

Ep #117: Ride the Wave



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With Your Host

Natalie Brown

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This is *Weight Loss Success*, with Natalie Brown, episode 117.

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, certified life and weight coach Natalie Brown.

Hey everyone. I have to say, springtime in Utah is an adventure. The temperatures just this week have gone from lows in the 30s to highs in the 70s and everything in between. It snowed yesterday morning and then the sun came out in the afternoon and now it's raining and it's 45 degrees but it's supposed to be sunny and 75 tomorrow. This is just the time of year when nature baffles me the most.

I haven't packed up my boots, and sweaters, and coats quite yet. And I still need some warmer weather clothes too for those warm days. So, my closet feels very full at the moment. And in the midst of the weather turmoil everything is also coming to life, leaves appearing on the trees, the grass greening up, blossoms and flowers emerging. I actually love every season and I love experiencing seasons. And I'm filled with wonder in each one, I just think they each have their own magic.

But this tumultuous unpredictable, everchanging spring weather is especially mystifying. Yesterday I was sitting in my office in between client calls just kind of gazing out of the window, zoning out. And I happened to witness the transition from that snowy and cloudy morning sky to the clouds moving away and the sun coming out, that darkness and cold to light and warmth. And I couldn't help but think about our experience of emotions.

I think the weather and water are really the most illustrative analogies for our emotions and I often use them because I love me a good analogy. I'm sure you'll remember a few. But I want to just kind of expand on what we've already talked about when it comes to navigating emotions and give you some new tools to try out. You can see by the way we categorize emotions as positive and negative, why our reactions to them and our thoughts about

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them are to try to avoid and distract and disconnect from some of them and to seek and to strive to feel and experience others.

When we judge our emotions as good and bad we are assigning them a moral value and we're seeing them as right and wrong. If we value good and right then we will always want to feel the good and right emotions and we will run away from the bad and wrong ones. We'll be in a constant state of alert and vigilance to protect ourselves from the bad and wrong ones and to try to find and keep the good and right ones. Since our human lives are a mix of all of it, it's no wonder this pursuit creates some conflict.

The mechanism of emotion developed as an information system, there was no morality for primitive humans. There was just danger and safety. Emotions were signals guiding primitive humans towards survival and away from sickness, and predators, and death. Those that could tune into the messages of emotions and turn toward those feelings and listen for the information, they were the ones who thrived and survived.

It wasn't until we could reason and think about our emotions and judge them that they became problems to be solved, or to be rid of, or sought after even in some cases. Our big reasoning brains complicated the issue and took us farther away from presence with and the reality of our emotions and encouraged disconnection from emotions. Rather than the messages that they are meant to be, we started to see emotions as a nuisance. And that disconnection has created a bit of a mess.

We are no longer tuned into and listening to the messages of our emotions, the information that they are offering, we are afraid of them. We're annoyed by them and so we distract ourselves with food among many other things. Try to open up your mind to this next thing I want to offer. Are you ready? What if our emotions are neither good nor bad, right or wrong, positive or negative? What if they are just as Dr. Antonio Demasio suggests, a felt experience of a unique neural firing pattern that assists in our decision making process?

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Or as Dr. Candace Pert wrote, that they are the informational content that is exchanged via the psychosomatic network with the many systems, organs and cells participating in the process. What if they are just information that exists for our protection and growth, helping us to know how we want to react or respond in any given situation?

Can you imagine what it would be like to feel anger, or sadness, or overwhelm, or joy and simply observe it and think, here's overwhelm, feels like a heaviness in my head, a solid stillness in my chest. I wonder why it's here and what it wants me to know. Instead of our current response which is to freeze, and eat, and then judge it and wish it would go away so we could get some crap done.

I recently listened to a podcast with a man named Sadhguru, he's an Indian mystic and guru obviously. And one of the things I loved that he shared is that one of the problems humans are experiencing. That is the impetus of many other problems from the way we eat to the way we interact, what we believe and subscribe to is our delegating wisdom outside of our brilliant bodies to other people and things. Our compulsive reactions due to our being out of tune with our own inner wisdom.

