

Ep #61: Compare and Despair



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Natalie Brown

[Weight Loss Success](#) with Natalie Brown

Ep #61: Compare and Despair

This is *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown, episode 61.

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, Master Certified coach, Natalie Brown.

Hello everybody. Is it spring break where you are? It's spring break week in my neck of the woods, which means kids are out of school, we don't have dance, which rules our life most of the time. Regular schedules are out the window, and people are traveling a little bit again.

So I'm watching my social media feed fill up with families having fun and palm trees and beaches and people getting sunburned as their winter skin sees the sun for the first time in a while. We sort of took a long weekend style spring break and we road-tripped down to Moab, which is about three and a half hours from me in Southern Utah to do some Jeep trails and sit by the pool and relax together.

It was beautiful and 80 degrees and we saw some pretty awesome views, and arches and other magical works of mother nature. And we made it home safe and we're now having a chill week at home, sleeping in and relaxing.

So it's not like I'm picked on and I don't get to have any fun in my life. But can you guess what my toddler brain is telling me as I am seeing my friends in exotic locations? Yes, the whiniest, most entitled things, that I wish I was there instead of here, and that everyone gets to do fun things but me, and that I'm missing out, and that it's unfair.

Now, I know this isn't true. I know this is silliness. I know that I have so much to be grateful for and so much goodness to focus on, and I have a choice as to what I do with my time, energy, and money, like go to a beach for spring break if I want to make it happen.

Ep #61: Compare and Despair

But my toddler brain sometimes wants me to focus on the lack of palm trees and sandy beaches in my current life. And when I do that, focus on what I lack, I miss seeing what I have. I'm sure you've heard the saying comparison is the thief of joy. It's sometimes attributed to Teddy Roosevelt but I could not find proof of that.

So it's just going to be an anonymous quote for now. I think this is true, the idea that comparison is the thief of joy because of the blindness we experience to what we have when we focus on what we don't. It's difficult to feel joy in the deficit.

But it is a tendency of humans to frequently compare ourselves to others, which is yes, all humans, and I've heard statistics like 10% of our thoughts each day are comparisons of some kind. So it's quite often.

We compare ourselves to others to keep our bearings as to where we fit in, or to make sure we do fit in. It's a function of what we've talked about before, our primal need to be accepted in and be acceptable to the tribe. We compare ourselves to gauge our skills, our value to the tribe, to see how we're doing.

But much of the time, we don't think critically about what and who we're comparing ourselves to or why. And these are important questions to ask. I read a study where they looked at the subject's outlook on their social lives. They were asking people what they thought about their social lives.

Most felt they were home alone more, went to less parties/get togethers, and had less friends or were part of fewer social circles than other people, including their close friends. So most people were sure that even their close friends were invited to more things, were having more fun, and had more friends than they did.

But the flaw here is in who we are comparing ourselves to most of the time. The most visible, most social people, right? Who's out there posting about the things they're doing and the places they're going and the friends they're having fun with? The most social among us.

Ep #61: Compare and Despair

Who's posting about another Friday night watching Netflix? No one. Who's posting about the super fun tropical vacation they're on? Everyone on a tropical vacation. Who's posting about staying home and not going anywhere? No one.

So we're seeing some people posting about things and we're generalizing it to all people. Everyone but us. Our typical control subject when we are comparing ourselves in certain areas is also a bit flawed. We typically pick someone who is super fit when we're trying to gauge our fitness.

Or someone who's amazing at a particular skill when we are wanting to evaluate ourselves in that area, whether it's cooking, organization, meal planning, whatever, which has us predictably falling short, right?

I see this happening with my clients all the time. They come to our group calls when they're having a rough week and they hear someone share their three-pound weight loss that week, and someone else maybe share how they've planned and executed every day this week and they're so proud.

And then this person, my client who's having a rough week will come to their individual coaching call with me or message me and say how everyone's doing well but them. How no one else seems to be struggling.

And I'm always like, you heard two people out of 10 share successes and you've decided that means everybody's doing awesome and you're on your own? Did you forget how three-pound weight loss friend was struggling last week and how perfect planning and executing friend had three weeks last month where they felt like they couldn't get it together?

You somehow didn't notice the four people who didn't share because they weren't feeling proud. When we want to feel better, we compare ourselves to someone who's doing worse. When we want to improve, usually we compare ourselves to someone who's doing better. But this doesn't always serve to motivate us. Sometimes it just serves to make us feel worse about where we are.

