

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress



Full Episode Transcript

With your Host
Elizabeth Sherman

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And so, I could weigh 300 pounds. I really could not care less about what the scale says about my weight. Because what scale weight is, is it's only measuring our gravitational pole to the earth. That's it! And scale weight varies so much. We have no idea what those daily fluctuations really are.

And so, when we measure success through the scale, I mean, yes, standing on the scale is easy. It's a really easy way of measuring whether we're sticking to our habits. The scale is a really good way of noticing if we are on track, if your goal is to lose weight.

But really, when we want to lose weight, we really don't care about the weight. In fact, I had a client once, and she got braids put in her hair. And the next time she weighed in; she was eight pounds heavier. All because of the weight of her hair.

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.

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

Hey, welcome to the 53rd episode of the done with dieting podcast. I am Elizabeth Sherman, your host, and I am so glad that you are here today. And, you know, it's so funny. So, it's 53 episodes and I was talking to my friend Michelle yesterday and she is starting a podcast and she was telling me about how she wants to have me on.

She was actually on earlier last year, Michelle Runnels . And is one of my most popular episodes all about parenting and how to be a better parent. But she was saying that she's starting a podcast, which is so super exciting because she has so much great stuff to offer the world.

She said she wanted to have me on her podcast and that she wanted to do it for three episodes. And I was like, three episodes? I don't know if I have enough to say for three episodes, but clearly, I do. Because I have done 53 episodes at this point, which is unbelievable, but it's so super exciting.

So, today, what we are talking about is measuring success or measuring progress. So, first of all, let me back up for a second. As I've mentioned on the podcast before, my husband and I, Gary and I are building a house here in Mexico. It's just down the street. And every day when I walk our Boston terrier, Sadie down and do her morning walk, we walk right by the house. And the house has been under construction for at this point, well over a year.

In fact, it's been a year and a month. Hopefully, fingers crossed, we will be done by April. So, that's what date they're giving us. But if you look at this structure, I don't know how that's going to happen. I don't know if elves are going to pop up overnight, like Dobby the house elf from Harry Potter. I have no idea how the house is going to be done. But my builder assures us that it will be done.

And building of the house has actually given me so many analogies when it comes to moving forward with our health behaviors and moving forward with losing weight.

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

Because right now, if this was weight loss and the house completion would be 100% to goal.

Right now, I would say that we're not even 50% done. And yet, we have another, "oh, I don't know," three months left. And so, it's one of those things where like, if this was weight loss, how many of us would be like, well, I'm done, I'm not going to hit my goal in time. And so, I'm throwing up my hands.

And what's really been interesting is that the guys have been at the house every single day. They've been making progress. It's just that sometimes that progress, isn't visible to me. It doesn't mean that they're not making progress. It just means that I can't see what it is that they're doing.

And I think that that's really freaking important. Especially, when it comes to weight loss. Because so often, when we want to lose weight, when we want to be healthier, right? We think that scale weight means healthier. But it doesn't, it really doesn't.

We think that if I exercise and eat a vegetable, that my body should lose weight. Right? We feel entitled to that. But so often, that doesn't happen. Until we know that there are other things at play when we're talking about weight loss.

And if you've been listening to all 52 episodes of this podcast, you know that sometimes, well, most often, we don't really have a lot of input on what our body does. We don't have a lot of control over our body losing weight or not losing weight.

And so, if you go back to episode number 26, I talked about goal setting. And in the goal setting episode, I talked about the difference between setting outcome-based goals and habit based goals. And so, we're going to actually, continue that a little bit today. But so many of us use the scale as a measure of whether we have been successful or not.

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

And you know, I tell my clients this all the time that I really don't care how much I weigh. In fact, when we moved from Texas to Mexico, I threw away all my scales. So, I really have no idea how much I weigh. What I care about is that I fit into my clothes and that I fit into my clothes comfortably.

