

# Done with Dieting Podcast #39: Abstinence versus Moderation



## Full Episode Transcript

With your Host  
Elizabeth Sherman

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You are listening to the Done with Dieting Podcast Episode number 39.

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 today's episode. So, before I get started with talking about our topic today, I am so super pumped to tell you something super exciting, which is

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that as of today, October 12th, enrollment is open for the next session of the Feel Good Sisterhood. And that starts on October 25th.

So, if you are listening to this podcast in real time, you need to head over to [elizabethsherman.com/groupcoaching](http://elizabethsherman.com/groupcoaching), that's all one word and check out what the Feel Good Sisterhood is all about. It is my six month group coaching program, which I could not be more proud of, because I think it's the best thing around. Seriously, I could not be more proud of the content, the coaching, and the resources that I'm producing.

And I am currently having a session going on right now, we started back in August and there are 13 women in there. And I just have to tell you, they are making such amazing progress, not only with losing weight, which of course is great, but the non-scale victories that they are reporting are freaking amazing too. The things like, they're sleeping better, they have less anxiety, less brain fog, more energy. And although it's still a little early, many are also feeling super confident in their ability to create and stick to their weekly behavior goals. Something that they haven't been able to do before.

They've become more aware of their eating habits, why they're digging into the chocolate, or the ice cream, or what some of the reasons are that we do the things that we don't intend to do. The awareness in and of itself creates such amazing change. And again, we're not even halfway through the program at this point.

Honestly, I can't wait until we do get finished so that I can report back to you, what an amazing transformation these women have gone through and will continue to go through. So far, they are just loving the program and the content and the coaching that goes along with it is just so freaking incredible.

So, for anyone who's looking to change their relationship with food, exercise, or your body, this program is the next natural step. And I have 100% confidence that anyone who does the work in this program and completes it, will never have to go on another

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diet ever again. And the amazing thing about this, is that when you joined the program, you actually get lifetime access to the materials.

So, it's a win-win for everyone. Why aren't you doing this? And so, just one more thing, that this session we are doing an evening call. So, if you work during the day and don't have the flexibility in your day to break away for a group coaching session, then this might be the option for you. So, again, head over to [ElizabethSherman.com/group-coaching](http://ElizabethSherman.com/group-coaching) and check out the Feel Good Sisterhood.

Now, today we are talking about abstinence versus moderation. And we're talking about that in terms of habits that we want to break. So, things like smoking, drinking alcohol, eating sugar, or other habits that just don't serve us.

I recently came out on social media that I am a gum chewer, and I have been a gum chewer my entire life. I've gone through periods of it not being that big of a deal, but then I've also gone through periods where it has been a big deal. And what's interesting is that I really think that there might be a correlation between my needing sweets after dinner and my gum chewing. So, I'm doing an experiment right now, more on that in a future episode.

But there's a really good book by Gretchen Rubin called, "Better than Before." And in it, she talks about the difference between what she calls moderators and abstainers. And I think that there are some people that really just need to abstain from having certain foods in the house before they can move into a moderation phase.

So, for example, when I was going through my transformation, everyone would tell me that peanut butter is a really great protein source and that it can quell cravings and things like that, and honestly, it does. However, maybe it was just the thought that this is my

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go-to. I could not trust myself around an open jar of peanut butter. If I started eating from the peanut butter jar with a spoon, I would end up feeling sick. And so, what happened for me was that I just needed to ban peanut butter altogether from being in my house.

Now, today you have tons of different options for you if peanut butter is a problem for you. You don't have to banish the entire jar. There are packages of pre-portioned single serving peanut butter packets, which then create what are called points of pause in your peanut butter habits. So, it doesn't prevent you from eating a jar of peanut butter, but you would have to go through a lot of packets and make that mental decision to open up the next packet. And those packets are great to have around if you want some but feel like you need to manage it a bit.

Now, for me, I stopped buying it all together and eventually started buying it and using it for cooking only. And I got myself out of the habit of digging into that jar so that I can now actually have it in my house and not feel like it's calling me from the refrigerator.

