

Ep #81: Ideal vs Real



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Natalie Brown

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This is *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown, episode 81.

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. For my birthday this year, which is coming right up, I decided to do something I've never done before but have always wanted to do. Not because it's a special milestone birthday, I'm just turning regular old 42, which I had to calculate in my head based on my birth year because I barely think about it and I clearly don't remember how old I am.

I don't remember not because I'm like, it's just another year, birthdays are overrated. I actually love the idea of celebrating me on my birthday every year. I'm just not super attached to the number I suppose.

Anyway, several years ago, I stopped waiting for my people to plan and celebrate me the way I think they should, and I took over the job, which I'm best at anyway. And so any celebrating or acknowledging they do becomes just a birthday bonus.

This year, I planned an alone trip for my birthday. It happens to fall on a Saturday, so I'm taking a long weekend and I'm going to spend it doing exactly what I want to do, every second of it.

One version, this version of my ideal day includes sunshine, water, sand, and/or a lovely pool, palm trees, novels, naps, cold beverages, maybe a massage. Just letting the day come to me moment to moment. A beautiful sunset, no alarms or phones or appointments or schedules. Just pure unadulterated me time. So dreamy.

I have ideal day versions that include husband time and family time, et cetera, but this one is all me. I'm so excited. I'm smiling and giddy just thinking about it. I leave tomorrow.

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I have a pile of novels I've been wanting to read but I skip in order to read self-help and work-related items, and I have a couple of new swimsuits I'm excited to lounge at the pool in, a lovely hotel room booked. It's going to be epic.

My ideal day however looks nothing like my real day-to-day. If I lived my ideal day every day, I would not have a home or clothes or water or food or relationships. My ideal day, if you notice, does not include me working, doing dishes, driving carpool, or paying bills.

It does not include planning for the future or preparing for it. It's all about right now. Super awesome for a weekend. Not realistic for my life. There are elements of my ideal day I could and do bring into my day-to-day life. It isn't that I just grind and work all the time except for once a year.

But I don't live my ideal day every day. We often get the message that this is a problem, that we should be doing what we love and loving what we do. Well, I say that's crap that has created a lot of unnecessary suffering in our lives.

I think that's part of the reason why we spend so much money trying to escape. Money and time. Because we're under the impression that the ideal, that things are not supposed to suck and we're supposed to love working hard, and also things are supposed to feel easy is supposed to be real.

Think about some of the most satisfying days or accomplishments you've had in your life. Did they feel easy? Were they fun the whole time? Did you love every minute of the journey?

My answer in my life is no freaking way. They all required hard work and pain and sacrifice. There is not anything in my life that I'm proud of that someone just gave to me, or that just fell into my lap or that was easy.

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I'm proud because I worked really hard and I had to give up things and I had to sacrifice and say no. I got to show myself what I'm capable of and what is possible and the value of hard work and not quitting.

This ideal sentiment of it should be easy and I should love it the whole time has become a little poisonous in my opinion. That's not real. That's not how it's supposed to be. We know that because it's not how it is.

We have this mixed up idea that if it feels hard or challenging or not fun, or we're not happy the whole time, or we're not happy about it being hard, that something's gone wrong and we need to fix it, that our life is not the ideal one we are supposed to be having.

We make it personal, since everyone on Instagram seems to be happy about the journey and it seems easy for them, and so we make it mean that something must be wrong with us. Even their, "Today is hard and I'm just like you and I struggle too" posts are typically not even real, right?

So that gets us in a lot of trouble in our minds when we buy in. It leads us to quitting, to giving up, to not being present for the process because we are so distracted by how we're not enjoying it and so focused on the ideal that the end result will create ultimate joy and fulfillment and enoughness, and if we can just hurry up and get there, all will be right in the world.

But unfortunately, waiting for you there will be some of that joy and fulfillment and enoughness if you choose it, yes, but also some more hard and sucky and not fun things too. In other words, reality.

You reaching your weight and health goals won't make you a magical unicorn that doesn't experience suffering anymore. Sorry, still a human at the end of this. And on to the next thing. That's real.

I think it's important to note that in most cases, I want to say every case, but I'm sure someone out there will think of an exception that I haven't. So in most cases, the working hard and moving through the hard and being able to be right where we are is where we find the fulfillment, rather than

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when we are in a rush to get away from where we are to the ideal we are striving for.

You may be thinking, “That sounds like some enjoying the journey ideal garbage,” but it’s not even about enjoying the journey. The idea in and of itself infers that we are supposed to be happy all along the way, even when it’s hard. That the parts that suck and the parts that are hard should still somehow be fun.

I think instead of trying so hard to enjoy the journey the whole time, even though we don’t at every moment, we should try instead to value the journey. The definition of value in this case being both the importance, worth, or usefulness of it, as well as considering it to be important or beneficial.

We want to acknowledge the suck and not try to run away. Look for the usefulness of it. Notice how it is beneficial, not so it can feel more fun and we can feel better about it, but so we can experience our real lives while they are happening without an unattainable ideal of enjoyment or perfection clouding the process.

Let’s think about some examples of the ideal versus real in weight loss. The ideal version of what it will look like goes something like this. I plan my food carefully and easily, I wake up with the desire to follow that plan, and that desire remains all day and I carry out the plan with a smile and nothing deters me from wanting to do this.