And so, I could weigh 300 pounds. I really could not care less about what the scale says about my weight. Because what scale weight is, is it's only measuring our gravitational pole to the earth. That's it! And scale weight varies so much. We have no idea what those daily fluctuations really are.

And so, when we measure success through the scale, I mean, yes, standing on the scale is easy. It's a really easy way of measuring whether we're sticking to our habits. The scale is a really good way of noticing if we are on track, if your goal is to lose weight.

But really, when we want to lose weight, we really don't care about the weight. In fact, I had a client once, and she got braids put in her hair. And the next time she weighed in; she was eight pounds heavier. All because of the weight of her hair.

So, we don't care about the weight when she got them taken out, she was eight pounds lighter. Did she lose weight? Yes, she lost weight. But was it the weight that she wanted? And so, weight, scale weight is so completely arbitrary. Yes, it's concrete and it's measurable. But again, we don't really know what it is that we are measuring.

And so, I have some other methods that I'd like you to entertain in today's episode. Some of them are easier, and they're more subjective. Okay. Others are harder, but they're more concrete and more reliable.

And so, let's talk about the easy methods first. Of course, we have this scale. And I want to mention here that when a client starts with me and they want to lose weight, I always encourage my clients to start to not only use the scale as a unit of measure, but also use other methods of measurement as well.

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

If you follow me on social, you may have seen that occasionally, I will post pictures of myself in my measurements. So, every month, I take a picture of myself in my workout gear before I work out. And it just allows me to see like, am I on track or not?

And what I do is I then take that picture that I took today and compare it to like the picture that I took last month or even further long ago. And it just allows me to see like, where am I? Am I gaining weight? Am I losing weight? And of course, I can tell by the way that my clothes fit.

But again, when clients start with me, I have a list of different methods that they can use in order to gauge progress that have nothing to do with body size and have nothing to do with weight. And I'm really going to encourage you today to try some of those on.

Because when we can see progress in the non-scale, in the non-body weight areas, that's going to propel us to keep going. And eventually, see progress in the body size areas.

Now, one of the methods that people will always recommend when it comes to staying on track and measuring our progress is they'll say, use the mirror. And first of all, I just want to tell you that I think that the mirror is a terrible, terrible way of measuring progress. Because we see ourselves in the mirror every single day.

And we don't see those very subtle changes on a daily basis that allow us to propel forward that allow us to stay motivated. All we see is our face when we wake up in the morning and maybe how tired we look. We don't see that we're just infinitesimally more alive, or our skin is a little less sallow, or that we look a little bit more hydrated. We don't see those things. What we see is just the same thing that we saw yesterday.

And it's not until we take pictures. And I think that pictures are a really fantastic way of measuring progress. No one wants to take pictures. No one wants to take pictures at the beginning of their journey because we are so. in our heads about how terrible we look. And so, we never want to take pictures at the very beginning.

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

But I will tell you this, that if you take pictures at the very beginning of your process, that you will thank yourself. In a month, in two months, in five months, in six months, in a year from now. When you're able to look back and see the progress that you've made.

To other methods that we can use that are super easy to do. The first one is an item of clothing. So, I'm sure that you are like many other women in the United States where you have four different dress sizes in your closet.

And first of all, I am going to recommend that you get rid of anything that you don't want. So, anything that is way too small for you get rid of it. Don't use it as evidence to make yourself feel bad that you used to fit into it or that you bought it with the idea that eventually you could. And so first of all, get rid of that.

But if you do have something that you're like, oh, I think I can get into that someday. And I really love that dress, or I love those jeans, or whatever. What I'm going to suggest is that you use an item of clothing as a method of determining your progress.

When you're going through your closet, try stuff on. And see like, what does fit and what's really kind of close? And then, every month, try those things on and to determine how well you're progressing towards your goal.

