

Ep #31: Adjust Your Expectations



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Natalie Brown

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This is *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown, episode 31.

Welcome to *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown. If you're a successful woman who is ready to stop struggling with your weight, you're in the right place. You'll learn everything you need to know to lose weight for the last time in bitesize pieces. Here's your host, certified life and weight coach Natalie Brown.

Hi everybody. Today's review I want to share is from Christina. She titled it, "Bitesized and fabulous." And she says this. "Natalie's podcast offers great advice in bitesized pieces. I love the short format as it's enough to get me thinking about things without dragging it out. And I can listen again to get the most out of them. I love that she includes worksheets in the show notes to help us. Natalie has been there, and listening to her feels like a chat with a friend. I look forward to listening and thinking every week."

Thank you so much, Christina. The show notes often include lots of goodness for you if you didn't know that. There are links in the show notes to all of the random things I refer to in an episode, as well as links to worksheets and tools I create just for you to help you take what you are learning and apply it. So glad you're taking advantage, Christina. Your gift is on its way.

Have you ever picked up a glass to take a drink of what you think is water, only to find out it is not? It's Sprite or lemon water or something, and you immediately spit out the foreign liquid that tastes so terrible. But not because it actually tastes terrible. Just because it wasn't the taste you were expecting.

You may like the taste of Sprite or flavored water and even choose to drink it on occasion, but when you drink it expecting something else, it's a different experience. It's not the beverage that is the problem or the flavor even. It's your expectations.

Expectations are the single biggest cause of unnecessary suffering for my clients on their weight loss journeys and my guess is the same is true for

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you as well. I want to help you see how adjusting your expectations can change not just your experience of the journey, but your results as well.

Notice I said adjust your expectations. Not let go of or abandon your expectations. I'm not advocating for the if you don't have any expectations, you won't be disappointed idea. I want you to have a target to shoot for. I want you to have and be reaching for your goals. I want you to develop and aspire to a future you that is an expression of your highest best self.

But I want you to do all of that realistically, compassionately, and wisely. Expectations are predictions your brain is attempting to make based on its past experiences and what it thinks should happen. Notice that should word. Whenever you hear it, it's a signal that we are arguing with the reality of what is.

Byron Katie teaches that whenever we argue with reality, only lose 100% of the time. And yet, we spend much of our lives trying to win the argument anyway. Where do expectations and predictions live? In your imagination of course. They haven't happened. Your brain just made them up. They may be based on facts or evidence from the past, but they are still conceptual and therefore optional to buy into and to believe.

The number one expectation that causes trouble in weight loss is our expectation of how long the process should take. My program is six months. That's not because all weight loss takes six months. It's a completely arbitrary number that I chose because I liked the idea that it was a half of a year, which guaranteed us some holidays, birthdays, vacations, a couple of seasons, and lots of weekends so that my clients can learn how to lose weight while they live their lives.

But so many of my clients set a completely unrealistic expectation that they should reach their goal in the six months. Many of them also think that they should be able to lose one to two pounds a week because that's the collectively accepted amount of weight that we think a person should lose.

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But let's look at what happens when these are the expectations. When my clients believe that they should reach their goal of 50 pounds, losing 50 pounds that is in six months, and then two months in they've only lost 10 pounds, they think they're behind, or that they are not being successful enough and they feel panicky and anxious.

Or when they believe they should be losing one to two pounds a week and instead are losing half a pound a week, they think something is wrong with them and they are definitely never going to be able to get to their goal and they feel hopeless.

Panic is the kind of fuel that makes you want to move, to do something. But what does it make you want to do? Think about when you feel panicky because you are believing you are behind. What do you do? Most of the time, we take frantic action doing a little bit of everything, but nothing well. Or we take extreme measures to try to make up time.

This does not bode well in weight loss. Extreme measures are not thoughtful. They don't raise consciousness or increase learning or skill. Quick fixes are not lasting ones. So panicky is counterproductive fuel. Hopeless is the kind of fuel that has you crawling back into bed and pulling the covers over your head while Doordashing yourself a McFlurry.

