

## Ep #99: Positivity



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With Your Host

**Natalie Brown**

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This is *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown, episode 99.

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 life and weight coach Natalie Brown.

Hey, everyone, I am dying that we are going to hit triple digits on the podcast next week. To be honest, it's a bit surreal, but also such a huge moment of pride for me for all that it represents. All the hard, all the creativity and creation, all of the hours, all of the knowledge I have gained and shared with you. All of the successes and shifts and changes you have shared with me. That you have had because you listen and do. It's just amazing. I'm super excited about it.

As I have shared with you over the past few months, I have been working on opening up to feeling some more of the pleasurable, positive emotions in my life. I started with gratitude because that felt like something I could generate with ease. I have so many things I am grateful for in my life, after all. And yet, I found it to actually be more challenging than I initially thought, as I shared in episode 89. Because being grateful and feeling grateful are two different things. But I have persevered, and I have been actively seeking the feeling of gratitude every day.

In November, I turned my attention of gratitude for my body. I meditated with this as my goal, which opened up my mind to noticing throughout my days all the things I am grateful for and not just thinking it but feeling a little missed of the feeling of gratitude along with the noticing. It has really been transformative. And I say that with the knowledge that some of you may be a little eye roll-y at the word and the concept. I know I feel that way when people say that word about things. I actually think it's a little overused and applied to situations that make a mockery of the idea of transformation like, I was completely transformed by this TED Talk I listened to, or I'm transformed after my spa day.

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In my life, transformation is a much slower, almost imperceptible process that requires effort and time, and conscious acknowledgment. I have been actively engaged in generating gratitude for several months now, and when I say actively engaged, I mean I have dedicated time every single day. Not only opening up to and getting to know the feeling but time and energy investigating what blocks me from feeling it.

What stands in the way? Meditating, making a conscious effort as I'm eating, working out, getting dressed, showering, driving, whatever it is to call to mind specific things I am grateful for and why in that moment and expressing it outward when I can and noticing when I am not feeling it and why. Noticing what it feels like in all its iterations and colors, choosing it consciously when I am with my family or out in nature, and breathing into it and expanding it and noticing related feelings, observing how it's impacting different areas of my life. This is not a casual endeavor.

So, where the transformation comes in is in how I've seen the ratio of positivity in my everyday shift from how it used to be, which I kind of felt was more negativity than positivity sometimes or kind of a neutral balance of both most of the time to more positive than negative and more intensity of positive emotion. That was not the goal necessarily. I actually didn't think that it was possible for me to shift that ratio, to be honest. I really didn't think I could feel intense, positive emotion anymore. I was kind of starting to believe, based on the evidence of my day-to-day, that I was sort of confined to a more neutral emotional life. I kept describing it as living in the middle. Meaning, not many super highs, not really many super lows either; no really big swings.

It almost felt like my heart, my emotions were kind of confined in a way. Not that I was numb or not feeling anything, but just neutral; not amazing, not terrible. And it felt hard to generate intense happiness, love, or excitement. I was content with this space because I was also not feeling the intense irritation, anger, frustration, overwhelm, worry, disappointment, all the things that I had felt kind of overcome by in the past. So, I was considering my more neutral emotional landscape a welcomed change from that.

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Before I had the knowledge and understanding I have now about my thoughts and their optional nature and their creation power, I was just at the effect of the people and situations around me, and that was a very powerless place for me to exist. Now that I have the tools and skills to understand my mind and manage it differently. I feel so much more empowered, and I've really seen a difference in how I perceive and how I handle and how I create discomfort for myself.

So, that's one transformational state that I landed in that I was really pleased by. Less of the intense negative emotional swings and more peace. But in the last year or so, I really started to crave more of the higher vibration emotions. I love peace and serenity, but I also wanted to experiment with how I could invite more excitement and joy and love in as well.

I read a book called Positivity by Barbara Fredrickson, Ph.D. that really helped to explain why and how this transformation to more positivity happened for me. It obviously wasn't just me telling myself to be more positive, and I didn't follow a prescription necessarily; it was just experimentation, but how it turned out was so fascinating to me and unexpected. I wanted to share some of the things I learned from the book, some tools she offers for you to try out and see if you can create the same kind of transformation for yourself.

The thing about positivity that I noticed for me that has been so interesting is that it has this expanding effect. I didn't just notice that I felt more gratitude. My focus on really generating what Ms. Fredrickson calls heartfelt positivity, meaning sincere, authentic positivity, not just plastering a smile on your face and reciting don't worry, be happy, right? What heartfelt positivity in the form of gratitude triggered for me was more positivity overall. I noticed it permeating my reactions, my thoughts about people, the world, my business, myself, my outlook, my hopes for the future, my ability to be present, expanding my creativity, and my thoughts on possibility.