And then, the other is a similar method, but it's a little bit more difficult to do correctly. And that is tape measures. So, getting a tape measure and measuring certain areas on your body as girth measurements. And so, you can measure your chest, and the bra strap line, the narrowest part in your torso, your belly, and then also the widest. Those are the areas that I measure.

Now, what happens though? Why this can be a little tricky is if you don't have the exact right line horizontal line. Then, sometimes the number is off a little bit, and it can look

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

as if you've grown instead of shrunk. Also, bloating, and extra water can also impact that as well.

So, just be aware that tape measure is great. It's not super accurate. However, over time, it will tell you if you're going in the right direction. Of course, all of these are really super easy measurement methods.

Now, there are more difficult methods that are more concrete. And I say difficult because generally, you're going to need a professional to help you out with it. And one is calipers. Now, calipers are aware you measure, what's called a "skinfold." And what they do is they have this device; it looks like those pinchers that you use when you're grilling, and they pinch your skin.

The idea is that half of the body fat that we have on our body is stored, what's called subcutaneously, and the other is stored viscerally. Subcutaneous, means under the skin. Viscerally, means that it's stored within our muscles. And so, when we do a skin fold test, we want that number to go down. We want it so that the skin is just barely there. If you want to lose weight, I mean, that's the idea.

So, the idea between with a skinfold is that the measurement gets smaller and smaller as we lose body fat. So, calipers are really good. But Unless the person that you're going to see is a trained professional and has been doing it for a really long time. It's difficult to get the same number on calipers.

Calipers are also really difficult to do on yourself. So, just be aware that when you're using calipers, there is some deviation of accuracy.

Now, the other methods are something like a hydrostatic weighing, which is like the gold standard when it comes to checking out how much body fat we have.

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

However, again, there are problems with it. People who are not white can have different measures than the standard deviation. So, the underwater hydrostatic tank, it's when they dunk you, and they use this method for displacement. How large your body is, how much water is displaced when you go underwater.

And one of the problems with this method though is that people who are non-Caucasian will have different measurements. And so, it's really not super accurate either. However, it is accurate as far as being able to see progress.

And then finally, there's another tool out there called the bod pod, which is a similar tool. But again, you need to go to a facility that has that type of equipment and figure it out.

Now, one of the methods that I really love. So, up until this point, I've only been talking about measurement methods that are size related. And I really dislike it that most of the measures that we have are size related. Because there are so many other things that come into play when we on our quest for health.

There are so many other ways that we can measure our health. And one of the other methods is getting our blood work done. So many of my clients come to me because they've had their blood test taken and their doctor's like, Hey, we need to get these numbers out and under control.

Numbers like your cholesterol, your blood sugar, your triglycerides, or your A1C. They're all health markers that will tell us if we're headed in the right direction, if the habits that we're doing on a regular basis are making an impact.

And this is one beautiful reason why diets aren't always the best for us because diets don't always lead to better health markers. Diets, we do, and they reduce our size. But that doesn't mean that they actually reduce the health markers.

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

And so, be aware that when we are doing the habits that we want to be doing for better health, that ideally, that's going to impact our body size as well. And our body will right-size as a result of that.

Now, one thing that I always try to steer my clients towards is not doing health behaviors for the purpose of losing weight. But rather, doing the health behaviors because they're good for your health. Not eating vegetables because vegetables are low calorie. But eating vegetables because they're good for your body. They have vitamins and minerals in them.

And yeah, they're just going to make you feel better. So, doing things because they're good for you versus doing things because they're going to help you lose weight. Stopping overeating because it's not helpful to your body, instead of stopping overeating because it's going to help you lose weight. It's going to help you be a smaller size.

And I think that, that distinction is actually really important because when I have the idea that I can't overeat, and I can't overeat because I need to lose weight. That's not always a really motivating idea.

But if I want to stop eating, because it's going to decrease the load onto my body. It's going to decrease stress. And I want to stop overeating because people who really love and appreciate their body don't overeat on a regular basis. Then, it completely changes why I'm wanting to stop overeating. It's a completely different experience.