So, I wanted to start out today's episode telling you about a friend of mine, whose name is Mark. Mark is a big guy; he's got tons of life in him, and I love him to pieces. He does everything just so big. He loves food and he's so well-traveled, and in all of the locations that my husband and I have gone that if mark has been there, he tells us the best restaurants to go to. He's hands down, he's always spot on. In town, he owns a pizza place, and he loves pizza too.

Now, I don't know if it's a personality trait or what but mark sometimes goes seemingly overboard with some of his habits. He goes all in, or he goes all out, as far as his health habits go. He's been excessive with both drinking and smoking. And you know, we live in a vacation town and so there's no shortage of someone to have a drink with at any time of day. It doesn't really matter.

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In fact, where we live right now, we can hear the local beach bar blow the conch shell that signals happy hour to start and to end. And when we moved here, I had these worry fantasies that my future self would become this bloated wrinkly raisin drinking pina coladas and smoking cigarettes at 3:00 PM on a Tuesday. I had to consciously make the decision that I wouldn't be going to the beach bar during the week.

And so, since we've known our friend Mark, he has completely given up drinking alcohol and completely given up smoking, which I think is a huge testament. It's actually quite amazing given our environment. And there are lots of people who retire here and end up with a drinking problem for one reason or another.

So, Mark reached out to me a few months ago because he was trying to lose weight and he was asking me about the steps that he should take. And so, we chatted a little bit about the approach that I take with many of my clients. And although there are definitely some challenges that women in midlife face that men don't, the basics are gender and age neutral. He asked me, what is it that I need to do? I really want to lose weight.

And so, I referred him to the "Eight Basic Habits that Healthy People Do." It's an amazing guide and checklist. And you can get that by listening to episode number three, called the "Foundation" or you can go to [elizabethsherman.com/habits](http://elizabethsherman.com/habits) to get your own copy. And I'll for sure put a link in the show notes for you if you're interested in that. It's just Eight Basic Habits that if you have these eight basic habits down, you will be healthier than most people that you know.

Now, I explained to mark how the eight basic habits work. That once you have a habit established, you slowly lean into better habits through the process of increasing frequency, as well as increasing density, and also increasing what's called intensity as far as the habit goes.

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Now, an example of that as it pertains to water might be first assessing how many ounces of water you're currently drinking. So, if right now you're drinking, let's say 30 ounces of water five days a week and you want to eventually increase that to 60. What you're going to do is slowly start to increase that. Choose three days, for example, let say, "okay, I'm going to increase my water content to 40 ounces."

Now, once you feel confident with drinking 30 ounces, four days out of the week, and then 40 ounces, three days a week. See, how that goes for a while and then start to increase your volume to 40 ounces, four days a week, and then five days a week, and so on and so forth. And then, as you get stable with the 40 ounces, then start to go up to 50. So, you might decide that two days a week, I'm going to drink 50 ounces. So, that's just an example of how frequency and density apply to the habit of drinking more water.

Now, I explained to mark about how I approach getting healthier, because it doesn't need to be super uncomfortable. And so many of us, when we decide that we want to become healthier, we want to lose weight, we want to do something, we feel like we have to go all in. And that just can be a recipe for disaster.

And just recently, another friend of ours reached out to us and said, " Hey, did you hear mark is now a vegan? And I was like, "wait, what?!" It was so confusing because he and my husband actually will go out for tacos or to one of those Argentinian places where they just bring you all of the meat all of the time. And so, it just seemed out of left field that Mark would become vegan, just didn't make sense. And so, it was really confusing as to why he would do that.

But as my husband and I were talking it through, he said, " I think this is probably pretty doable for him because he did the same thing with alcohol, and he did the same thing with smoking too." He used to drink a lot of alcohol and now he's not drinking any. He

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was smoking a lot and now he doesn't smoke at all, and he can be around those things, but he doesn't participate.

And so, I think that it's really interesting about the idea of abstinence versus moderation, because sure we've all been there. We've all been on diets where we have these strict rules and it's actually easier to be totally on or totally off. What's difficult is the in-between, it's the moderation, being able to figure out how much is just enough versus too much for my body.