He says the only problem you have is a compulsive reaction to life around you, what is needed is a conscious response to life. We have emotions all day every day, our body and brain are communicating to each other. We're experiencing the felt experience of the brain's communication. And rather than being aware, turning toward it, listening in, consciously responding we are compulsively reacting, disconnecting, turning away from, distracting, trying to numb and avoid with food, and alcohol, and all the things.

We want to pretend that by reacting and disconnecting we are controlling our experience. And with control comes safety, right? Wrong, because trying to completely control our emotions actually translates to us trying to feel good all the time and trying to push away anything else. And ignores the reality which is that we feel a spectrum of emotions every day. Our brain is always sending us emotion messages that we can either

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acknowledge or leave unopened, which doesn't mean they go away, it just means the little red notification number keeps ticking up higher and higher.

Trying to completely control our emotions is like trying to control the weather. Impossible. But that doesn't mean we have to just be at the effect of our emotions. Trying to control and choosing how to respond are two different things. Part of why we compulsively react and try to control emotions is that we fear emotions. We fear how uncomfortable they will be, how intense they might become, how long they will last. We fear what we make it mean about us that we have them.

Many emotions we haven't really ever allowed ourselves to feel and their unfamiliarity alone makes them scary. Some we have felt and we know how uncomfortable they are and so we don't want to risk feeling them again. Imagine it rains and you have never experienced rain and so you walk out into the downpour without an umbrella or a raincoat, just in your clothes. You would come back in soaked to the bone and then the next time it rained you would probably stay inside or hide.

Or imagine you get caught outside during a blizzard without shoes on and you end up with some frostbitten toes. The next time it snowed you'd probably be pretty afraid of it based on your previous experience. What if instead of running and hiding we chose to get curious about what the rain or snow are signaling, for instance that the rain is telling you to wear rainboots and bring an umbrella and the snow says put on a coat, hat and some footwear. The weather is the message and you get to decide how you respond.

Here's something I think is absolutely fascinating. Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor who just as a sidenote is a neuroscientist who had a stroke. And she wrote an incredible book detailing her journey through that and the recovery process from the inside of her brain out. And from the perspective of someone who had studied and understood the brain and how it worked, so she had these incredible insights about how the brain functions as hers was kind of lapsing in function through the stroke and its aftermath. It's so good. It's called My Stroke of Insight.

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Anyway, she suggests that once a feeling is evoked the chemical released by your brain surges through your body and activates bodily sensations that are unique to you. This is what you hear referred to as a wave of emotion. Each wave has a biochemical lifespan of around 90 seconds – 90 seconds. So, we spend days and weeks, and lots of money, and energy, and we eat, and we shop, and we drink, and we scroll, and we watch to avoid 90 second waves of bodily sensations.

Sometimes the waves feel longer usually because we are thinking about the trigger over and over, so new waves are washing over us. Or we're judging the initial wave, trying to push it away which sends a new wave crashing. But each wave of emotion, if we were just to experience it, will come and go in 90 seconds or less. It will crest and recede in 90 seconds or less. Basically, the time it takes for your body to reregulate back to its typical state.

If you remember from episode 24, our bodies are homeostasis maintaining machines. So that is always what it's trying to do, go from whatever arousal state it's in, be it anger or joy back to whatever's normal for you.

Dr. Joan Rosenberg came up with an awesome concept she calls the Rosenberg Reset based on this simple formula. One choice, eight unpleasant feelings, 90 seconds. The idea is this, that if you can make the choice to be present with and fully feel your feelings all the way through and you ride one or more waves of one of the eight most common unpleasant emotions. You will make space for more confidence, more connection, more authenticity, more happiness and more success in your life. Because you won't be spending so much of your time running away and hiding.

The first step is a willingness to allow instead of avoid when you become aware of an unpleasant emotion. As soon as you notice a feeling of sadness, shame, helplessness, anger, embarrassment, disappointment, frustration or vulnerability. Rather than distracting from it, or eating over it, or ignoring it, anything that has us turning away from it, we want to notice it

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and make a conscious choice to turn toward it and ride the wave for 90 seconds.