So, one of the ways that I love measuring progress is through these subjective biomarkers. And I talk about the biomarkers in episode 36, called managing menopause about how the biomarkers tell us whether our hormones are balanced or not.

And so, the biomarkers that I'm talking about are energy, sleep quality, cravings, mood, as well as our appetite. And so, we can actually look at those even. Even though, they

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

seem really subjective. We can look at those over a period of time and determine whether the things that we are doing are helping us to balance our hormones.

And help us to have more energy, help us to have better sleep quality, help us to reduce our cravings, and to keep our appetite stable. And so, how we do that is first of all, we need to have awareness when we're starting out the process and asking ourselves on a scale from 1 to 10, how would I rate my energy? How would I rate my sleep quality? How often, am I waking up in the middle of the night and staying up? How often, am I having energy dips or needing to take an afternoon nap? How often, am I giving into cravings? Or how often, am I having cravings? And so, these are some of the things that we can look at when we're trying to measure success.

And as we go through and develop better habits, we can see that those things, having energy dips and energy spikes, and waking up in the middle of the night and staying awake, having insomnia. That those things are actually going down.

And it's not something that you notice in a week, but it's something that you notice that over time that they actually get better. Things like hot flashes or night sweats. Those are other things that we can definitely control through lifestyle habits. I've done it myself and I've helped my clients to do it as well.

And so, the first thing that we want to do when we're talking about these more subjective types of progress is really raise awareness at the beginning of our journey first. And notice, how often am I experiencing fluctuations?

Now, many of my clients actually come to me with other things that are bothering them. Things like pain in your knees, or having binges, or over-drinking, or just feeling stuck, or not happy, feeling lethargic. And so, what we can do is we can really start to create awareness around those, for lack of a better term pain points. So that we can start to measure whether we're improving on those.

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

So, as we start to notice that we're eating less inflammatory foods, we'll probably start to notice that our knees stop having so much pain, or our hips, or our wrists, or elbows, our joints. Right?

And so, what we can notice then is that the days when I'm really being taken out because of this pain is going down. And when we have less pain, right? Then, we are so much more encouraged to keep up with these healthy habits.

Now, the last category of measuring success is really behavior driven. And so, one of the things that I love are the 8 basic habits that healthy people do. The 8 basic habits are exactly what I said, they are 8 basic habits that I talked about on episode 3, titled the foundation.

But I'll go through them right now. And they are the 8 things that if we are doing these 8 things on a consistent basis then we know that we are healthier than most people. And so, there are things like drinking water, eating vegetables, sleeping, getting good sleep quality.

And so, you could track how many hours of sleep you're getting on a regular basis. You could measure your number of minutes walked or minutes of physical activity. You could measure your number of treats eaten within a week or days without treats, maybe days drinking soda or not drinking soda.

And so, these are the behaviors are some things that we can start to notice that over time they are getting better. And there's a really good James Clear quote, if you don't know who James clear is, James clear wrote atomic habits, and which is a really fantastic book.

This is a great quote from James Clear that says; "In many cases, improvement is not about doing more things right, but about doing less things wrong." "Don't look for

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

things to add, look for things to eliminate." And I love this quote because for so many of us, we do look at that. Right?

We look at; well, I need to be running more or I need to be doing more. And maybe what we need to be doing instead is starting to notice what we want to let go of, the bad habits that we want to eliminate. And you don't actually have to add anything to your day at all. We just want to subtract things.

And so, for so many of us, far too often, at how far we have to go? But what I really want you to start noticing is how far you've come. Because when we look at how far we have to go, quite often, the goalpost moves. As we progress towards the goal, the goal will actually move as well. We want to be able to see progress. And we want to be able to see that we're moving forward.

So, going back to my house that we're building, the house went up. At the very beginning, when they started laying the foundation, they had to spend a lot of time digging. And when they were digging, we didn't see a lot of progress unless it was something major like, excavating where the foundation was going to go.

