort. And this is why. And the better we will be at quieting that emotional immediate gratification brain. Because the better we get at feeling discomfort in the short term, the more amazingness we create for ourselves in the long term.

Now here's the thing. These thoughts are always going to be there. They're never going to go away. The more we allow them to run the show, the louder they get, they become bossy. But the more we talk to ourselves over listening to ourselves, the quieter they get.

I also want you to keep in mind, that we have upwards of 60,000 thoughts in a day. Trying to rewire your brain and redirecting your brain is not as easy as flipping a switch. It requires a little bit of work, and it requires some conscious effort.

The first step is becoming aware of the thoughts that our emotional brain is offering us. And this takes a lot of paying attention, paying attention to our thoughts, and paying attention to our feelings. Because the more we can pay attention to those suggestions, that the emotional immediate gratification brain offers us, without us even realizing it, the better we can get at identifying and deciding if we want to go along with it in the first place.

Because sometimes when we're trying to decide between brownies and broccoli, the brownies need to win. But I think that sometimes our emotional brain is just being a petulant child saying things like, I don't want to eat my vegetables. I don't want to exercise, right?

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Kind of like when I was a younger woman and I was like, Elizabeth and sweat, don't go along together in the same sentence, and I totally get it. We're just being a brat, but sometimes we need to eat the vegetables and not love doing it. We could just decide to feel whatever emotions we feel and do the thing that we are avoiding doing anyway.

Now, I also want to talk to you about two different types of discomfort. Deferred discomfort versus necessary discomfort. So, if I'm willing to choose discomfort now, and I'm willing to do some things that I kind of don't really feel like doing, that I really don't enjoy doing that kind of discomfort is moving me someplace.

Because, like I said, it's going to create that different result, that result that we want. It's going to give me a healthier body, a cleaner house, food that's prepped in the refrigerator so that I can eat it in a moment's notice. It's going to give me a podcast, whatever it is that I want, or that I'm working on, I'm going to achieve certain goals that I want to have in my life.

So, this discomfort is necessary. It's necessary because it's getting us someplace, it's getting us a result. When I choose discomfort later, so that I can have ease now. That's what I call deferred discomfort. An example of that would be eating in response to a negative emotion, right? Or avoiding work by scrolling Instagram.

Now we're choosing to distract ourselves knowing that we're going to have to deal with this thing later. So, it's often similar if not the same emotions, but the difference is, it's not moving me anywhere. I'm not becoming more of who I want to become and I'm not creating what I want to create. So, I'm still in discomfort, but I'm deferring the discomfort. Does that make sense?

So, choosing the discomfort now means we're choosing necessary discomfort. Necessary to get us to, what it is that we want. Choosing discomfort later, means that I'm deferring my discomfort, I'm deferring my pain.

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And you can see why I recommend that you choose to go through the discomfort now. At least more often than we probably are. So, when people ask me the question, how do I get myself to just follow the plan, Elizabeth? It's an interesting one for myself as a coach, but it's also a tough one because when you think, how do I get myself to just get up every morning on time?

There's part of me that says, well, you just get out of bed, you just do it. But what people really mean, when they ask me, this is how do I deal with the negative feelings that go along with that? They think that they want me to help them to feel better about getting out of bed in the morning. And again, maybe there's a little bit of progress that we can make there. And I'm all for you, experimenting.

But at some point, we just need to chalk it up to doing things that you just don't like doing, and you do it anyway. It's part of learning how to parent yourself, the better you can get at doing things that you don't want to do, the more amazing your life will become.

And I use the phrase managing your mind a lot with my clients. I say, we just need to manage your mind. But I'm not always talking about managing your mind to feel better. Sometimes managing your mind is saying, Hey, "listen brain," I hear you; I get it.

I understand that you want the brownie or that you don't want to prep your food right now. I understand that we don't want to do this, but if we don't, the future version of me is going to be AFT. And I love her, and I want her to succeed. I want her to be successful.

And so, we're going to do what we need to do now, so that we set ourselves up for success later. And then after we've done it, we are going to thank ourselves, because we are now so freaking proud of what we did. That we did something that we didn't enjoy.

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But we are going to reap the benefits later. We need to do things that we don't like so that we can do the things that we do.

All right everyone, you get to decide, discomfort now or discomfort later?

I'll talk to you next week. Bye. Bye.

Hey, thanks for listening.

If the show resonates with you and you have a friend, mother, sister, or anyone else who you think would benefit, I'd love for you to share the podcast with them.

You can leave me a rating and review in Apple podcasts which helps me create an amazing experience for you. And it helps other women who are done with dieting and want to get off the diet roller coaster to find it as well.

See you next week.