

Ep #84: Listener Questions Part 1 - How I Look



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Natalie Brown

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This is *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown, episode 84.

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. I get so many great questions emailed to me about things you are wondering about or struggling with, and I wanted to pick some and address them in what I decided will be a series of listener question episodes, rather than just one episode over the next few months.

Not in a row because I have so many other topics I want to dive deep in to, but we'll sprinkle some Q&A episodes in. So that means keep your questions coming. A super easy way to do this that a lot of people have been doing is to head to itbeginswiththought.com and get on my list if you're not already, and then you can just reply to any of my emails with your questions and we'll grab them and answer them on a podcast. Easy peasy.

A Q&A podcast has been a long time coming, so some of the questions have been waiting for answers for a hot minute. I'm so excited to finally get down to it. I paired these questions together for a reason. I'm sure you will see the connection.

The first question from a listener is, "I have been on my weight loss journey since October 2020 and I have lost 67 pounds. Some days I feel light and thin and I walk out of the house and catch a glimpse of myself in a mirror and I am shocked by my reflection and immediately feel fat and ugly and honestly ashamed of how I look. I don't know how to get past this. This has come up recently because I have to buy new clothes. How can I get my perception of my inner and outer self to line up?"

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First of all, amazing. Congratulations on that weight loss. I hope you are celebrating that accomplishment. It is not small or insignificant. It is giant and magnificent. I love it.

And that's for any of you, no matter how much you have lost, where you are on your journey, I think celebrating the accomplishment of what you have done is so important, so give yourself some credit. I know I hear my clients minimizing, "Well, it's only..." fill in the blank. And there's no such thing. What you've done is what you've done, and it's awesome.

So let's talk about what's happening here. You step on the scale, you see that number is 67 pounds lower than it used to be, and you have some thoughts run through your head. I don't know exactly what those are so I'm just going to make some up that could potentially be running through your head.

I'm so much lighter, I'm making awesome changes, wow, I'm so proud of myself, I've come so far, I feel so different, I have worked hard and it shows, I haven't seen this number in years/since I was 20/ever.

And when you believe those sentences, when you buy in to those ideas, you feel light and thin and proud and free and accomplished and satisfied and amazing. And you walk around with a little spring in your step when you feel that way, and you probably take care of yourself differently, and maybe you choose a different lunch or a different outfit, and a whole bunch of other things different as a result.

And then you see yourself in the mirror and you have some thoughts run through your head. I don't know exactly what those are either, so I'll make some up. There's no way that's what I look like, I look so fat, I'm so ugly, I thought I was looking so much better than this, I can't believe this is how people see me, you can't even tell how hard I've worked, it doesn't matter what I do if I still look like this, I'm so ashamed.

And when you believe those sentences, when you buy in to those ideas, you feel some other feelings. Shame, embarrassment, despair,

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hopelessness, regret, disbelief, sadness, frustration, irritation, anxiety, apathy, and you want to hide in the pantry with some cookies, or in your bed with some chocolate and never go out again.

When you are focused on what it feels like to be you, on what you have accomplished, what you have done, what it's like to be in your body, you feel good. When you focus instead on what you look like, on how others see you, on how you are perceived, you feel bad.

This scenario you describe is minutes apart. Nothing about your body has changed in those minutes. The body on the scale is the same one in the mirror. The body standing in the mirror is the same one that stood on the scale moments before.

The only thing that has changed is the sentences in your mind, the focus of your thoughts. And with that, everything changes. How you feel changes, what you want to do changes, how you want to react changes. It isn't your body that changes, and you don't have to change your body to feel different.

You asked, "How do I get the perception of my inner and outer self to line up?" Your perception is expressed in thoughts, in those sentences in your mind. Decide how you want to perceive or think about yourself no matter what you see on the outside.

Decide that you want to focus on how you feel, on what you've done, and not how others see you. Decide that your value is innate and is not determined by the scale or the mirror. Remind yourself like the Kite sisters teach us in their amazing book, *More Than a Body*, which I highly, highly recommend, that your body is an instrument, not an ornament.

Think about all it does for you, all it's capable of, how it feels to be you, how your body takes care of you without you even having to think about it. I love using questions to focus our brains on how our bodies feel and what they can do, rather than how they look.

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How do you feel in your body in your daily life? Think about all the things you do. Waking up, walking around, whatever else, picking up kids from carpool, working, whatever.