But once they started laying rebar and the boards that would ultimately make up the foundation. It felt like everything was moving very slowly. But then, once they poured the foundation, they started building the cement block on top of it. And quickly we saw that things were moving fast again. And in fact, so many of our friends were telling us, oh, your house is going up so quickly. It's happening so rapidly.

But for us it felt like we were watching paint dry. And now, what's currently happening is that they're putting in the conduit that is ultimately going to have the electric system, and the plumbing, and they're smoothing the walls.

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

And so, from the outside, we don't really see that a lot is happening. But we know that a lot is happening because they're there and they're doing the work. It's just that it's not visible. One of my favorite sayings is "don't force fruit."

The idea behind this saying, and I realized that I'm mixing analogies here but the idea behind "don't force fruit" is that when we plant a seed, and we water it, and we don't see any progress happening. We water it every day. We don't want to dig that seed up, right? Because if we dig the seat up, then we're going to disturb the roots. And when we disturb the roots, then we're going to put ourselves back.

Getting on the scale and beating ourselves up is like digging up the roots of a seed. We have to do the behaviors and have faith that those behaviors are doing something. Because we all know what we should be doing. Right?

And so, when we eat more vegetables, when we drink more water, when we are more physically active. When we are spending less time on the couch, when we are not eating as many sweets, or we're eating different sweets, we're eating fruit instead of chocolate or cookies.

We know that these are the things that are going to make us successful in our goal. We don't want to dig up that seed. And so then, what happens is we water the seed. And eventually, we see that it sprouts. So, we're seeing some progress.

But when we have a seed, and we water it every day, and it grows into a tree. What we consider the fruit is the weight loss. But the fruit is often the very last thing that shows that the tree is healthy. The fruit, the apple, or the pear, or the avocado that comes on the end of the tree is one of the very last things that the tree bears.

And so, when we're trying to lose weight, we're looking for the fruit when we've just planted the seed. There is so much more that needs to happen before we get that fruit. It's going to take some time.

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

When we pay attention to the little things, it makes it so much easier to stay motivated and do the behaviors that we need in order to see progress with the big things. Because those are the things that really matter. When we can fall in love with the process and not do the things so that we lose weight.

We do the things so that we enjoy doing the things. We don't exercise so that we lose weight. We don't eat vegetables so that we lose weight. We don't stop eating too many sweets so that we lose weight. We do those things because they're good for us. And because that's what builds a healthy body.

Every week, we go over to our house and check out what did the guys do in our house this week. And every week we do see small changes. It's the expectation that we have, that they shouldn't be doing it faster, that makes us feel frustrated. And it's the same thing with weight loss.

When we get on the scale and we're like, we should be so much faster. That creates so much anxiety. It creates so much disappointment and frustration around it. Because we think that it's taking forever. Know, that your weight loss is inevitable. When you can see it and you know that what you are doing today is going to produce the results of your future. Then, it doesn't matter how long it takes.

We think that it's going to be better when we lose the weight. But when we lose the weight, we're going to have a whole host of different challenges that pop up. Trust me, I know this because I've had it and my clients have had it. And when we are so anxious to get to that result, it takes time for our brain and our body to adjust to the new way.

So, I have to brag on a few of my clients because what we're talking about today is something that we talk about in our appointments as well as in the Feel Good Sisterhood, which is my six month group coaching program, which is actually coming to an end right now, but doors just opened for the next cohort.

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

So, I'm going to tell you about the Feel Good Sisterhood, and I need to brag on these women because they have just been doing such amazing things. We were just recently talking about progress and how everyone felt like they were doing. And Christine realized that losing weight really isn't the goal anymore. That it's the behaviors that we're doing on a regular basis. Focusing on them, that is the goal.