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It wasn't just that I felt more gratitude. I felt more, period. I had a good hard cry, the kind that feels healing and clearing and leaves you exhausted. I haven't cried like that in two years. I label it a good cry for a reason. It wasn't necessarily like happy tears, but it was me allowing myself to be vulnerable, connected, and feel in a way that I haven't in a long time. It felt healing and powerful, and it was a positive experience because there was a lot of love and beauty in that cry. I had an issue come up again with one of my kids. The same one that came up last spring for me and it caused a lot of turmoil in my family at the time.

Turmoil, that was driven a lot by me and my reaction to it. And this time, I reacted completely different, not necessarily consciously, just naturally, with so much more love and compassion and patience. This wasn't a deliberate change I made to react differently. This was something I noticed in hindsight, in review. I thought what ruled the day this time around was how much I love them and how important our relationship is to me. Whereas what drove how I showed up last time was my desire to be right.

It caused a strain in our relationship. This time it opened up an opportunity to draw closer. Ms. Fredrickson describes it like this, no matter how good you are at negativity, you are also capable of positivity. Keep in mind, that like negativity, positivity goes beyond self-talk. Although subtle, it too infuses your mindscape and outlook, heart rhythms, body chemistry, muscle tension, and facial expressions, and your resources and relationships. She shares these six facts about positivity.

First, that it feels good. It feels light and buoyant. The feeling good is what "awakens your motivation to change." Second is that it changes how your mind works. It opens and broadens your range of vision. She says, "positivity doesn't just change the contents of your mind. Trading bad thoughts for good ones, it also changes the scope or boundaries of your mind. It widens the span of possibilities that you see." She talks about broadening and creativity and some of the other effects, and that's something I've also noticed that I didn't really connect the dots to. But, out

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of this period of me focusing on feeling more positivity, more gratitude, more of those higher vibration emotions, my new program was born.

I feel like my mind is opening up to the creation, and that's something that I didn't expect. All of the sort of science in this book points to that being real, being a thing. The third fact is that it transforms your future and you for the better. Moments of positivity, she says, accumulate and compound over time to build lasting resources for life. Positivity spells growth. She describes more in-depth in this concept that the positivity accumulates and compounds and relates it to our ability to be resilient in the future when things come up, right? So, my reaction changing a little bit to this situation that is repeating itself in my life shows my ability to shift and be resilient and sort of change and grow in the way that I respond.

Fourth is that positivity puts the brakes on negativity and fuels resilience. It's kind of what she describes as a reset button, helping you go from negativity's downward spiral to the upward spiral of positivity. You've probably all had the experience of one thing going wrong and your brain kind of thinking everything's going wrong. I remember times when I would put my daughter to bed, and she would start telling me about something that happened at school that she was sad about, and then it was just like all the things came out, right? That downward spiral of somethings wrong, everything's wrong, and I am terrible, and all of that.

Positivity can be that reset button and has the same effect but, on the way, up. So, being able to open up and look for what's right has you seeing more of what's right and being resilient in the face of opposition. Fifth is that positivity obeys a tipping point. So, this was one of the most interesting parts to me and what I feel related to my experience the most. There's a lot of scientific research to back up all the theories she shares. That's one of the things I loved about it. It wasn't just her saying like, be positive, it's going to be great for you, and it's going to feel amazing. But she has heavily researched this topic and has studied to prove what she's sharing here.

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My critical thinking mind really loves that. It's not just about mantras and good energy, right? She shares this huge body of evidence to support all of it. The chapter about this tipping point is fascinating. There's a mathematical equation they discovered through research that reveals the ratio of positivity that signals this tipping point. So, most people live their lives with about a 2:1 positivity to negativity ratio in their lives. Life is just kind of, meh, right? You get by but aren't necessarily growing?

Kind of how I was feeling before. As a person raises this ratio, 3:1 or higher, a transformation occurs, she says. Which is what I described earlier that I noticed; you feel more alive, creative, and resilient

You have a palpable sense of personal growth and of making a positive difference. This is what she calls flourishing. The last fact is one I was not believing was true until I experienced it for myself. Which is that people can raise their positivity ratios. You have more control over your ratio than you realize. Positivity is not automatic. This 3:1 ratio requires you to make the choice, again and again, to open your mind, heart and choose it.

"The more you value positivity, the more often its upward spiral will lift you to new heights." It's a deliberate decision that you make to see both sides, to lean into the bright side. Notice the ratio of flourishing is not 3:0. The idea of expanding and increasing positivity is not inferring that you will rid your life of negativity and only see the bright side and smile all day, every day. That is not a thing. There will always be a contrast of positive and negative emotions in our human lives.