It typically leads to inaction and more eating of things that don't align with our goals. We think having high expectations about how long weight loss should take will motivate us, but it ends up sabotaging us. We need to adjust this expectation.

What if I told you that it was scientifically proven that losing 50 pounds was guaranteed to take two years? What would you think in that case at month two when you were down 10 pounds? You would think, "Wow, I am killing it. I'm already 10 pounds down, only two months into this process. My body loves losing weight, I am totally going to do this. My success is inevitable. I'm going to crush this goal. This feels totally doable."

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And then you would feel amazing, motivated, excited, proud, committed, strong, relaxed, all the things. Those feelings are the kinds of fuel that drive you to want to plan and execute and experiment and keep going until you get to your goal.

The truth is everybody's body, and therefore weight loss timeline, is different. There's no accurate predictor of how long weight loss should take for you. It takes as long as it takes. And if you only lose 0.2 pounds a month, you will still get to your goal if you keep going.

When we expect a short timeline or we are in a hurry to lose weight, it's only because we are believing that it is better there than here. And certainly, there will be things that feel better there than here. You'll be more comfortable in your physical body, have more energy, but you'll still be a human with sorrow and pain and frustrations no matter your size.

And rushing doesn't produce the results we want. Listen to episode 15 if you want a reminder or a deeper dive into this topic. Another expectation that causes trouble is our expectation that perfection equals progress. Let me explain with an example.

I had a client who subscribed to the idea, like many of my clients and probably a lot of you, that the only way to lose weight was to be "perfect," which for her looked like eating only green things, never going through a drive through, and cutting all sugar out of her life immediately.

Now, take a second and check in right now. Do you feel yourself agreeing with that? If so, take a mental note. This is classic diet thinking and it is effective for like, three to five days. That's it. Because it doesn't take into account at all where you are now. It isn't looking at what you are currently eating and why. It doesn't consider your desires or your current capacity to feel, or that food is your current coping strategy.

So by ignoring all of that and changing only the food and changing it completely today, we set ourselves up for an overeat in the near future. And that is what was happening for her. She was being perfect, meaning

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creating a perfect plan full of perfect foods. I'm doing air quotes for all of those perfects. And eating that for a few days, and then eating all the things for a full day or three, and then back to perfect for a few days.

You can imagine how much actual progress was happening with this strategy. Three pounds down, then two pounds up, then one pound down, then three pounds up, and on and on and on. No weight loss, no progress.

Perfection isn't realistic, and therefore isn't effective. I recommend that my clients meet themselves where they are and they make a realistic plan, that they include in that plan food that they will actually eat, the food that they want to eat, and we start with small changes to that baseline that they know they can commit to and we go from there.

I have found that for many of my clients, planning in a few Oreos at first is more effective than going no sugar from day one because of your expectations that you shouldn't want them and will only lose weight if you never eat them.

What ends up happening is overeating a whole package of Oreos on day seven because of all the deprivation created by your expectations. It's counterproductive. Set yourself up for success by adjusting your expectations from perfect is the only way to progress, from all or nothing, to small changes equal success.

So how do you know when your expectations need adjusting? The feeling is the signal. When you notice yourself feeling frustrated or disappointed on your weight loss journey, it's a pretty solid sign that there's an expectation that might need some adjusting.

When you hear your brain offering you thoughts with should in them, that is a hint that there's an expectation that could use some adjusting. You are likely arguing with reality and you, my friend, are going to lose that one every time.

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So ask, why am I frustrated? Why am I disappointed? What am I expecting right now and why? What am I believing should be happening and why? What if I'm wrong? What else could be true? How would I feel if I believed something different? What would I do if I believed that instead?

Be gentle with yourselves. Have compassion for you through this process. Set realistic expectations. Make reaching your goal inevitable by finding ways to love your journey. Leave me a review if you love the podcast and let me know at itbeginswithathought.com/review and I'll see you soon.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown. If you want to learn more about how to lose weight for the last time, come on over to itbeginswithathought.com. We'll see you here next week.