And I totally understand this because in the beginning of my journey, I started a job where I was traveling 100% of my time. And I remember being really worried because I was already overweight, I was young, and I had heard that when people travel, they typically gain weight. Which I did not want to do. And so, what I did was the only thing that as a 24 year old woman who knew nothing about health, nothing about nutrition, or what I was supposed to be doing. What I did was, I became a vegetarian. And so, what eliminating meat did for me was when I was looking at a menu, it immediately got rid of 90% of the items that were on that menu. And ideally it forced me to look at more vegetable-based meals.

Now, I still ate eggs, and I still ate fish. So, I did have some protein sources, but I really did not do vegetarianism very well. What I did was I took out animal products and I thought that by doing that, it was enough. What I didn't necessarily pull out of my diet were fried foods. So, I remember going into Chili's and getting like a blooming' onion because it was vegetarian. And what else I didn't pull out of my diet were sugars or starches. So, I ate ice cream, a lot of ice cream just because it was vegetarian.

And ultimately what happened to my body was that I wasn't giving it the proper nutrition. I probably lost a lot of muscle in the process because I didn't have enough

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protein to support the metabolic needs that my body required. Now, of course, that's just my experience with vegetarianism.

And I also want to point out that I was using vegetarianism as a form of a diet with a big "D." There are tons of people who are vegetarians and that's just the way they eat. And so, when we think about our eating habits, it's important to understand the reasons behind the decisions that were making.

And so, when we look at someone who says, "okay, I need to do this extreme thing in order to manage my process, to manage myself around food, that those foods are now off limit." It totally makes sense because then there's an actual black and white where we have problems in general is in the gray. Right?

Just recently in the Feel Good Sisterhood, my six month group coaching program, I was coaching one of my clients and she brought up the problem that her daughter had said to her just recently, "oh my gosh Mom, I'm so excited for fall, I can't wait to make pumpkin bread." immediately my client's brain started spinning. She was like, "oh my God, that's great! I want to do that with you, And we can make pumpkin bread and we can make pumpkin pie and we can do all of these "fall-ish" things."

And then, when she started really thinking about it, she was like, "oh my gosh, what does that mean for me in my weight? And That's unhealthy and we can't do that." , I think we really need to learn how to co-exist in a world, where treats also exist, where desirable food also exists. Where are those people who we love, love to eat those treats and we want to share those with them and also navigating moderation.

That area between being all in and being all out. That gray area of not wanting to be super strict because when we have a daughter of course, we don't want her to pick up on the idea that certain foods are bad and that we can't have them. Right? We want to

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teach our children how to have a healthy relationship with food, but how do we do that when we don't have a healthy relationship with food ourselves?

And so, I really applaud my client for bringing this up because it allows us to take a look at the thoughts that we have, the food rules that we have, the judgments that we have about certain foods and what they mean. Not only for us in our body, but also how they impact those around us. And oftentimes, clients will come to me, and they'll say, I wish I lived alone so that I can control my environment. And "Hey, I totally hear you," but that's not really possible. It might be, but it can also create a ton of isolation and it cuts out all of our socialization.

So, as we're approaching the holidays, I want you to imagine going into the holidays saying, "okay, these are the foods that I can eat, and these are the foods that I can't eat. And then, I want you to visualize yourself at a party and what happens when none of the foods that you can eat are present, but all of the foods that you can't eat are. Because what you've done is you've put this restriction on yourself.

What happens to your decision-making, when you are following a diet that tells you, you can't have these things. How does that result in you being successful? And I can tell you it doesn't, we cannot live in an isolation chamber. We need to figure these things out in order to be successful in our goals. Because no one wants to walk around life, cutting ourselves off from entire food groups or unnecessarily creating barriers for ourselves and our food choices.

Walking into Christmas or the holidays thinking, "oh, I can't eat that," or I can't enjoy a party, or dinner with my partner, or my friends because there's going to be all of this food that I can't eat around. Or the other thing that happens, which is, "oh, I totally can handle myself." I can just eat beforehand or I'm going to be perfectly on my diet when all of this food and the alcohol is around me.

