

Ep #69: The Truth About Making a Plan



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Natalie Brown

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This is *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown, episode 69.

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.

Hey everybody. So I am on one today on the podcast. I had a direction for this podcast, an idea of what I wanted to share, and as I started into it and I was typing the list of objections to planning that I've heard from my clients, I seriously could have kept going for a whole day.

And it got me riled up because it made me start thinking about all the lies and the BS I hear their brains offering them that is keeping them from living the life they want, in the body they want. It's keeping them from stepping fully into their greatness. It's holding them back from their future selves becoming a reality.

Planning ahead of time with your adult brain, with love for your future self and learning how to honor that plan no matter what garbage your toddler brain offers you is everything. It is you choosing what you want most over what you want in the moment, and that skill is the one thing that will change everything. Everything.

So it sent me in a little different direction, a little less nice and fluffy direction. A more direct direction. So be prepared. I know you may have your own thoughts and objections about planning ahead of time. You may have been scarred by your past experiences of food journaling everything that went into your mouth.

You feel rage and maybe some extreme resistance to the idea of measuring and weighing and calculating. I get it. It's not comfortable. But the power is in the principle here. In the moment, when there is a strong desire and no rationality is not the time to make eating decisions.

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In the moment is where your toddler brain is in charge. It's about quick fixes and escape hatches. There's no foresight in the moment. There's not rational thinking and careful consideration of the consequences. It's all impulse and habit.

If you haven't used your adult brain to make a plan in advance, to make decisions ahead of time, you are up a creek without a paddle in the moment of desire. Just floating along with whatever your toddler brain wants to do.

And if you have listened to me at all, you know your toddler brain wants immediate gratification, period. There's no, "What about my goal?" With the toddler brain in charge. There's no, "How will I feel an hour from now if I eat this or tomorrow?" With the toddler brain in charge.

You've been around a toddler, right? There's no pause and think happening. There is no, "Remember the commitment you made to yourself," with a toddler. It's all now, mine, I'll do it myself, don't tell me what to do, who cares, I want it now, now, now.

So making eating decisions ahead of time with your adult brain is critical. Your adult brain that can think about what it is you really want. Your adult brain that can see far into the future and anticipate consequences and dream and imagine.

Your adult brain that knows what makes your body feel good and cares more about that than taste experiences. Your adult brain that has envisioned your future self and knows that she is born out of the hard decisions now, the choices you make now, the way you choose to take care of yourself now.

That is the part of your brain that you want in charge of making these important decisions. This is the part of your brain that you want to task with taking care of you. So I think where planning ahead gets a bad rap is when we make that plan ahead of time based not on where we are but where we want to be.

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We make a “perfect” plan containing all of the things we think we should be eating or very little food in an effort to “maximize” weight loss. A plan that does not take into consideration where we are, what we currently are capable of, what our schedule is, what we like. And then it comes time to execute the plan and we don’t.

Because it’s not a plan for us. It’s not a plan born out of love for our future self that has to carry it out. It’s a plan that looks good, sounds right, but it has no relevance to us and therefore very little chance of being followed. So the most important part of a plan, next to it being done ahead of the moment of the eating decision is to make it realistic.

We want to push our comfort zone, yes, we want to change our eating habits and our relationship to food, yes. But we don’t and can’t change that in a day. We want to create a plan with tons of love for our tomorrow self, like, what does she have going on? What is she like? What will she want? How much food does she need? What will feel good to her? How can we set her up for success?

What are some small changes that we can make that will push her into the growth zone but not have her giving up by 4pm? If you were making a plan for someone you loved, to help them make changes but also feel successful, what will you do differently than the usual kale salad with no dressing punishment that you dole out to yourself when you are pretending you are a robot with no preferences?

If you are doubting me right now, if you’re saying, “But kale salad with no dressing is what creates weight loss,” I want you to think back to the last time you tried perfection planning. How long did it last? How long did you honor it? How long before you went off and ate all the things?

That’s what I thought. My clients often doubt me when I tell them to plan realistically. They’re like, “Excuse me, how will I lose weight if I am planning in a cookie still?” And to that I say how many days of staying on your

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perfect plan will you have before you eat a cookie anyway out of rebellion, or whatever your favorite treat or food is?

And when you do, what is the likelihood that you eat only one cookie? And then how many days will it take for you to plan and eat your kale salad again? How many days will transpire in between where you are eating all the cookies and more because you are starting over tomorrow or Monday or after the holidays or whatever we tell ourselves?