And Carla recognized that she could get out of a negative spiral so much faster now. She used to run to food whenever she was in a negative state. And now she realizes, "Hey, wait a minute. I can coach myself through this." I don't have to eat in order to get rid of these negative emotions. There are so many other things that I can do that are going to be way more helpful.

Renee said that she is losing weight. And also, she's just paying attention to what she's eating and noticing that it all adds up. In fact, that was her phrase on one of our recent calls that she was like, "I just keep saying to myself, it all adds up." Every minute of exercise just adds up. And every bite that I don't eat adds up.

And so, I eat until I'm satisfied, and I stop. And every little bit adds up and it's such a beautiful sentiment because it's the truth. It all adds up. So many of us are like, oh, I guess I ate a brownie. I should eat the entire pint of ice cream, but it all adds up.

And then, Amy said that she feels solid about what she needs to do to feel good going forward. And so, I'm telling you, if you want 2022 to be the last year that you go on a diet. In fact, if you don't even want to go on a diet in 2022 and you just want to lose weight, the Feel Good Sisterhood is the way to go.

So, if you're wondering what it is, it's an opportunity to take what we've learned here in the podcast and apply it to your specific situation in your life. It's just an amazing way to take what you learned from these episodes and apply it so that you can be successful. Because so often, we are in our heads so much that we can't get out of it.

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

So, that's really the short answer of what the program is about. But again, it's a six month group coaching program where we meet weekly. We have a community that is such an amazing community of women. These are women who are strong, they're smart, they're super motivated, and I love them so much.

You know, it's funny. I feel really inarticulate when I talk about the Feel Good Sisterhood because it's so overwhelming. There are so many different aspects to it. Of course, you're going to learn everything that I know when it comes to eating, and movement, and what you should be doing. So, there are habits that you're going to be working on, on a weekly basis.

But then, there's also the other piece. The other piece that no other program talks about, which is the mindset piece. How to get your mind right when it comes to your body, when it comes to your relationship with food? How do you go to a party and not eat everything? How do your children leave food on the counter, and you'll not feel resentful because you can't eat it or that you have to eat it because it's there.

So, it's really changing your relationship, not only with food and your body but also with exercise, yourself. And then, that just spills over into your relationship with other people. Because I know that when I was in the middle of my dieting days, that I would be out to dinner with friends and my brain wouldn't even be on the conversation that we were having at the table.

My brain would be thinking about the food. What should I order? What can I order? What's available to me on the menu? Is this going to make me gain weight? Is this going to be a good choice? Should I be proud of myself? All of these things, and then what can I eat when I get home because I'm still hungry.

Like all of these things were in my brain and I wasn't being present for the people around me. What the Feel Good Sisterhood does, is it takes all of that away. And it helps you

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

to have a normal relationship with food, your body, exercise, and your friends. So, I really can't say enough about the Feel Good Sisterhood.

Again, we've just opened for enrollment this week. It's going to be going on until the end of January. We start February. Actually, we start January 31st, technically. And I say technically, because the calls are on Wednesdays.

But check out the Feel Good Sisterhood sales page or reach out to me if you have questions. So, if you want to learn more about the Feel Good Sisterhood, go to elizabethsherman.com/groupcoaching or again, you can drop me a line either on Facebook through messenger, or you can email me at eliz@elizabethsherman.com. I love hearing from you. I love hearing what questions you have, and I love just teaching.

And so, that's why I have this podcast, right? Because then I can teach you how to be healthier. So, if never doing a diet is on your goal for 2022, I'm going to invite you to join the Feel Good Sisterhood or at least just learn more about it. Because again, it's just an incredible program.

So, that's all I have for you today. Check in next week, when I talk about the capacity to have. How do we maintain once we've gotten to our goal? That's huge. Right?

Okay. I'll see you next week. 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.

Done with Dieting Podcast #53: Measuring Progress

Join me over at elizabethsherman.com/groupcoaching. I'd love to have you join me in the Feel Good Sisterhood.

See you there.