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So, isn't it much easier to manage that on your own? Sure, it takes a lot of thought, but unless you have a food allergy or intolerance, it also is the way to being successful in your goal. And so, the question really is, how do we live in a world where there's desirable food? How do we live in a world where food manufacturers want you to buy their food by making it so incredibly hyper palatable? And then, they also market it to us with slogans like, "you deserve a break, or you deserve this, or it's a guilty pleasure," right?

And so, in the free guide and checklist that I mentioned earlier, the eight basic habits that healthy people do, one of the habits is called "limit treats," not eliminate treats. And when I work with clients individually and in the Feel Good Sisterhood, it's always so interesting to me. That one of the things that they do is they immediately think that they have to cut all of the treats out of their diet. And I don't want you to, because that is not realistic in figuring out how to live in this world.

And so, I intentionally create a guideline that directs folks to have treats daily. Not a cheat day, you're not being good all six days and then go in all in one day. This is having treats daily and this is really super important because we think that when we are losing weight, when we are on a plan that we aren't allowed to have treats and that treats are off limits.

But what we need to learn is how to have treats in our diet and be able to control ourselves around them. To have self-trust around desirable foods, to be able to say, "this is what I'm going to eat," and then follow through. Be satisfied with the amount that you've given yourself.

Now, be aware, this is not believing that the future version of yourself is going to be perfect. It's meeting ourselves where we are today. And so, if you cannot stop eating after dinner or at three o'clock, then I'm not going to suggest that you cut that out just

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yet. But what we can do is we can slowly taper the amount that we're allowing ourselves to have.

So, maybe instead of eating a pint of ice cream after dinner, we portion it out into a bowl, and we eat that. We decide ahead of time way before our instant gratification monster is awake. How much we're going to eat? And we stick to it, we give the instant gratification monster his dopamine hit. But then, we don't allow him to run the show.

Now, one of the tools that I bring to my coaching is a method called creating a protocol. And what creating a protocol is all about is deciding ahead of time, what foods you're going to put into three different buckets? The first bucket is the foods that I'm going to be able to eat all of the time. There's a second bucket, which is called sometimes foods. And then, there's a third bucket that isn't never or off limit foods, but it is foods that we rarely eat. Okay?

And so, how does that break down? So, we have these three buckets, the three buckets are foods that will make up most of my diet, foods that I eat occasionally, and we'll make a guest appearance in my diet, and then, foods that I want to limit or have rarely.

And so, what that looks like is the foods that I want to eat most of the time are going to make up like 80 to 90% of the foods that I eat on a daily basis. And then, the foods that are in the sometimes bucket, those are going to generally fill in the next 15 to 20%. Okay? And then, in the rarely bucket, those are the things that I might have once a week, maybe once a month.

So, you decide ahead of time, what foods belong in each of these buckets? , what this does is it allows us to, again, plan for treats and not feel like we're deprived. We think that, again, we shouldn't have treats, but that's the same idea of saying that when you're on a financial budget, that you should only spend money on things that are bare

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necessities, or your bills, and that you shouldn't treat yourself financially, you should never eat out.

And we think again that we should be perfect, that we should be able to resist these other foods. But we're not perfect and also that just doesn't make sense because then once we hit our goal, we then have this huge problem of, how do I manage these treats that I can bring back into my diet?

But the way that we can learn to moderate foods is by slowly tapering them off. What intentionally planning, what we're going to eat does is it allows us to use our rational thinking part of the brain to plan out, what we're going to do the following day, what we're going to eat? And again, when we do this, we don't want to screw over the future version of ourselves.

We want to be kind to her and set her up for success. We want to be aware that the future version of myself tomorrow is actually going to be very similar to the version of myself that I am today. And so, if there's something that I don't want to do today, there's a pretty high likelihood that I'm not going to want to do it tomorrow, either.

Now, here's what's brilliant about this work. Let's say that yesterday, I planned what I was going to eat today. As temptation comes up today, so let's say that I planned into my daily protocol that I planned on eating two cookies. And let's pretend that as I go through the day, someone says to me, "Hey Elizabeth, here's a brownie, I made it especially for you."

