

Ep #87: Habit Fading



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With Your Host

Natalie Brown

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This is *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown, episode 87.

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. As you can probably hear, I have a bit of a cold, so just bear with me and my silly sick voice. So a quick backstory. A few years ago I was really tired. Like feeling like I needed a nap by 10am most days, and then again in the afternoon tired.

I frequently pulled into random parking lots to take quick naps because I felt like I was going to fall asleep at the wheel if I didn't. This was after I had lost weight, I was eating really well and consciously, and I was working at five to six days a week really hard at Orangetheory. I was so confused about the intense fatigue because I thought I was doing everything I could to not be tired.

I had remedied my reflux that was disturbing my sleep with my diet changes, I was doing all the right things I thought, but I was still just so tired. I decided to go get some blood work done and see if I could figure it out.

I went to a clinic that specializes in wellness and optimizing health, and we figured out that my hormones were all out of whack and that my thyroid was on the low end of optimal. So I started a supplement and hormone regiment and I was amazed at the difference it made.

No more naps, even energy all day long, way better sleep at night, all sorts of benefits. Now I go in every six months to get blood work done and make sure everything is good and make adjustments as needed. So at my last appointment, I got the results of my blood work and my cholesterol was high.

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This has never been an issue for me. It's always been in normal range, all good, and this time it wasn't. It wasn't astronomically high, but higher than I want it to be nonetheless, and I was so confused. So I asked my doctor what could this mean? How could this be happening? Tell me more.

And she mentioned a few things, that eating fried and fatty foods may be contributing, so not eating those. That really didn't make sense to me because I really don't eat much of either of those things. And also that a great way to increase my good cholesterol was with cardio.

So as I left her office and I went through the rest of my day, I just kind of started thinking through what had changed in the last six months for me in terms of food, lifestyle, et cetera that could be causing this change in my cholesterol.

One of the big ones was, as I kind of reviewed, my exercise habit. During Covid, meaning kind of started mid-2020, working out at Orangetheory was at first not possible because it was closed, and then after it reopened, it was much harder and less convenient. Not harder to do, but harder to get in.

So pre-Covid, I would book out my classes two to three weeks in advance, if something came up and I had to cancel and reschedule, it was usually still pretty easy to get into a class time that worked for me, even at the last minute. Things changed with Covid. They made classes much smaller so that people could be spread out sufficiently, so the classes filled up quickly, and then ended up with enormous waiting lists.

If I could even get into a class, I was lucky, and if I had to make a change because of a change in my schedule last minute, I was out of luck. So my consistent three to four-day-a-week Orangetheory habit turned into once, maybe twice a week, often with a week in between.

I did get a Peloton bike during Covid, so I would do that some days, but the workouts just got farther and farther apart until there was a whole month in the summer where aside from walking, I didn't really exercise at all. So if

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my good cholesterol is increased by cardio and I'm doing zero cardio, it makes sense that it might get a little low.

Aside from my workout habit fading, I also noticed my water habit had faded a bit in the last six months. I'm still drinking water, I pretty much always have a water with me and I'm sipping on it throughout the day. But I started adding in other beverages.

Pepsi Zero, iced tea, et cetera. The more I drink other things, the less I drink my water. And it used to be that I almost never ordered a drink other than water when we were out to eat, or on a road trip, I would just get a fresh bottle of water, whatever. And that had slowly changed too.

So it had gone from water being my primary beverage to water being a more supplemental beverage. For the past few years, I have limited my sugar intake. Not eliminated it, but cut down on it because I just feel better when I'm eating other things.

I would typically have dessert or a treat or something one, two times a week, sometimes more, sometimes less. Well, guess what else has changed in the last, I would say year, not just six months. My treat consumption.

It seems like it has turned into treats multiple days a week, most of the time just a bite here or there, but just not being as careful, as conscientious, and it's really not aligned with how I want to be feeding myself. And I've read some research about sugar and its potential impact on cholesterol. So I can't help but think this may play some role in my cholesterol situation as well.