We have so much more power than we know when it comes to creating our emotional lives and increasing this ratio of positivity that we experience. I love this summary so much, here's what she says, so tune into kindness, your own and not of others. Seek out and savor all manner of goodness, beauty, and excellence. Treasure these moments, and you'll unlock recurrent waves of gratitude, awe, inspiration, and more. Become like a plant, and turn toward the light in all its spiritual, earthly, and human forms,

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feed on it. The more you train your eye, mind, and heart to the positivity in your life, the more of it you'll find.

Remember that the intensity of your positivity matters far less than its relative frequency. This means that even mild positivity experienced often can lead you to higher ground. Gratuitous negativity, which one screw out of control, will no longer control your destiny. By cultivating positive actions and positive thinking, you see more positivity in your life. The more positivity you seed and harvest, the better become your prospects for flourishing. She shared 12+ tools in her positivity toolkit, as well as the positivity portfolio that I described in episode 89.

I want to highlight a few that I think could be particularly relevant and helpful on our health and weight loss journeys. One is to cultivate kindness. She recommends designating one day as a kindness day and setting a goal of performing five new acts of kindness on that single day. And then to take stock of the good feelings, you feel after having increased your kindness.

She shares some science behind the idea of dedicating a whole day to kindness rather than small acts of kindness daily, not that a little daily kindness isn't a good thing rather than the ritual of the whole day, but it makes it a different kind of impact. Sometimes getting out of ourselves and focused on others and making a positive difference for them can be a useful way for us to put our own lives in perspective. That being said, I think it might also be kind of fun to experience with a kindness day where the kindness is directed toward yourself. What might that look like for you? This might be especially poignant if you struggle with being kind to yourself day to day.

Another tool in the positivity toolkit is to dispute negative thinking. I often tell my clients that when their brains offer up an argument for something, that doesn't move them forward. Like, they will never be able to do this, or that this off-plan eating doesn't matter. That they need to be prepared with counter-arguments that are even more true. Like, that they can do this one

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step at a time, and that because they matter, and what they want ultimately matters. What they choose in this moment does matter. Ms. Fredrickson takes it to the next level with this tool, though, because she encourages you to do this preparation well in advance and do drills to sharpen your argumentation skills.

She recommends that you get a set of index cards and on each one, write one of your typical negative thoughts. You likely have a pretty good idea of what that critical voice in your head usually offers you. Write them all down, as many as you can come up with it. Then, shuffle them, draw one, read it out loud, and as quickly as you can dispute it. What are the facts here?

As you notice, negative thoughts come in that you haven't disputed yet; add it to the deck. She says the goal is to "become just as quick with disputation as you are with negative thoughts. Nip them in the bud with your fast facts before they have the chance to blanket your day with doom and gloom." I think the more you do this, the quicker your mind will recall these counter-arguments in the moment, and eventually, your brain will be ready to let the negative thoughts go.

Another tool to try out is mindfulness meditation. I love the app Insight Timer, and Sarah Blondin is one of my very favorite teachers on there. I just love her voice and her poetic language. There are courses there for beginners, and courses focus on all sorts of subjects. If you're new to meditation, I think it's really helpful to try an app like this just to start.

Once you have a foundation, it becomes easy to just turn on some music and do your own thing. If you're really opposed to trying an app, you can always set a timer for 5-10 minutes, listen to some music, and just focus on your breathing in and out. Notice as your mind wanders and gets distracted from this focus on your breath and just gently direct it back. You can also try loving-kindness meditation.

The idea is that the meditation is focused on feeling, not just on presence and mindfulness. The focus becomes generating love in your body as you

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visualize someone you love. It could even be a pet you love. Holding that feeling and then radiating it to others. You can direct the focus to someone in your life and use traditional statements like, may they be safe, may they be happy, may they be healthy, may they live ease. You can reword the statement so they resonate with you a little more, and you can also practice radiating the love you feel inward to yourself.

Play around with your positivity ratio. Know that it is a choice that we must make over and over and that the impacts may take some time and effort, but they will compound and expand and offer the opportunity to see you and your life transform. Okay, everybody, exciting news, applications for my brand-new program, Love First Weight Loss, is open to all of you today! We start on February 14th because love is the focus, of course.

And I am so excited to dive into this work with all of the amazing people who have applied and signed up already. If you want more information, head to [itbeginswithathought.com](http://itbeginswithathought.com) and click on group coaching to learn more. If you're ready to dive in and apply for a strategy session and chat directly with me about it, head straight to [itbeginswithathought.com/apply](http://itbeginswithathought.com/apply). 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](http://itbeginswithathought.com). We'll see you here next week.