Now, I get to decide, do I want to eat this brownie, or do I want the cookies that I had originally planned? I can't have both, okay? So, that's the rule, I can't have both. And so, which would I rather have? What this does is it teaches us the idea of discernment. It gives me the opportunity to say, "okay so I'm going to stick with the cookies, but if I want the brownie tomorrow, I can plan for it."

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And so, what I love about this technique is, again, it uses the rational thinking part of our brain, the part of our brain that has a goal, and it sets out a plan, and it loves sticking to that plan. But the emotional part of our brain that doesn't care about the plan that only cares about what we want right here and now, the instant gratification monster, right?

It allows us to quell those desires because we're still giving our instant gratification monster what it wants. It allows us to plan for understanding, what our instant gratification monster is going to want. But it requires us to stick to the plan and tell our instant gratification monster, "Hey, I hear you, I'm not going to do that right now. I'm going to follow the plan, but we can totally do that tomorrow."

And so, as we approach the holiday season, this can be an amazing time to learn how to live in a world where there are treats all around us. Where we can intentionally think about, how do we want to respond to our desire to both want the holiday experience and at the same time, not feel like crap the next day from over doing it?

And so, one of the things that I walk my clients through, as well as the women who are going through the Feel Good Sisterhood is we will actively be visualizing the situations that we're walking into ahead of time. And what we're actively going to think about is how do I want to respond when someone offers me another drink, or someone says, "Hey, you need to eat this it's super good, or I made that don't you want some?"

But it's not what we had planned on doing or we don't like that thing and we don't want to offend that person.

So, you can use this holiday to actually be successful in your goals and to become healthier. And one of the ways that you can do that is through joining the Feel Good Sisterhood. Again, as I mentioned at the beginning of this episode, it's open for

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enrollment today. It's a six month group coaching program for women in midlife that will teach you how to get out of the diet mentality and finally feel free around food.

So, everything that we're talking about here in the podcast, we are going to take all the concepts, study them, and then apply them to your unique situation. Not only will you get personalized support, but you are also going to receive accountability and coaching on your specific situation. This program will teach you everything that you need to be successful.

And I want you to just imagine for a second, what would it be like starting in January, not only with a plan, but firm in the belief that you are going to be successful in 2022? And totally 100% committed to the outcome. Not just hopeful that things are going to work out for the best but transferring hope into belief. Hope is a great emotion, but it only gets you halfway there. " Oh, I hope I'm successful in 2022 versus I totally believe that I'm going to be successful in 2022." Doesn't that just feel incredibly different?

The women who are currently halfway through this program, I'm telling you they are loving the results that they're getting. And they are loving the results that they're getting so far and how valuable this program is to their success. I really could not be more proud of them for showing up for themselves and applying these teachings to their situation.

Now, one of the questions that I often get is why is it six months? It seems like it's so long, especially in a world where we have eight weeks to a new you or a 12 week fat loss fix. Right?

But those eight week and 12 week programs, if they actually worked, you wouldn't be where you are today. And what I find in working with my clients is that it just takes six months in order for our brains to make the changes that it needs in order to change our relationship with food, change our relationship with our bodies and how we think about

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food, how we think about exercise, and really growing into the person who doesn't struggle with their weight, anymore.

And so, if this is something that you want, again, I'm going to invite you to join the Feel Good Sisterhood. I'm going to invite you to go to [elizabethsherman.com/groupcoaching](http://elizabethsherman.com/groupcoaching), fill out your application today and schedule your session with me. I'm telling you this year is going to be epic and I believe it's possible for you.

So, head over to [elizabethsherman.com/groupcoaching](http://elizabethsherman.com/groupcoaching) and let me know what questions you have. That's all I have for you this week. I'll see you next time. Bye-bye.

Hey, if you enjoy listening to this podcast, you have to come check out the Feel Good Sisterhood. It's my small group coaching program where we take all this material, and we apply it. We figure out what works for us, and we don't ever look at another diet ever again.

Join me over at [elizabethsherman.com/groupcoaching](http://elizabethsherman.com/groupcoaching). I'd love to have you join me in the Feel Good Sisterhood. See you there.