

Done with Dieting Podcast #51: The Stages of Grief



Full Episode Transcript

With your Host
Elizabeth Sherman

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And it didn't make any sense to me at the time, until months later when I realized that, you know, what? If I want to eat more, I can always come back and eat more. Right? But yet there was still this sadness about not being able to overeat anymore because it was such a familiar feeling.

You are listening to the done with dieting podcast. The podcast for women in midlife, who are done with dieting, but still want to lose weight and feel good in your clothes. You know that diets don't work long term. But you feel like there's this secret that everyone else knows that you just haven't figured it out yet.

I am your host, Elizabeth Sherman. And I've helped hundreds of women get off the diet roller coaster change their relationship with food, exercise, and their bodies. Through this podcast, my goal is to help you too. Welcome. Let's get started.

Let's get started.

Hey everyone, welcome to today's podcast. Welcome to podcast number 51. I am Elizabeth Sherman, your host. And first of all, Happy new year. I hope you had just an amazing holiday season and a safe one too. And I hope that the new year was good to you, and you got some time to rest and recover and take care of yourself and just really figure everything out for 2022.

So, I talked about this in a previous podcast just recently about how new year's is just such an open book. And I love having journals and I love opening up a journal and

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seeing all of the fresh pages. And you know, that's what a new year feels like to me is just what is going to appear on these pages.

And so, yesterday, I hosted a webinar all about how to conquer your 2022 goals. And if you did not get in on that, you can watch the replay, all you have to do is go to elizabethsherman.com/nyr as a new year's resolution. And you can get the replay of it.

And in that webinar, I shared the three mistakes that I see so many of us make, when we are thinking about what do we want to accomplish this year? And if that's something that's on your mind this year, if you have goals to be healthier, maybe to lose weight, not necessarily. But if there are goals that you have, whether it's to eat better, or eat more vegetables, drink more water, or perhaps start and be consistent with your exercise routine.

Definitely head over to elizabethsherman.com/nyr so that you can be successful this year. Because that's what this webinar's all about how to set yourself up for success so that you can be one of the 3% who actually accomplishes your goals for 2022. Because that's what we want, we always want to be getting better. Right?

So, today, what I wanted to talk about is the grieving process. And I know that sounds funny for the first podcast of 2022. But someone mentioned it in the Feel Good Sisterhood recently, and I was like, "oh yes, that's exactly what's happening."

And so, I wanted to do a podcast on this because it's something that I went through when I was in my journey to clean up my habits. And so, I just wanted to share with you what that looks like and just how to get through it a little bit faster.

So, I remember being in my kitchen in Austin, Texas and looking down at my plate. And seeing the half of a steak and green beans that were on the plate and just feeling this intense emotion. And I don't even know that I knew what it was at the time. All I knew

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was I felt really sad. And the reason why was because I had just started eating to the hunger scale.

And I knew that what I had previously been eating was too much. But you know, that's the thing is that I didn't really know that. I was actually kind of in denial about it. But what I would decide was that I was going to cut everything that I ate in half and serve that to myself. And if I really needed seconds, then I would go back.

I used to buy these beautiful New York strip steaks from the grocery store that were probably about an inch thick, and they were just freaking gorgeous. And I would eat the entire thing, not thinking of it, and feeling pretty happy with myself.

And in adopting this new habit of eating just enough and not too much, what I decided was that I was going to cut down on the foods that I was eating. Generally, when we do this, we talk about cutting out like 20% because the eye can't really see 20%. But I had an idea that the entire steak that I had previously been eating was way too much.

So, I cut the steak in half and looking at it on my plate, just gave me this sense of sadness. And the sadness was all about the familiar feeling that I used to have on being over full after I would finish a meal. And I asked myself, would I still be able to feel that way?

As I looked down at the half steak sitting on the plate with my green beans, saying it out loud, doesn't make any sense at all. But in my head, I was thinking that it was sad that I wouldn't get to overeat anymore.

And it didn't make any sense to me at the time, until months later when I realized that, you know, what? If I want to eat more, I can always come back and eat more. Right? But yet there was still this sadness about not being able to overeat anymore because it was such a familiar feeling.

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Now, for you, whether we're talking about overeating, or eating certain foods, or exercising, or whatever habits that you want to adopt. And you're doing it, but yet you feel resentful, or you feel sadness, or whatever emotion it is that you're feeling about, whatever it is that you're doing. Be aware that you may be going through the stages of grief.