And in your case, having lost some weight, how do you feel in comparison to how you used to feel? You'll likely notice places where moving and living feel easier or different than before. What does your body allow you to do? What does your body do for you without you even having to think about it?

If there was no feedback from the outside world, you were alone with no mirrors or cameras, what would it feel like to be in your body? You can choose to think and feel those things now.

We're not trying to ignore that we have other thoughts and sentences. I think there's a lot for us to unpack here. We've been sold a belief system and frankly are still being sold it about our bodies being objects to be viewed, about the view, the outside appearance of our bodies being paramount and a huge determiner of our value.

From *More Than a Body*, we learn that the most important thing about women is their bodies and the more important thing about women's bodies is how they look. So we don't want to pretend that's not happening. Acknowledging that it's happening is the first step. And choosing on purpose to focus on how it feels to be you is the next.

Second listener question. "I'm on a weight loss journey and I'm struggling with putting myself out there to date right now because I feel like I have to be thin to date. But it causes me to feel pressure to lose the weight now. Any ideas?"

Well, let's look a little closer at what pressure does to weight loss typically first. We think I have to lose this weight now. We feel pressure, we feel urgency. And we start to take extreme measures like under-eating, which often looks like counting calories and picking a super low number that we can't go over each day or doing some sort of pill or shake program that has us consuming very few calories.

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Or we adopt some intense and unrealistic restriction rules like I won't eat anything white, I will only eat cucumbers, or I will only drink lemonade and cayenne pepper and maple syrup or whatever. We see the scale start going down. It works for a minute.

Extreme measures aren't sustainable or healthy for that matter. And your body will fight really hard against them to try to restore what it's losing. And what will usually happen is rebound eating that will get you back to where you started, or usually a little higher for good measure, your body thinks, just in case you try this funny business again.

It will have some cushion, literally and figuratively. I think an important question to ask before we start down this road of extreme measures and pressure is why do I have to lose this weight now? What will I get to think and feel about me if I do? That is what we're after. That feeling.

That feeling is what we want to find at the end of the cleanse or at the bottom of the shake. That feeling of confident or sexy, or let's be honest, worthy. Worthy of love, care, someone's time and attention, of our own time and attention.

Here are some questions to ask and answers to seek around this concept of dating. Why do I have to be "thin" to date? Thin is in quotations because that is just a thought, a label that we're using here. Who says? Where did I get that information? Consider the source, people.

Why is "thin" better than whatever I label myself now? Why do I label myself that? What does putting myself out there look like? What am I afraid of if I do? What will be different about dating if my body looks the way I think it should?

The truth is there are people your exact same weight and size who are out there dating like crazy, getting married, living together, wearing what they want, doing what they want with whoever they want, and there are people who you would label as "thin" who are sitting at home feeling inadequate,

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questioning themselves, not putting themselves out there because they don't feel worthy either.

It isn't your body size that makes you ready or worthy to date. You are already exactly as worthy as you need to be to do whatever you want to do in the world. I want to leave you with my favorite metaphor from *More Than a Body* that sort of helps explain why we even have the questions that have been asked on this podcast in the first place.

“We invite you to envision this journey back home to yourself through the metaphor of a sea of objectification, which splashes at your feet when you're very young, submerges you as you get older, and eventually becomes the only home you can remember or imagine. It represents all the ways women's bodies in particular are prized above all other aspects of their humanity, and all of the ways women are taught they should look and act in order to be accepted, respected, valued, or desired. We can adapt and survive in the sea of objectification but it is a constant burden on our mental and physical energy to keep our heads above water.

When you experience being objectified by others or become aware of the unavoidable objectification of bodies in our media, culture, and personal interactions, you learn to view yourself that way and your identity becomes divided. The whole embodied human on the beach and the self-objectifying image-focused part of yourself trying to stay afloat in the water.

You leave behind your embodied, whole, complete self on the shore as you wade, dive, or get pulled into the water. As your clothes, skin, and hair get drenched, you are pulled into a new way of navigating and understanding the world and your place in it. Once you're in the water, you quickly start to become acclimated to it. After a while, it doesn't shock you or take your breath away anymore.

We all grow up and grow older in various depths of this water, more often than not surrounded by others we know and love who entered the water before we did. We all adapt to it. We forget about our carefree inner

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children whose lives and hopes and imaginations weren't distracted or limited by envisioning how they looked."

You may be immersed in the sea, my friends, but you don't have to stay there. Your body is a miracle, your worth is innate, and you deserve to live the life you want and love you no matter what the scale says. I love you all so much, 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.