

## Ep #38: Zoom In/Zoom Out



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With Your Host

**Natalie Brown**

[Weight Loss Success](#) with Natalie Brown

## Ep #38: Zoom In/Zoom Out

This is *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown, episode 38.

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.

I read an amazing book a year ago-is by David Goggins called *Can't Hurt Me*. He is an incredible human who's a pro at conquering some of the hardest physical challenges on the planet. He completed multiple elite military trainings, SEAL training, not just once but three times in one year.

Army ranger training, just to see if he could, and air force infantry training, and then went on to run over 60 of the most challenging endurance races, including ultramarathons, triathlons, and ultra-triathlons, if you can even believe that's a thing that humans do.

Learning about human brains and what the human body is capable of continually blows my mind. And his life story is one of the more extreme examples of this. I highly recommend that you read his book. Actually, I recommend that you listen to the audiobook version.

It is read by Adam Skolnick and it's annotated kind of podcast-style with Skolnick interviewing Goggins and that in and of itself is fascinating. So he reads a chapter, and then he interviews David Goggins about what happened in the chapter and asked him questions and you get even more stories. It's awesome.

It's kind of like hearing real-time commentary and insights on the book by Goggins himself. I just loved it. So anyway, I digress. But one of the most aspects of his journey is that he wasn't always an elite athlete. He had an abusive childhood, he had serious struggles in school, and at the age of 24, when he decided to take on SEAL training, his weight disqualified him from even applying.

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He was 6'1" and the weight limit for that height was 191. And at the time, he weighed 297. So he had to lose 106 pounds in something like three months in order to be eligible and he took it on. He changed how he was eating, he started biking and swimming until he could run, and then he started running a mile at a time.

He tells the story of getting up early in mid-winter in Chicago and getting ready to go out for a run. It was already a grueling physical exercise for him based on his low level of physical fitness, and winter mornings in Chicago with wind chill can end up in negative temperatures.

He describes opening up his front door to head out for his run and being just knocked back by the cold, how he immediately shut the door and watched his brain start negotiating about whether or not to go. But he had a realization.

What he was learning through his process of getting his body in shape was that discomfort is the gateway we must pass through in order to change. Whether it's cold weather runs or saying no to a brownie, in that moment, he had to zoom out from the cold weather to see the bigger picture. He was on a mission to qualify for SEAL training, to see what he was capable of, to prove to himself that he could conquer incredibly physical feats, overcome mental obstacles and rise to any challenge.

And that discomfort drove him forward, out into the cold Chicago winter and beyond. He chose not to interpret the discomfort as a red light, but instead, as a signal to move forward. He learned to leverage the discomfort to create real change.

He ended up losing the weight, getting fit, and being accepted into SEAL training. Now of course, I don't recommend you go out and try to lose 100 pounds in three months like he did. He actually doesn't either. He had some collateral damage later as a result of the toll all of that took on his body.

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But learning how to zoom in and zoom out on any journey of change in order to leverage discomfort and grow is a takeaway from his story really to all of us. So zooming in is where we want to begin on any journey of change because any change we are looking to make happens in this moment and in the subsequent moments that follow.

It's in small decisions, tiny steps, little habits that we create the big long-term impacts. I love the example of the airplane flying from LA to New York to illustrate this concept. If the pilot changes the trajectory just 3.5 degrees, which only moves the nose of the plane a few feet, the plane lands in Washington DC instead of New York, which is a 230-mile difference in the end.

Small changes can equal big differences in outcomes. Our brains are changeable. I'm sure you've all heard the term neuroplasticity, which means just that. The ability of our brain to change through growth and reorganization.

As children, our brains are actively being shaped like little sponges in this process of growth or neuroplasticity is constant. The design of our brain is to analyze incoming information from our senses and then customize our responses and relegate these solutions to our default mode.

Our brains strive for that efficiency. They don't want to spend too much energy on analyzing information and want to turn as many processes into reflexive behavior as possible.

As adults, it takes a little more effort, but it's still absolutely possible. Changing our adult brain is a deliberate process that requires three ingredients. Focus, connection to meaning, and internal reward.

When we decide to take on this process of doing something new we've never done before, or learn a new skill, or cultivate a new habit, we have to zoom in with our brain. We have to focus. It's basically like putting our brain into portrait mode.

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Dr. Andrew Huberman has some really enlightening, awesome research on this subject. He outlines how when we decide to focus, to zoom in, the brain switches on a set of circuits to analyze and understand three things. Duration, how long something will last, path, what's going to happen, and outcome, what's the ultimate result.

The whole objective of this analysis is to figure out how to relegate this to a reflexive behavior, to get back into our energy-saving, default comfort zone. When we zoom in, norepinephrine is released to increase our alertness and our ability to focus our attention.