Ep #61: Compare and Despair

In addition to comparing ourselves to other people and almost more discouraging is when we compare ourselves to ourselves. We compare our bodies to the body we had in high school, or pre-baby, or pre-menopause. We compare ourselves pre-quarantine and post-quarantine, or our college selves to our now selves.

We think we should be able to get back to where we were before, or if that it was possible once, it should be possible now. But let me tell you, these stretch marks from my four pregnancies, they are not going back anywhere. The flappy extra skin on my arms, not going back to tight and tones no matter how many weights I lift.

My eyes, not going back to not needing glasses ever again. There's no such thing as going back when it comes to our bodies, even if we happen to hit the same number on the scale as we used to see once upon a time, your body will never go backwards.

It's marching forward. It's aging and changing and evolving every minute of the day. I don't say that to discourage you from wanting to change or from setting a number goal based on a number you used to see and hope to see again.

I just want you to use a realistic point of comparison. Look at where you are now. Your age, your lifestyle, your desire, your time, your priorities, and your values. And then set an achievable goal for the future based on that.

Or gauge your process towards your goal with all of those things considered. Pre-having my business and working, I had all my kids in school all day and all the time in the world to workout and meal prep and whatever else I wanted to do. And I took it seriously.

I worked out hard every day. Sometimes twice, sometimes a hard cardio workout and some yoga, and I ate carefully. And as my business and work life have changed, the balance and priorities of my time look a little different.

Ep #61: Compare and Despair

I could absolutely 100% have kept the same workout frequency and added my work life to it, people do it every day of course, but it didn't feel good to me. So I've scaled back my working out from daily to three times a week, I've changed it up a bit from Orange Theory at the studio, to Peloton in my bedroom, and added in more rest and more white space, more quiet time, more me time in different ways.

If I compared my now self to my past self, in terms of super fitness, I would probably judge myself as failing instead of listening and honoring what works for me in this season, what I want now. There may be a time when I get back to working out hard and being super focused on my ab definition and training for a race.

But for now, it feels good to move my body in different ways, to count both 20 minutes and 60 minutes cardio or yoga as my exercise, to allow myself the space and freedom to walk or run, to compare not who I was but who I am to what I want now.

When you notice yourself wanting to make comparisons, ask yourself a couple of questions. Is this a realistic target? Or is this a realistic point of comparison?

Notice who you're comparing yourself to, whether it's someone else or yourself of the past. If it's not someone you can realistically become, it won't be an effective comparison target. It will just serve to make you feel terrible and less than.

Like I will never be 5'10 and have thick brown curly hair and no stretch marks. So if I spend my energy comparing myself to someone who is, I will perpetually be disappointed and discouraged. Also ask what am I trying to achieve through this comparison?

If you want to use someone who's killing it in some way that you someday aspire to, focus on the ways you could become more like them. How did they build the skill they have that you want? How did they learn? How did they work to improve? What do they do when they fail?

Ep #61: Compare and Despair

Think about the small details. The things you could also implement. When it comes to planning and executing your food, your meals for example, think about how that person sets themselves up for success. What time of day do they plan and why? What do they focus on in their planning? Is the plan realistic? How do they make it easier for themselves?

When it comes to executing the plan, what do they do at 4pm when they want to throw it all away? What do they ask themselves? How do they remain focused and honor their commitments?

We have a tendency to just think, "Well, it's just easier for them. They have something that I don't. They're a special unicorn." But that leaves you on the outside, powerless to change, unless you were born that way. And it's simply not true.

You may not be exactly where they are, but you can be with some thought and attention to the little changes you can make to work your way there. And you don't have to do it exactly as they do in order to be successful. Your path will be yours.

But you can look at how someone else does or achieves something, there's method to their success, and look at how you might take steps in your own life to do the same in your way. And if all you feel is down and discouraged when your brain is comparing you to others or yourself, disrupt it.

Choose to look at your progress instead of your problems, the gains, not just the gaps. Choose to see what there is to be grateful for, how it is exactly as it should be. Notice how much worse your brain makes it than the reality of it.

Think about how you are the someone that someone else may be comparing themselves to. You are a role model to someone just like you look up to your role models. Comparison may be the thief of joy, but you can protect your joy and be the hero, not the victim.

Ep #61: Compare and Despair

It's completely your choice how you use comparisons in your life, to your advantage or your detriment. Up to you. Okay friends, thanks for showing up here this week. One more week to apply if you would like some help on your weight loss journey.

I have a group starting their six-month program with me at the end of April and I have a few spots left. So head to itbeginswithathought.com/apply if you're interested 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.