Think about the quantity of cookies you eat in a month if you plan in one a day or one every other day compared to the amount, quantity, volume of cookies and other things you eat in that weekend or week when you give up and quit on yourself because your no dressing kale salad plan sucked and wasn't realistic. Just saying.

My clients start where they are and they work their way to that future vision of them, who fuels and nourishes with food, and doesn't have cookie drama. But you are not her yet, and that's okay. Honor where you are. Challenge yourself to spend time in the growth zone and your success is inevitable.

So many of my clients struggle with the planning piece, as I'm sure some of you do too. Their brains offer all kinds of objections. I want to spend some time going through them and offer to you my rebuttal arguments and some questions for you to consider if you hear these objections coming up for you.

The thing I hear most is planning is hard. What is hard about it? It requires a paper and pen or your phone, the ability to write or type, and a general knowledge of what's happening tomorrow and what food is available to you. Hard is not a fact. It's your perception. Planning can be as easy or hard as you make it.

If it feels hard, how can you make it feel easier? The thing I hear second most is planning takes too long. What is too long to you? How long do you think it should take? Then make it that long. There's no rule about how long

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it's supposed to take. I personally don't think planning your meals for tomorrow, which is all I require my clients to do, plan the next day's eating, should take more than five minutes.

You have three meals and maybe a snack to plan at most. Doesn't have to take all day. I also hear, "I don't know what is happening tomorrow, I can't possibly plan ahead." First of all, really? You have absolutely no idea where you will be or what will be happening at all tomorrow for any of your meals?

Do you not have control over what is happening at all? How or when will you know what is happening tomorrow? I hear this lie a lot. We want to delegate all of our control outside of us so that we don't have to take responsibility for what we do.

I call BS on this. If you insist that this is absolutely true for you and you think I just don't know your life, then hear this. You don't have to know exactly what is happening at every moment in life in order to take care of you.

No matter what is happening or where you are in the world or what your life looks like, you can decide in advance what your general plan is, what you are willing to commit to no matter what comes up. Make a specific plan when you can.

So maybe your general plan is that you're going to choose veggies or a veggie, a veggie, with two out of three meals. You're going to eat fruit instead of dessert, and you're going to drink 64 ounces of water. You can stick to that anywhere.

Maybe your general plan is protein first, no grains, and dark chocolate after dinner. Once again, anywhere, anytime, no matter what's happening. Maybe your general plan is to fast instead of eat breakfast, have protein, fat, and veggies for your other meals, and drink water instead of Diet Coke.

What can you commit to no matter what? My general plan is what I live by. I don't write my food down every day anymore because my general plan is

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what guides me. I fast until noon because my body loves it, I eat two meals made up of protein, fat, and veggies, and I drink mostly water.

That's my general plan, I carry it out no matter where I'm at. Home, Disneyland, Hawaii, on a work trip, whatever. I listen to what foods my body wants, what feels good in my body, and I honor my hunger and satiety no matter what, no matter where I am, what's happening, what comes up.

I eat fruit, I eat sweet treats, I eat grains, I eat chips on occasion, always checking in with my reasons for wanting to eat these things and making sure I love those reasons. And as always, listening to and honoring when my body is done. So I don't finish the cookie if I'm done with it halfway through. That general plan, always in play for me.

I hear, "What if something comes up I'm not anticipating, or I have a client meeting and they're choosing the restaurant, or I don't know what they're serving at that event, or I don't know what they have at that restaurant." I hear versions of this a lot.

And to that I say so what? You can take care of you no matter what comes up. And I will refer you to the previous suggestion of having a general plan you are committed to no matter what happens. Also, there's this thing called the internet that allows you to search virtually any restaurant and see their menu, or at the very least their phone number to call and ask questions about.

But even if not, once again, what's your general plan? You can stick to that no matter where you are. I hear my clients say things like, "I planned something and I didn't want it. I wanted something else, or I didn't plan enough and I was hungry."

Of course you didn't want it. Your in-the-moment toddler brain loves to complain about what has been decided. It doesn't matter. If the plan was made with love in advance with your adult brain, your toddler brain will just have to deal.

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It can pout and tantrum all it wants. That's the thing I like about planning a day at a time. You can always plan in the thing your brain wants and have it tomorrow. Today is decided but tomorrow's wide open, and you can plan in anything you want. Just love your reasons for putting it in the plan.

Same goes for not planning enough. If you are in fact hungry still after eating what you planned, not just feeling sorry for yourself and wishing you could keep eating, plan in more tomorrow. And here's the thing about hunger; it isn't an emergency.

If you have extra fat stored on your body, this is exactly what it's for. So your body can use it when there's not incoming fuel. So just let your body have a meal off your butt and plan in something more tomorrow if you want.