Or if something like a pesky craving tries to deter me from my perfect plan, I just smile and I tell that silly craving to go away and it does and I skip to bed completely satisfied and happy and certain that I am becoming more and more of my future self in every moment.

The ideal version of how long it will take goes something like this. I lose five to 10 pounds in the first week because I’m so perfect at my perfect plan, every day I step on the scale and the number is lower than the day before, I

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lose at least two pounds a week consistently after that first week, and then I get to my goal quickly and easily.

The ideal version of how I will feel about it goes something like this. Of course I will enjoy the heck out of this journey because I am taking amazing care of me, and loving myself every minute of the day. I feel satisfied and content with the delicious, healthy foods I'm eating, and I don't even miss warm chocolate chip cookies at all because my steamed broccoli and chicken just fills me right up and there's no room in my mind or tummy for those cookies at all.

I don't think this is that far off of the ideal that most of us want to believe is possible at all. I hear my clients all the time coming to me feeling super discouraged and distraught that this isn't what they are experiencing. They are tied to this ideal and not willing to see what's real.

The real version of what it looks like looks something like this. I plan my food some days but not all days. Many of the days I have a plan, I don't want to follow it at all, and especially in the afternoon/evening when I want some relief through food. I crave what I restrict, I judge myself for craving things, I wonder why I can't just stop eating the food I crave and I go to bed feeling bad about how it went today, right? Sound familiar?

The real version of how long it will take looks something like this. You lose weight at first and you gain some back, you lose a little more, you gain a little, you hover on a number for a minute or a week or a month, and then you try some new things and the scale goes down again. It takes six months, three months, a year, two years, it takes as long as it takes.

The real version of how we will feel about it looks something like this. I'm excited about it, then I hate it, then I feel unsure, then I'm on top of the world and crushing it, then I feel despair, then I get apathetic, then I get excited again. Then I feel content, then I'm curious and committed, then I feel hopeless, then peaceful and committed, then frustrated, then determined. That's all in one week.

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I don't think this is how it has to go. There are definitely ways to meet in the middle of ideal and real versions, but just the acknowledgment of your ideal expectations and the reality can be a good first step.

What's your ideal version of how it's supposed to look, feel, and how long it's supposed to take? What's your reality? Be transparent with yourself here.

So how do we meet in the middle of these two perspectives? How do we value the journey we are on and balance being where we are with the goal we're headed for? I love some concepts in the book *Mini Habits for Weight Loss* by Stephen Guise.

First, your primary goal is not weight loss, it's behavior change. We are trying to choose what we want most more often than we choose what we want in the moment and have that become our default behavior.

We're using the scale as a measure to kind of gage how our behavior is impacting our progress, but not as a measure of our success. If the primary goal is behavior change, rather than weight change, the weight change is a result of the behavior change.

He says this, "This is akin to using a lever to move a heavy object. You can try to push the object directly, or you can use the lever's power of leverage to make the move far easier. Behavior change is the lever of weight loss. To succeed with weight loss, you must change into the type of person who weighs less. If you do that, results will follow."

If we're focused on changing our behavior, that will help the focus remain on what we are doing in the present. We can find how it is useful or beneficial or how we can shift and adjust to make it more so.

Second, the end goal is not the strategy. For example, if you want to stop drinking soda, you want to find strategies to help you do that, rather than just focus on not doing it. Direct resistance, just stop it, is not always the easiest strategy, though it's often the first one we try.

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Other strategies might be limit it slowly until is eliminated. Substitute a different, comparably enjoyable beverage. Require yourself to drink a full glass of water before drinking soda, pause for 10 minutes every time you have a craving for it to allow the craving to just be there, and to consider more consciously if you want to make the choice to drink it. These are all ways to meet in the middle of ideal: not drinking soda, and real: drinking nothing but soda.

Third, your training. What is your current perspective of what you're doing on your weight loss journey? How do you describe it? Trying to stop being so out of control around food? Making sacrifices to lose weight? Do you feel punished? Does this feel temporary?

Do you describe it as mostly failing, as hard, impossible, a huge undertaking? These perspectives won't lead to losing the weight and becoming future you. We want to focus on what we are doing. We are training our bodies and brains to be different than they are now, which takes time and effort.

Top athletes train. Top writers write. As Guise shares in the book, what does anyone successful do to get where they are? Practice their craft until they succeed. If you don't like your current weight but you like your current lifestyle, you've got a choice to make because your lifestyle is your weight and it will take dedication and commitment to your training of your body and brain in order to change it.

Your perspective on what you are doing on your weight journey day to day will change how you show up for it. In this case, the ideal is usually it being an overnight change that will feel easy. And the real is that your perspective about what you're doing is making it hard to even begin.

The middle, looking at this as training that will require work but not perfection, dedication but not total sacrifice, may help you get going and keep going. What behaviors are you changing that will result in weight loss? What's the end goal and a strategy you'll use to get there? What

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does your day-to-day training look like? Meet in the middle of ideal and real and you're on your way.

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Reviews also help the podcast get discovered by the people who need it. Happy birthday to me. See you soon everybody.

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.