Now, within the stages of grief, the first stage is denial. The second is anger and resentment. The third is bargaining. The fourth stage is depression. And then, the fifth is acceptance.

And I'm going to go back and we're going to go through each of these. And I'm going to share with you some thoughts that you might be thinking in each of the different stages. And remember that when we are going through the stages of grief, whether we're talking about a person, or an animal, or a situation. Like many of us went through when COVID hit. Right? That was a grieving process. What we're grieving is what used to be.

I want you to be aware that we don't have to be stuck in any of these different areas. And, it's really important to understand that, first of all, in this situation, when we're talking about the grieving process, as it pertains to your habits, you are in the driver's seat.

It may not feel that way. It may feel like it's self-imposed. And if that's where you are, be aware that we need to do some coaching around that. We need to get your mind right. For those of you who haven't seen my office, there's a quote that I have on my wall that says, "everything you do in life is a choice, even if it doesn't feel like it."

And that is especially true when it comes to your health habits. Right? Which is probably why so many of us give up is because we realize, Hey, I don't have to do this thing. And we go back to what's familiar.

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But I want to suggest that we don't have to think about what we're doing as being thrust upon us, right? What we can do is we can look at the situation saying, Hey, this is something that I am choosing to do. And so, therefore, this is what it is. Okay.

So, let's go back and start back again with denial. Now, again, remember that you may go through these process, whether you're talking about overeating, whether you're talking about getting rid of certain foods in your diet. Like sugar, like flour, like quote unquote junk foods. Or it could also be in relation to adopting a new exercise program, or a new movement routine, whatever it is be aware that you may have some of these thoughts happening. Right?

And so, the first one is denial. And with denial, what the thought is it's sometimes, this is totally fine, this is totally going to be fine. I can do this. It's not going to be difficult. I don't need any help. And I don't really overeat or on totally in shape. And so, it's no big deal that I have to do this. Right?

Those are thoughts that were denying the fact that it's going to be difficult, that there's something up ahead that we're not prepared for. And just putting that out of our heads and really thinking about, no, I got this. Totally fine. Nothing to see here. Right? Those are little red flags that maybe we haven't thought everything through. Okay. So, denial is our first stage.

The second stage is anger and resentment. I have spent much of my life sitting in anger and resentment. And when we are in anger and resentment, what's happening is we are identifying as a victim. And when I talk about being a victim, I'm not talking about being a victim of a crime. Right?

But I'm talking about feeling like something is being thrust upon you. Like Something is happening to you. And when we feel anger and resentment, it's usually because we

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don't feel like we're empowered, we don't feel like we have a say, we don't have control. And so, one of my friends talks about how anger is actually sadness turned outwards.

When we feel that sadness, and when we just feel sad, and we don't know what to do with it because it just feels uncomfortable. Sometimes we'll lash out. Right. But oftentimes, when we're lashing out, when it comes to our health behaviors, we actually lash out at ourselves.

And so, what that can look like is self-sabotage, feeling sad because we can't eat the thing. And so, we overeat to self-soothe, or we decide that we're going to go out, and we're going to prove to ourselves that we can eat ice cream anyway, or that we can do these things and not feel repercussions. Right? That's anger.

And then, the resentment is this totally sucks that I have to do this. Why is this happening to me? Another thing that we might be thinking is it's totally not my fault that my family genetics are this way. Right?

And so, we're abdicating responsibility of our situation. We are deciding that we are not responsible. And we're not empowered. And so, this whole thing is being put upon us and it's unfair. Okay.

And so, when we feel anger and resentment about how we're eating, or that we have to exercise, or that we can't eat certain foods. Really, realize that those are choices that you are making. And that you are completely empowered with each of those decisions. No, one's decided this for you. You can totally do this, ? You can totally make your own decisions.

Really, get your mind right around that. And maybe what it takes is when you find yourself not in this situation, but before, when you're embarking on the new habits, really putting together a list of why it is that you want to do this.

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So, why is it that you've decided that you want to eat more vegetables? Why is it that you've decided that you want to limit the amount of sugar or treats that you're eating on a daily basis? Why is it that you've decided that your bedtime is 10 o'clock. Right?

So, decide ahead of time and write out a list of reasons why you've made this decision. Because when it comes down to feeling anger and resentments, the best way to counteract that is to understand that you are 100% in the driver's seat here. And that you are empowered in these decisions. And the reason that you're doing this is because of X, Y, and Z.

