

Done with Dieting Podcast #71: Why We Moved to Mexico



Full Episode Transcript

With your Host
Elizabeth Sherman

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On this episode of the done with dieting podcast, I am talking about something very personal. I'm talking about why we moved to Mexico. How we got here, what our experience has been.

And so, if that's something that is interesting to you and you're curious, maybe you want to move to Mexico too. Maybe you want to move someplace different. I'm sharing all the information about what led us here and what our experience has been since we've been here.

So, tune in.

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.

Hey everyone, welcome to the done with dieting podcast. This is episode number 71. And today, I'm talking not necessarily about health and weight loss, but I'm going to talk a little bit about my personal experience living in Mexico.

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I was recently at a conference and of course, when people ask, where do you live? And I say, Mexico. They look at me and say, how did that happen? Because I am 53 years old and people want to know, how did that happen? How did you live in Mexico?

And so, I thought that I could just create a podcast episode that answered it, not that I'm not willing to talk about it one-on-one but you might be asking yourself the same questions. Like, how did Elizabeth end up in Mexico?

This story starts, oh gosh, maybe 12 years ago. I used to be a personal trainer and one of my clients who I adore. She had a place in Belize, and she wasn't going to be using it for a week, and she asked me, hey, do you want to use our condo? And of course, my husband and I were like, yes, please.

So, we went to Belize, we were on the island of Ambergris Caye. And this place was a type of timeshare it's called fractional ownership. My client and her husband owned one unit of this complex for the month of August.

While we were there, we were talking to the folks in the management office and we ultimately, decided to buy our own place. And so, the following year, we went back, and we stayed in Ambergris Caye in Belize on the beach for an entire month.

It was that experience right there that my husband, Gary and I looked at each other and we were kind of like, "oh, is this something that we could really do for the rest of our lives?"

Now, he took half of the time and spend it on vacation and worked half of the time because 12 is years ago, the internet wasn't stable enough. He would be working in our apartment and see the weather come in and the internet would drop out. And then, as the rain passed, it would come back.

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And so, we knew that we couldn't make the move just yet. And we also knew that Belize wasn't really the place that we wanted to stay forever. But it really gave us a taste of what life could be like. And at the time, as I said, I was a personal trainer, and I didn't really know how I would be able to make a living while living in Belize.

Anyway, we went back to our normal lives, and we kept doing what we were doing but that experience really created a spark in us. That made us want to explore, where could we do this?

And so, every year, what we did was we would go to Mexico for vacation. And each Thanksgiving, we would go to a different place.

Now, there's an island just off the coast of Cancun called Isla Mujeres and it is gorgeous and it's beautiful. And we thought about Isla Mujeres as a destination but there are a couple of different things that were really keeping us from that.

One is that there's a roughly 20-minute ferry ride to get from Cancun to Isla Mujeres. And so, therefore, first of all, the internet and electric weren't stable enough for us to live there. But then, also, if you needed to go to the hospital, if you needed to go to the dentist, or to Costco, or make any appointment in Cancun, it would add so much more time.

And so, as we moved through these different cities in Mexico and visited different places, we were reflective about it on what it was that we liked about different cities and what we didn't like about different cities.

One day, we said, let's get serious about this and let's put a checklist together of what are the things that we want. And what we really wanted was we wanted beach life, but we also wanted a colonial city.

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There are cities in Mexico that are so amazingly beautiful, like San Miguel de Allende, and Merida, and Puebla, and all these cities are just so incredibly beautiful but none of them exist on the coast. And what we found out was yeah, there are no cities that are colonial cities that also exist on the coast.

In November of 2015, when Gary found the town that we live in right now, which sits between Cancun and Playa Del Carmen. And the idea was that since we liked Isla Mujeres that maybe like living on the mainland and we like this part of Mexico.

We decided to stay here and travel all along the Riviera Maya, which is the area that this is called. And go to Cancun, and go to Playa Del Carmen, and go to Tulum, and go to Akumal. And visit those other little cities and see which one really resonated with us. And making this town, our home base.

When we left after that trip, we looked at each other, we were out to dinner. And I remember exactly where we were, I remember exactly talking about it, and looking at each other and saying, you know, I think it really checked all the boxes. And it was so exciting because at that point, more things were becoming available online.

So, my husband's office is mostly remote, they did have an office in Austin at the time that we were living there. But since we've moved, they've completely moved to a remote workforce.

And for me, having more online opportunities was becoming more mainstream, still not 100% viable for personal training. But remote health coaching and remote life coaching was becoming more popular at the time. And so, we realized that it was a good enough time.