Have you ever heard the phrase 'never turn your back on the ocean'? There are a million YouTube videos of influencers at the beach trying to get an awesome photo with the ocean behind them who end up getting pummeled by a wave they didn't see coming, just look it up. If you turn toward the ocean you can respond when a wave comes and you could remain upright.

If you have ever played in the ocean you know that right at the beach where the waves are crashing, not the most fun place to experience the ocean. Even though the water's more shallow and you would therefore think it's easier to navigate, if you can get out just past the crash zone where the water is deeper, the waves are just a gentle undulation that lift your body up with them and let it back down without much effort from you.

As we've talked about many times on the podcast before often it's the counterintuitive solution that is the right one. Rather than turning away from the waves we want to turn toward them and even go a little deeper in order to ride the waves. There's no resistance in this process. If you notice your mind or body wanting to tighten up and fight against it, you're employing resistance and you are not riding the wave. If you notice your mind wanting to argue, or dismiss, or minimize, you're not riding the wave.

Just like in the ocean, if you go with the wave, if you allow it to move you even lift your feet off the sand for a moment, you'll go up and you'll come back down. If you try to keep your feet on the ground, fighting against the movement of the wave, it's going to overwhelm you. If you notice yourself wanting to escape the present moment in order to not have to ride the wave, that's okay. If you don't even notice the desire to escape and instead you only see it after the escape has happened, that's okay too.

If you spend a lifetime using these tactics to survive, it's important not to judge yourself for what you have done to survive. I hear my clients say this a lot, "I didn't even notice until I was in the pantry eating chips." Or, "All of a

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sudden I realized I had finished the whole thing of ice-cream”, etc., etc., It will take a bit to raise your awareness and choose to stay present. If that’s the case for you where it’s just happening, you’re noticing you’re wanting to run away, just notice what you use to escape or distract yourself. That can then begin to be your sign to pay attention.

Maybe the emotion isn’t the thing you notice first but you notice what you’re doing as a result. When you notice yourself going for your distraction or for your favorite escape, that’s when you can choose to stay in the present moment and ride the wave instead. Once you notice the unpleasant bodily sensation or feeling and you choose to stay, glance at the clock, set a timer for 90 seconds if you want and then turn toward it and ride.

At first when this is new to you as you’re working on building the habit and skill it can be helpful to kind of talk to yourself about what’s happening. See if you can name the feeling. See if you can start to notice where it’s showing up in your body and how. Narrate what’s happening for you. If it’s moving, if it’s intensifying, if it’s changing, if it’s receding, notice it. If you want to stop and run, notice that too. It will require patience and kindness to be present with yourself and your emotions.

Just like with any new skill, allow and expect yourself to be a beginner. One thing to be aware of, reconnecting to your present experience of emotion after being purposefully disconnected for decades, it may feel overwhelming, it’s like opening the floodgates of a dam. When you have spent years building a dam against your emotions to protect yourself, this is to be expected. That feeling of overwhelm, just like the flood will abate. The goal of connection is so that we can learn to address and to process emotion rather than bury it and let it fester or build up.

So, there may be some unprocessed emotion that needs some release, that’s okay too, just more waves to practice riding. Eventually you will be able to ride whatever comes your way. You will not fear emotion because you know it’s just information. You won’t have to concentrate so hard on turning toward it instead of away from it. It will feel natural to stay present. It will be effortless to ride the waves and let them move through you.

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You won't eventually live a pain and discomfort free life, that is not the promise but you will be able to navigate the pain and discomfort of your life without compulsively reacting because you will be in the habit of consciously responding one wave at a time. So, get out there and ride the waves my friends.

If you want to learn and practice this skill and so many others with support and guidance from me along the way, ensuring your success, come apply for Love First Weight Loss. There are a few spots left in my May group and only a few days left to apply so head to itbeginswithathought.com/apply today. 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.