Now, remember, when we're talking about the stages of grief, just like we're talking about the stages of awareness. And like we're talking about the stages of change. All of these stages are completely fluid.

One day, you may find yourself in denial. On the next day, you may find yourself in anger. The next day, you may find yourself back in denial. It's totally okay. And then, the third day you might find yourself in acceptance.

So, again, the stages of change, the stages of grief, and the stages of awareness are all very fluid. Meaning, that it's not linear. We don't go from one, into the next, into the third, into the fourth, and so on. And then, we're complete. We may find ourselves back again, back at the beginning. Okay.

And so, in each of those situations, we just need to remind ourselves that this is just a process. And the more we find ourselves in acceptance and not in anger or not in bargaining, which is our next stage. The more we're processing the information, the more we're processing the grief, and the more we're working through it.

So, when we talk about bargaining, and this is one of my favorites especially when it comes to eating and when it comes to exercise. What we do oftentimes is we set up a reward system. So, we say to ourselves, okay, so I've been good all week. And so, because

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I've been good all week, then I get this. And that thing that you want is in direct contradiction to your goal.

So, for example, I've been good all week, so I get to overeat. Or I went for a run today, so therefore, I can eat chocolate cake. Okay. So, what we do is we create this reward system, that then is negatively going to impact our progress towards our goal of what it is that we want to be doing. Or I've been good all week, so I can take a day off. How many of us do that? Right?

We give ourselves these rewards that really aren't helpful. And then, the other side to that, the other thing that we do when we talk about bargaining is we create what are called loopholes. Right? I love loopholes. So, loopholes are that if I exercise today, then I can have cake tonight. Right? Okay.

So, it's going back to the reward system. But we never really specify what the loophole is. And so, what's considered exercise at that point? Is it going for a run? Is it going and doing your normal strength training? Is it going to the gym or is it doing some gardening? Our minds will start getting into these like slippery slopes. Right?

So, unless we set structured metrics of what we expect exercise to look like, then our brain is always going to find a loophole to that. We're going to decide, oh, well, since I exercised, I get to eat this extra thing. Or that since it was made with cauliflower, I can overeat. Since I made brownies with black beans, then I can eat the whole pan.

I used to do that all the time finding these loopholes and really bargaining with myself. Like, well, if I did this, then I can have that. That's where bargaining shows up in the stages of grief, as it pertains to health. Okay. So, watch out for those.

And then, the fourth stage of grief is depression. And I think that depression is like the awakening of oh, this is what my life is going to look like. I'm never going to be able to

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overeat again. I'm going to have to exercise every day for the rest of my life! And I'm never going to be able to pig out again.

There's that sadness that goes along with it. That we're not going to be able to do the things that we enjoyed doing. Even if those things that we enjoy doing, aren't really for our benefit. It's almost as if we have a little glimpse into our future. And then, we look at our past and we think about how much fun we were having in the past.

But we really weren't having a lot of fun because we wouldn't have changed. We wouldn't have decided that we needed to change. We needed to adopt these better habits, unless there was some pain associated with the negative behavior in the past.

And so, what can happen when we're in this depression state is that we can look back at the past and think about all of the good things that happened back then. We can look back at the past and decide that; oh, I could eat anything that I wanted, and I could eat ice cream, and I could overeat all of the things, and have that big juicy steak, and it was all fine.

But when we do it in the moment, we forget how awful that food made us feel. When we think about sitting on the couch instead of exercising every day, we think about how much easier that was. But we don't think about how the fatigue that we felt on a daily basis going up the stairs. How we got winded because we weren't exercising ourselves. We weren't getting that cardiovascular benefit that was clearing out our lungs.

And so, when we are in this depressive state, what happens is we look at the future and we think about how sad it's going to be. And we look at the past and it's kind of like the glory days. And it seems so much better back then. But it really wasn't again, because if it was that great, we never would have wanted to change in the first place.

And so, it helps us to again, look at why were we making changes in the first place. Why was it? What was the pain that I was having in the past that I think I'm going to avoid in

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the future by doing these habits? What is the thing that I'm trying to eliminate from my life?

And when we can pinpoint that, we can ask ourselves in this depression state, is that true? Is it true that I'm going to get this reward? Normally, it is.

So, some of the thoughts that come along with depression are when it comes to food like, oh, is that all I get? Or if I could only, right? If I could only eat more, then that would make me feel comfortable.