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Now, one of the things that I really want to talk about today is you may not want to move to Mexico. Moving to Mexico, moving to a beach town may not be on your radar at all.

However, whenever we do something that is against the grain of what we're supposed to be doing in life, we always come up with objections. We always come up with excuses of why it's not the right time.

And for us, there could have been a ton of different excuses of why leaving Austin, Texas in 2017 was not a good idea. But what I want to allow you to do is really ask yourself, what is it that you do want in life? And think about, what are the self-imposed limitations that we put on ourselves and our decisions? And what are true factors?

Now, we don't have children. And so, it made it easier for us to move here. However, in this community of people, there are tons of young adults who have children, who have moved here, and who want that as part of their children's lifestyle. They want their children to live in a country and experience cultures that are outside of the American culture.

And so, my point is really that we can always come up with the reasons why not to do something. I really want to encourage you to open your mind and think about what is it that you do want and figure out a way to do it.

I'm also going to encourage you to listen to my podcast on decisions. Because we need to make sure that we like our reasons for deciding either to make the move or not make the move.

So, when we decided that we were going to do this thing, that we were going to move, we lived in Austin, Texas. We had a five-bedroom house, there's only the two of us, we don't have children, and it was full of stuff.

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We knew that we couldn't get to Mexico and sell all our stuff, sell the house within six months. There were reasons for why we wanted to delay the move and it worked out perfectly. We wanted to move just at the beginning of low season, which is just right after Easter time.

And so, we knew that we couldn't do that in 2016, it would be too short, it would be too quick to cut it close. However, we set the goal of doing it within April of 2017. And so, we slowly started in getting rid of stuff. And it was just amazing how much stuff we had really accumulated.

Just a little detour here. One of the things that I think when I go back to the United States, I see how much shopping there is. And when we lived in the United States, we used to do a lot of shopping.

One of the reasons that we decided to move to Mexico was because it seemed like our lifestyle had gotten away from us. We had this beautiful five-bedroom house in an amazing neighborhood. We had a pool, we had cars, we had technology, we had all these things.

And yet, we weren't at any happier for it. We felt like we were working in order to support our lifestyle. And why I bring this up is because when I go back to the United States, I see that the United States is built around consumption.

There's everything that you do that we used to do in the United States was around shopping and eating. And what really happened when we decided that we were moving to Mexico was that it completely changed the way that I spent money.

And what I mean by that is that before I would buy anything that I wanted. If I wanted something, I bought it and Amazon delivered it to me within a day or two.

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But when we figured out that we were moving, we were going to start selling all our stuff. Suddenly, I had this lens to which I could look through and look at my purchases. And ask myself, okay, do I need this within the next nine months?

If I don't need to have it within the next nine months, is it something that I'm going to want to bring with me to Mexico? And if the answer was no, then it forced me to not buy it. Because I didn't want to buy it and then get rid of it.

And so, what the move to Mexico did was it also put me on this diet of spending money as well. And it really allowed me to stop spending needlessly. It's so interesting when we talk about food, and exercise, and money. The habits that we have in one area, often move over into the others.

Recently, I was talking to a client of mine about spending. She was asking, how do I stop spending? I keep buying things and I know that these are things that we don't need but I just feel like my kids need them.

In reflecting on it, that was really the change that it took for me was those nine months or the year before we moved, really putting that lens on of oh, this is something that I don't want to bring it with me to Mexico.

And so, going back to this amazing lifestyle that we had. When we started telling people, our friends, and our family, that we were moving, that we were selling everything, and up and moving to Mexico. We got one of two different reactions.

The first reaction was "oh my God, that is so awesome. You are my hero; I totally want to do that too." The other reaction that we received was "why on earth, would you want to do that? You have everything you could possibly want." And it's true, we did have everything that we wanted. We did everything that we were supposed to in order to get this American dream.

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We were living the American dream. But it wasn't making us any happier. And so, that's ultimately, why we made the decision. And we felt a lot of pushbacks. People were challenging us because within our decision, we were challenging their social norms. You're not supposed to do that until you retire.

And because we were so young at the time, we were in our late forties. It really challenged a lot of people when we make decisions that aren't the things that you're supposed to do. People feel triggered by that because what you're doing is your giving them the option of possibility that they didn't even think existed.

We didn't know anyone who had moved to Mexico before or moved to a foreign country, really. We knew that people did it, but we really didn't know anyone. We were really going into uncharted territory.

Now, luckily for us, the internet was hugely established by this point. And so, there were a lot of people who are writing blogs and there were Facebook groups that talked about their experiences. So, that was available to us. We knew that other people had done it, and so it was available to us as well.