So it was interesting to look back and think, wow, some of these bulletproof, black and white habits that I have established over the past few years have faded to a little grey. I exercise consistently, I drink mostly water, I mostly eat food my body loves and needs. I feel like those were non-negotiable pieces of my identity.

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But how we take care of ourselves is a series of habits and choices that require conscious attention, clearly. Lest they fade from view. Have you noticed this in your life? Maybe you were consistently walking as a part of your morning routine for a year, and then one day you recognize you haven't been on a walk in weeks?

Or you were in the habit of taking your vitamins or medications before bed or at lunch, and then one day you notice you haven't taken them in a while. Or you were planning consistently and meal prepping for the week, and now you're ordering out every meal.

We are operating on a couple of fallacies here, you and I, if this is going on for you. First of all, that habits are bulletproof and unchangeable once established. Habits become easier for sure with repetition and consistent practice, but they don't necessarily become automatic to the point that we don't ever have to think about them again.

They don't get completely relegated to our subconscious so that we can just sail through life on autopilot. Also, this phenomenon of habit fading doesn't happen all of a sudden like it seems to. That's usually the language we use. "All of a sudden, I just realized," things like that.

It just typically happens so gradually and incrementally that we don't notice it is happening until we notice it has happened. So if we correct these fallacies in our minds, then we can prevent this habit fading in the first place, but also be more compassionate and solution-minded when it happens, as it will sometimes.

I don't know the answers 100% to my cholesterol issue. I have some theories going. And I'm going to experiment and I'm going to figure it out. It makes sense to me that going back to what I was doing previously when it was where I want it to be is a good place to start.

But how did I get here in the first place? I really like to get curious and investigate. I like to know how and why things are the way they are. I like to

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unwind things and follow the threads back to the beginning so that I can learn and move forward differently and create a different outcome.

So in this case, I had to ask some questions. Why did I stop working out consistently? I wanted to blame it on Covid and Orangetheory being hard to get into as a result of Covid. But Orangetheory isn't the only place on Earth to exercise.

I have a Peloton bike and lots of running and walking trails all around my house. There are endless apps and resources to workout at home. So why didn't I do those things consistently instead?

Well, because I told myself that I only like Orangetheory and that I would get back to it once it got easier again. Really, that's it. I was just like, Orangetheory or bust. And it was or bust, a lot of the time. I don't love that reason, that I only like working out if it's at Orangetheory, and I don't love the outcome that that reason created, the not working out consistently.

So how do I move forward differently and create a different outcome in the future? It starts with my reason. It's true that I love and prefer Orangetheory, but it's also true that I love exercising in general. I love moving and strengthening and challenging my body.

I like cardio a few times a week. I love strength training as well, and I love being outside. I exercise consistently can always be true with this expanded definition. Exercise can be done at Orangetheory and any number of other ways three plus times a week.

Going through the process of identifying your reasons, examining them, looking at their efficacy, and then adjusting them in order to move forward and create a different outcome in the future, it's one piece of the puzzle when it comes to keeping our habits from fading.

The other piece is regular assessment of what's important to you, your values, and looking at your day-to-day life and how aligned it is. My every

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six month checkup is a little longer than I'd like to go in the future in terms of this assessment period based on how this went down.

I'd like to keep a little closer eye on it. So I think once a month is the regularity that would be most useful for me right now, just to check in with my health habits. How's my food life? Am I eating foods that nourish me most of the time? Am I drinking mostly water? Do I like how I feel? How am I sleeping?

Some of those markers for me that really tell the story. I've already defined for myself what most of the time looks like, so if you haven't, make sure you know exactly how you define whatever these kind of rules, markers, metrics are for you, so it's really easy to measure and assess.

Just a note, new habits, unestablished habits will need more conscious effort and probably more frequent assessment. Daily, weekly, maybe. This kind of monthly looking back are for those things that you've already established a pretty good record of.

I think had I done this more regular assessment with myself, I could have kept these habits from fading without my recognizing it. They could have remained in full bright color in my life.

So check in with yours. Anything you notice that you used to do that was black and white, that felt non-negotiable, bulletproof, that has faded to grey. Are there things that are important to you that have fallen by the wayside? Investigate and assess. Okay everybody, 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.