Another thought that pops up when we're in the depression stage is this is no fun, or my life isn't going to be fun, or something about fun in relation to our food or exercising. So, just watch out for those little thoughts that we're having in our heads.

Now, the last stage, the fifth stage of grief is acceptance. And again, we are going to be in acceptance and then we're going to move out of acceptance. So, acceptance is really wanting what's good for me and my future. It's accepting responsibility and it's understanding that this is my new normal. And so, this is how I intentionally want my life to look like.

And when we're in acceptance, what happens is we look at our food and we think, you know what? I am satisfied with eating just enough. I don't need anymore. I'm good. And this is just what I do. This is my new normal, these are the thoughts that allow us to get into acceptance. And you can practice acceptance when you're in the other stages.

And so, it can be really helpful to understand that when you are in acceptance, just to jot down some of the things that you're thinking, so that you can practice those when you're not 100% on board with it.

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Now, one of the questions I started thinking about when I put this episode together was, what exactly is it that we're grieving? And I think that we're grieving a couple different things. One is we're grieving the familiar.

So, in between the time that it takes us to have the old habit break it, and then adopt the new behavior, that is our new normal, it's going to feel really uncomfortable. It's not going to feel familiar. And I think that that was the case that I had when I was looking at that steak, that I was grieving, what was familiar.

What was familiar to me was the over fulfilling that I would get after dinner. It felt familiar. It didn't necessarily feel comfortable, but it was what I was used to. And so, stopping that, even though it seems counterintuitive. Why would I want to continue doing something that doesn't feel good is because it's familiar and it's what we know. So, don't underestimate the pull of what the familiar will do for us.

The other thing that we're sometimes grieving, and it depends on the situation is sometimes an identity. When I was in my early twenties, I remember that when I started exercising, I did not like it at all. And I was really only just going for a walk.

And I remember feeling just so resentful about having to go for a walk and thinking, I was cute saying, well, the words Elizabeth and sweat don't belong together in the same sentence. And so, I had this identity that Elizabeth just doesn't exercise and that's totally okay.

And sometimes when we have an identity shift, we're acting "as if" in the process. But sometimes when we are really drawn to a specific identity like if we identify as, for example, the life of the party, and so therefore, we have to stay out all night, and we have to drink all the things, and eat all the things.

When we get to a more structured lifestyle where we're not eating all the things. We're eating some of the things, and we're not drinking all the things. We're drinking, more

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water and less alcohol. And we're not staying out all night because sleep is important to us, and we need to get to bed at a decent hour. That can feel really shifting.

And so, we can be grieving the loss of that identity. And so, until we can adopt a new identity, how does this new behavior fit in with how I identify myself. It can feel really, again, unfamiliar. It can feel really uncomfortable.

There's an idea that I talk about with my clients called cognitive dissonance. And it's when we are trying to hold two different beliefs in our head at the same time. Which might be that I am still fun and outgoing, but I just don't eat, quote unquote fun foods anymore. Right? Or that healthy food can be fun.

And so, these are some of the beliefs that we have, that it's really important to uncover in order to work through the stages of grief more quickly.

The last thing that we are grieving I think is when we blame others. And so, when we're blaming others, what's happening is we're not taking responsibility. And so, it's like we are grieving becoming an adult and having to grow up. It's grieving not being able to blame other people for our situation.

It's taking responsibility for the situation that we're in, understanding what our role is. And that can cause a lot of really negative emotion.

When we are adopting new behaviors, when we are adopting a new health attitude, we need to give it time and patience for the new identity to kick in. And so, don't be surprised if the stages of grief come up for you in this process, it's 100% totally normal and it's okay for this to happen.

But the more you can be aware of what is happening, tune into our lower brain, right? The emotional brain that comes up with these thoughts and suggestions. The quicker we can move through this process and really make peace with it.

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And for those of you who are interested in doing this, I just want to invite you to join the waitlist of the Feel Good Sisterhood. The Feel Good Sisterhood is going to be kicking off at the end of January. And we're going to be starting in the beginning of February.

If you're interested in joining the waitlist, you want to go to elizabethsherman.com/groupcoaching and put your name on the wait list because I give really good bonuses to folks who were there.

So, that's all I have for you today. Have an amazing week. It's the first week of the New Year, how exciting is that? And I will see you all next week. Talk to you later. 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. I'd love to have you join me in the Feel Good Sisterhood.

See you there.