Again, I just want to give you the option. I just want to share with you that the possibility exists for you as well. If someone else has done whatever it is that you want to do, you know that it is possible for you. All you need to do is raise that awareness and live into the possibility.

Now, what gave me the idea to record this podcast was actually the podcast that I recorded last week called the river of misery.

When I first moved here, I was writing a lot of emails to my list. I didn't have my podcast yet. And in one of the emails that I wrote right after we moved. In fact, it was a Cinco

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de Mayo email. We moved at the end of April, and so Cinco de Mayo was just a few weeks later.

And in that email, I wrote something about the valley of despair. And I remember someone coming back later and challenging me saying you don't sound very happy. And the valley of despair or the river of misery is just the situation that when we've made the change, we think that it's going to be easier than it is.

So, I want to talk a little bit about the challenges that we've had in living in Mexico. It has not been 100% a free ride. It has been a challenge. I want to reiterate that there's no perfect place in the world that there is to live. There are positives and negatives for everything that we do, for every decision that we make.

Living here has been an exercise in patience and in acceptance. And the reason I say that is because culturally, things are very different here. Things are done very different in Mexico than they are done in the United States.

Coming here and only experiencing the lens of how things are done in the United States, and then expecting them to be the same in Mexico is just an exercise in futility. It can be frustrating because you know how things could be and things just aren't done here the same way that they are in the United States.

Of course, not because we don't have the same laws. We don't have the same culture. We don't have a lot of the same experiences. And so, of course things are going to be completely different. To move here and to expect that I'm going to be able to live my American lifestyle here in Mexico is shortsighted.

And it goes against moving to another country because we could of course move to a beach in the United States and had a similar experience. We really wanted to experience the culture of living in Mexico. So, that's just part of it.

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Now, the first year of living here was so shocking. And I remember one of my clients saying, this is the only time that you're going to do this. You should just take it all in. And so, her words to me were just so wise and perfect because it really did allow me to take it all in more than I probably would have.

Although, I still don't know that I really remember my first year here. There was so much new stuff, like how we shopped. They work on metric here versus Imperial measurements. The language is different, how we measure things is different, how the government works is different. Everything is completely different.

So, for that first few months, I remember just taking everything in. And of course, we were learning Spanish at the same time. And so, there was so much learning to be had.

Now, after five years, of course, everything just becomes normal, and we are still learning Spanish. I don't know if I will ever get to the place where I think that I speak well enough. But it's all part of the learning process and I love how I can create the parallels between learning Spanish and learning new behaviors as well, so that we can put that into perspective for it.

One of the questions that people ask us a lot is how your life is different than living in the United States. And our lives are very different and not necessarily from what we do every day. Because both my husband and I work, we work traditional working hours, like nine to five, Monday through Friday.

However, outside of that, our life is very different. Not only because we live in a beach town in Mexico. But the foods that we have available to us are completely different. We don't have target; we don't have whole foods. We don't have all those amazing shopping experiences that we had in the United States.

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And what's so interesting about that is now when I go back to the United States, and I see all of the amazing choices that we had there. Here in Mexico, you only get one or two different types of hummuses. I remember going back to whole foods in the United States, and standing in front of this refrigerator, and seeing 40 different types of hummuses. It was so overwhelming.

And so, I think that in some instances, this is an advantage but it's also a disadvantage. Clearly, we don't have all the choices that we had available to us. What that's done is it reduces decision fatigue.

Before we moved here, I remember seeing a lot on Facebook people asking, what can I get in Mexico? And people would respond saying, you can get everything that you need. And that is 100% true.

However, and we know this from building our house right now is you cannot get everything you want. You can get everything you need; you might not be able to get everything you want. All of the selection is limited here.

And so, again, it creates this simpler form of life. But if you're someone who really likes exotic things or unique ingredients, it can be a challenge.

I remember in the states, I had a pantry that was full of alternate flours. I had coconut flour, I had rice flour, I had almond flour, all of these different flours. And those things are available to me here. However, they're not as readily available.

All of those things that I used to have when we moved to our new house, I may go ahead and start stocking those things again. However, my kitchen is set up so differently that I don't really have the space that I used to have. And so, it really has completely changed the way that I cook, the way that I move through the kitchen.

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I think about how I shop completely differently today. And when I lived in the states, I would do a major shop on the weekend, and then maybe go one more time during the week if I had forgotten anything.

And when we first moved here, I would go shopping on a daily basis. There's a fruiteria right down the street from us. And that's where I get all of my fruits and vegetables. And so, I would go on a more frequent basis and get what was fresh. The way that I shopped, the way that I ate completely changed.