Norepinephrine is otherwise known as noradrenaline and is involved in our fight or flight response, which is why your experience of zooming in is agitation, stress, discomfort. Why when we are trying to change what we eat, or change our bodies, or change our habit of using food to escape, we feel so uncomfortable. Makes a lot of sense, right?

While we're trying to lose weight, we are perceiving it as ongoing fight or flight mode. The agitation we feel when we zoom in is what we can leverage to get us moving toward our goals if we're willing to lean into it. The agitation is the signal to move, not to stop.

That agitation of norepinephrine is what gets a deer up and moving to find water when it's thirsty. It's what triggers a baby to cry when it's hungry. It's the activator that gets our brain finding solutions. Without that agitation, we wouldn't ever strive toward anything new. We'd just stay right where we are.

So the first ingredient to change is bringing focus to the behavior or thoughts or feelings we want to change. And the second ingredient is connecting to meaning, to a sense of importance. I've talked about this in several past podcasts, so I won't dive too deep here.

But we have to have a reason why it matters in order to temper the agitation and make it worth it. The second ingredient puts this stress

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response into perspective. It tells your brain this discomfort is good stress, rather than toxic stress.

But stress, even good stress, is still stress. And it's not meant to be sustained at high levels ongoing. High levels of norepinephrine drive us to seek relief through quitting. If all there is is focus on what we want to change and why it's so important and agitation, quitting for relief becomes what feels like our only option.

But good news, there's a built-in reward mechanism that helps keep norepinephrine in check, those levels low. It's our good friend dopamine. You may remember dopamine from our discussions of what happens when you eat sugar and what drives you to eat more sugar.

So you may be seeing it or thinking about it as a villain in most of our stories, but dopamine doesn't need to be typecast as evil. Dopamine is the reward that pushes the levels of norepinephrine back down and motivates us to keep going. Gives us some energy to keep moving toward our goals.

It keeps that quit response at bay and it encourages us to keep moving toward accomplishment. External rewards don't do the trick here. The reward has to be internal, coming from you, and it can be as small as acknowledging along the way that we're on the right path, that we're headed in the right direction.

We need these little injections of dopamine to push down that norepinephrine as we work toward our larger goal. I love the show Survivor. If you're a fan, you know how critical fire is to their survival and what a struggle it can be sometimes for them to get it.

They gather small dry bits of kindling, coconut husk fibers, dried grass, bits of bark. Anything they can find that will grab the small spark they create with the flint, or even sometimes the friction of rubbing two pieces of bamboo together and will ignite as quickly as possible.

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It's a tense moment to witness as you see a spark and a bit of smoke and the urgency with which they are blowing oxygen onto the little pile of kindling to nurture that spark into a small flame that can then be sustained and grow into the fire that will eventually purify their water, cook their food, keep them warm, et cetera.

It's a series of small accomplishments and that dopamine reward that comes when we acknowledge those accomplishments that are the sparks that fuel the fire of our weight loss. I like to look at every win along the way as kindling.

You add a spark to the accomplishment of the first five pounds, or the first week of planning and honoring it, or even a meal where you chose veggies over fries, and then you nurture that spark of accomplishment with planning and consistency and commitment and you then get to watch the flames rise higher and higher and provide lasting heat and comfort.

We have to build a pile of small accomplishment kindling that keeps us moving forward. Even though this process of zooming in is critical to our goals, there are some pitfalls to this zoomed in state that we want to be wary of.

When we are zoomed in, we only see now. What's right in front of us. Think about portrait mode. Everything outside of this moment, the focus of this moment, the future is fuzzy. Sometimes this means we are only seeing what has gone wrong. Sometimes this means we can look at the small decision in front of us and think, doesn't really matter.

That's why zooming out is necessary along the way. Think about how sometimes you find yourself staring off into space. Your focus expands, your vision goes into panoramic mode as your eyes relax. We want to take time along the way to relax our focus and zoom out, to remind ourselves of the bigger picture, to put things in perspective, to see how far we've come, to recognize the future impact of our in the moment decisions.

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We also want to zoom out in order to rest, to create space for rest. When we are zoomed in and focused, acetylcholine is released at the exact neurons involved in whatever new behavior you're learning to mark them for change during sleep.

Deep sleep is where these new behaviors and skills and changes are solidified. We need both deep focus and deep rest to complete this process of change. That's where these new behaviors start to become reflexive.

As Eliot Berkman defines it, a goal is a detour from the path of least resistance, this restive state returns us to the path. Lots of science today. The brain and body are complex and amazing, and I am just fascinated by all of it.

So to briefly summarize, change requires us to zoom in, to focus on what we want to change and leverage the agitation this focus creates in order to get us moving toward our goals. To define why it matters, to create a sense of importance, to reward ourselves internally to keep us moving toward our goals.

And then to zoom out, to put it all in perspective, and to rest from focus in order to allow space for the changes to solidify. Okay everybody, 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](http://itbeginswithathought.com). We'll see you here next week.