This is a popular one too. Plans are restrictive and remove flexibility and spontaneity. Yeah, exactly. They also reduce the chances of you eating like a jerk and having to lay down and unbutton your pants.

The lie about restriction is that it's always happening. We're always restricting in lots of different ways and not complaining about it. If you're listening to this, you haven't ever eaten until you died, so you are already restricting the amount of food you eat.

If you have said no to a burnt piece of toast instead of eating it, or to tomatoes because you don't like them, you have restricted a certain food and survived it. Restriction is happening all the time by your own free will and choice, so restricting the food you eat to what you've planned in advance is just another iteration of that. It's only a problem if you make it one.

What about planning is boring? Doesn't have to be. You are making the plan, so you can plan in whatever variety of food you want. You can eat a different thing every meal and different meals every day. Boring is on you. The plan is only boring if you make it so.

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What about I don't need to plan because I know what to eat? I hear this a lot. Most of my clients have done pretty much every plan, program, pill, shake, bar, everything that's out there. A lot of knowledge.

But I ask you this if this is what you think; how's that going for you? If you don't have a plan, you have nothing in the moment telling you what to say no and yes to. And I don't care if you have a PhD in nutrition. You are also a human with a toddler brain. So knowing what to eat does not guarantee you will eat what you know in the moment. Put that knowledge on paper ahead of time and give yourself the gift of not having to argue with a toddler all day tomorrow.

Another one I hear, "I always forget to plan." The forgetting happens. Do you forget to breathe? Do you forget to take care of your children or pets? Do you forget to go to work? Do you forget to go on your vacation to Hawaii?

No, because we don't forget what is important to us. We set alarms and we create calendar events and reminders so that we don't. Make taking care of you one of those important things. Choose not to forget about you.

I often also hear some sort of this; I'm too tired to plan, mornings are too busy, evenings are too busy, that flavor of excuse of objection. Choose a time of day that works best. If the end of the day is out because your brain is wiped, get up five minutes earlier and do it in the morning.

If the morning is full of getting ready and getting kids ready and getting to work, then take five minutes in the evening when everything is settled and plan. Or do it at 3pm or 10am. There is no rule about when. Just make five minutes to think ahead and write it down.

Don't let an imaginary rule about what it's supposed to look like make it so you don't get it done. Make up your own rules. This is the shortlist. I whittled it down. I also hear all sorts of other things like, "I don't want to plan forever." You don't have to. I don't.

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I did plan. I figured out what worked for me and what didn't and how to listen and what hunger felt like and what fullness felt like, and now I have a general plan that guides my life. But I learned how to take care of myself by planning how to take care of myself. And now it's my default setting and it can be yours too, but we have to start somewhere.

I hear my clients say, "I can't take care of me without a plan, if I choose not to plan, I will eat only crap, without a plan written down I eat all the things, I don't want a plan written down because then I don't have an excuse to eat all the things." All sorts of things like that. I'm sure some of these are familiar to you as well.

All of the objections, and I mean all are excuses. They are not facts or truths that you have no control over. Excuses are just thoughts. Thoughts are optional. The truth about making a plan is that there is nothing stopping you but you. There's no reason, there's no excuse that isn't within your control.

And believe it or not, there's already always a plan in place. Whether it is an intentional one created by your adult brain with love for your future self, or the default plan, the in the moment, no concern for the future toddler brain plan.

The main plan for all of us is to eat food so we don't die. There are layers of specificity below that of course that are up to us to decide. It's a lie to say I don't have a plan, or I can't plan, or I can't take care of me unless there's a plan.

A plan is always happening. It's always possible for you to make a plan with intention. It's always possible for you to take care of you and anything else your brain tells you is a lie.

Making a loving, realistic plan is freedom. It frees you from decisions in the moment. It frees you from the guilt of a day of eating without regard to how you feel or what you really want, and it creates the freedom of being able to

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take care of you on default so you don't have to write down a specific plan every day for the rest of time.

Without order, there is chaos. A loving, realistic plan ahead of time will bring that order. As with everything I teach and offer to you, I recommend you start where you are and you start small. Something is better than nothing. So start by planning one meal tomorrow. Think about it, write it down, commit to sticking to it.

Notice tomorrow when your toddler brain objects, acknowledge the objections with love and understanding and follow the plan anyway. All the tough love here. Still love. I see your possibility. I want so badly for you to see it too.

I want you to experience the dream future life that you envision for yourself and it starts today with a loving plan for tomorrow that will get you one step closer to future you. I love you, my friends. 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.