Now, you might be thinking that with all of this change that I'm talking about, that it's so much easier to eat healthy meals here. And that might be true. However, be aware that it is possible to move to Mexico and gain weight too.

That's a question that I see frequently. Like when people move to Mexico, do they gain weight, or do they lose weight? And I think it completely depends on your lifestyle and what you're looking for. Of course, you can find Cheetos here. Of course, you can find potato chips. And of course, you can find deep fried foods, and things like that.

But you can also find very fresh foods. And typically, in restaurants the meals aren't as large portions as they tend to be in the United States.

But that also brings up the topic of some things in Mexico tend to be cheaper. And other things tend to be more expensive. Anything that needs to be imported in is going to be more expensive.

So, like boxes of cereal are probably about twice the price that they are in the United States. Anything that I order, I can get Amazon us here, but not everything ships here. And so, when it does ship here that also has a tax on it as well. And it's so interesting that also everything that gets imported in, gets opened by customs.

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Now, as a tangent to that and this is not true for every part of Mexico, this is just my little city is I have not received a piece of mail in five years. So, put that in the positive category for us.

One of the reasons that we decided to move here was because we wanted a slower pace of life. And it really does seem like we have more time available to us. Part of the reason for that is because we do have help. We do have people who we can afford to come in, and help clean the house, and cook, and do that type of stuff.

But like I was saying, there's not as much to do here. There isn't as much shopping. There aren't as many movie theaters, and activities, and things like that. There are growing in the area, but it's still pretty limited. And so, we do have more time on our hands which slows the pace of life.

And I honestly wouldn't give that back for a minute. I remember what it was like living in the United States and feeling like I was on high alert all the time because there was always something to do. Always something else that was pulling at my time, and attention, and energy. And it just feels like everyone here has just slowed down a little bit.

The result of that is that our friendships have become so much more genuine. And our social support system has become so much tighter. So, we've developed really amazing friendships, and friendships that we didn't have in the United States because we just didn't have the opportunity to connect with people. Everyone was just so busy all of the time.

And so, here, it's just a little bit more slow and people get to connect a little bit more. So, that's been a huge benefit of moving here.

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I just want to share a couple of takeaways that I want you to take away from this episode. One is again, there is no perfect place. So, I think that it's easy to look at me sharing pictures on social media of me being at the beach or being on a boat. And think that my life is absolutely perfect.

And what I want to share with you is that again, there is no perfect place in the world. There are advantages and there are disadvantages of any location.

Something that I've talked about on the podcast is that we are currently building a house. And we have been in process of building this house for what seems like years. There is a mistake with the property title. And so, we've really been on this journey of building this house for what seems like three years now.

That has been an exercise in patience as well. Again, there are advantages and disadvantages to every single location. Life is always going to be 50% positive and 50% negative. And so, being able to figure out what is the positive and what is the negative that you want to have.

If you're looking at someone else's experience and thinking that they, have it perfect, it's probably not the case. There are again, positives and negatives to every single situation.

The second takeaway that I want you to take from this episode is that you can do whatever it is that you desire. Seriously, you can do whatever you want. You just have to figure out which obstacles are real and which ones are self-imposed.

We've talked about people pleasing before. And when we moved from the United States to Mexico, there was a huge part of me that was like, oh my gosh, what are we doing? Are we doing the wrong thing because other people are doubting us?

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I think the big thing that we kept in our minds when we made that change was the third takeaway which is you and only you are the ones that suffer the consequence of not doing what it is that you desire. This is your life. And so, when people were doubting, are you really sure that you want to do this?

In the backs of our heads, we were thinking, we don't want to go to our deathbeds, regretting not trying. And if we get to Mexico and we realize that it's not the place for us, we have two choices. One is trying another city in Mexico. The other was we could always move back. We could always go back to the United States.

But at least, if we tried to do it, we could at least say that we tried. I would rather try and fail and say, you know what? That wasn't for us. And honestly, it wasn't a failure because the only time it's a failure is if we don't try.

And so, if we had not moved because of all the doubts like, yeah, we really are living the American dream. We shouldn't screw this up because we're never going to be able to get back in this house, once we sold our house, our house was sold for so much money that we wouldn't have been able to buy it back. We would have been stuck in other people's expectations of us.

Again, what I want to share with you today is that do what it is that you want to do. You are the one that is going to reap the benefits and suffer the consequences of your decisions. And so, how do you want to live your life?

Now, if you want to find out more about our experience in Mexico, we were actually on house hunters international. And you can find that episode on my website at elizabethsherman.com. You can find that by going to the connect menu, and then in the media, you can also go to it directly by going to elizabethsherman.com/about/buzz.

So, I hope that this was interesting for you.

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