

Ep #126: A Roadmap to Loving You



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With Your Host

Natalie Brown

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This is *Weight Loss Success*, with Natalie Brown, episode 126.

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 everybody. My clients, not unlike you I'm sure really struggle to love themselves. Let's be real, they've struggled to even like themselves let alone love themselves a lot of the time. And because my program is focused on using love to take care of ourselves, using love to guide our eating decisions using the lens of love to view ourselves, this is a process they go through, learning to love themselves.

It doesn't happen overnight. It doesn't even happen fully in the course of the three month program necessarily. The process of deprogramming the way you see yourself and reprogram it to be more loving and compassionate doesn't have an exact timeline. I say that because not learning to love yourself fast enough does not need to be added to the list of things you beat yourself up for. So, what is the process, what does it entail?

I want to give you a roadmap to help you begin to work through it yourselves. The first step on the path is awareness. We need to raise awareness of how we currently think and feel about ourselves. So, start with writing the story of you right now. Who are you? What makes up your identity? Think not just about roles and accomplishments but go deeper to the characteristics that you think make you, you, be totally honest and transparent. Don't sugarcoat it or feign a positive optimistic view of yourself.

As you tell the story, tell the story of you at your best and your worst. We want to be aware of our current conception in its entirety. As you think about your roles, notice where you're judging the way you show up in that role. For example, do you think you are a good mom or a mediocre one? Do you think you are good at your job or bad at it? Let all those judgments

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come out. If you are judging we want to be aware because it's impacting your view of yourself.

As you think about the characteristics that make you, you, notice any judgment there. Do you want to discount, or minimize, or qualify things like I'm pretty patient, or I'm loving most of the time? Or I'm kind of organized but only in some areas and others I'm a hot mess. All of this is contributing to how you think and feel about you. Think about where you think your worth or value comes from. What were you taught or told about where your value comes from? What were some of the unspoken messages you got about your value and where it comes from?

Now, go back through your story and think about where your current view of you came from. Sometimes I have my clients make a timeline of important or impactful events from their past that have shaped their self-concept. It doesn't have to be just events. It could be things people said or messages you got from society, or the way you felt that shaped how you thought about yourself going forward. I'll give you a couple examples from my own timeline.

I went through puberty in fifth grade. I grew a few inches to my current height of 5'3 which made me one of the taller girls in class at the time which I know is ironic because 5'3 isn't necessarily tall. But my two best friends had not gone through puberty and they were just pretty tiny people anyway. And so, I started to perceive myself as a big girl. I was big compared to them. I was average weight but I started to see myself as overweight in comparison to what I had been and what they were.

And then at around the same time my parents suggested my dad and I go on the American Heart Association diet program together, which required us to go to a meeting and weigh in, multiple meetings throughout the process and then eat a prescribed diet. And I was the only kid at this meeting with a bunch of middle aged adults getting weighed in. And this to me was confirmation that my body must be too big, and wrong, and needed fixing. I hadn't really ever thought that before but I started to think that at this point of my life. I started to feel like another.

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And I learned what depravation felt like for the first time. I started to think something was different and bad about me. I sat at the lunch table eating my weird sandwich with no cheese or mayo because it was the whole fat free, fat is bad phase of the 90s. And only mustard on weird bread while my friends ate PB&Js and fruit snacks and Cheetos. I was embarrassed and ashamed. And depravation drove me to go a little crazy about eating the foods I wasn't allowed when presented the opportunity.

I started to sneak sugary snacks whenever I could and spend as much of my allowance as I could possibly afford on treats and candy. This goes on my timeline as a series of events that changed the way I viewed and thought of myself.

I also had an experience when I was even younger where I remember my grandma was visiting and I really loved her and I wanted to draw her a picture. And so, I drew this cute bunny sitting on the beach, on a little beach chair under a rainbow umbrella. And I wrote a phrase on it in cute curly lettering that I had heard and that I thought was perfect for this scene because I loved the beach. And I thought it was warm, and fun, and special, just like my grandma.

So, I wrote, 'life's a beach and so are you'. My little six year old brain didn't know that the word the beach in this phrase was actually not referring to the beach. It wasn't a fun positive phrase about life being like the beach. The word 'beach' was replacing a swear word and this was actually an insult. Now, I can see how cute and funny it is now as an adult looking back. But when I handed my grandma this picture that I had spent all this time on, and I was really proud of and all the grownups at the table especially my dad belly laughed at it. All I felt was humiliation.

I can still remember what that felt like, what I was wearing, where they were all sitting and that I ran down to my room and cried on my bed. They apologized of course and they told me they were laughing because it was so cute and innocent. But I could not forget the feeling of humiliation that I felt. My brain took it personal and it took note. It was not like those

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grownups, they're just being insensitive. That picture was really sweet, you should be proud of it.

My brain was like, something is wrong with you, you should have known better. In the future you really need to watch out for this. You need to make sure you know what's going on, that you are informed, and you are smart, and you don't express your feelings too openly just in case they make fun of you and you feel this again. It seems like a small thing, a small moment but it made a big impact.

You may have impactful things like your mom always making comments about sucking in your stomach, or talking negatively about her own body which made you look at yours differently. Or that comment someone made about you in the hall at school that you overheard. Or the celebrities on your favorite TV show that talked about how fat they felt even though they were three sizes smaller than you which made you think that you must be fat and that fat was bad.

Look back over the things from your past that shaped how you think and feel about you now and then ask this question which will lead us to the next step. How much of it was based on a choice or decision that you made? How much of it was out of your hands, meaning due to someone else's words that happened at a particularly susceptible or vulnerable time in your development, someone else's decisions, genetics, family, or cultural, or economic circumstances. Be willing to see how much of the past was no fault of your own.

Notice the things you did to survive and to stay safe. Listen to episode 124 about my favorite belief, it makes perfect sense to see how the things you did, the way you reacted, the things you believed all make perfect sense based on how your brain is meant to function. To avoid pain, to seek pleasure and to conserve energy. The next step is to forgive yourself for the past. Forgiveness is a choice we can make. It takes time to truly be able to feel and embrace forgiveness but it is a gift that you can give to yourself that allow you to leave the past in the past and move forward.

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When we refuse to forgive and let go we are choosing to drag our past with us through the present and into the future. It is a heavy load and it requires attention and energy that would otherwise be used for growth, and progress, and skill building. So, work toward forgiving yourself for all you did to survive, all of the choices you made that you regret, all of the ways you mistreated yourself, all of the times you beat yourself up and especially for the way you have talked to and about yourself which leads us to the next step.

Changing the conversation. The way that you talk about yourself, the way you describe yourself, the way you talk to yourself in your head, the way you judge yourself, that is a critical component of being able to invite more love for you into your life. If you are talking to yourself like you are your worst enemy, if the way that you speak about yourself is full of judgment and criticism, if your reaction to your underlying choices is vitriol and disgust, there will be no room for love.

The self-loathing will be too thick. So, once you've raised awareness and increased your understanding of where your current self-concept is and why based on your past, and you have chosen to forgive yourself for all you have done to survive.

I want you to imagine yourself at the age that you think you were the most innocent. If you have a picture of you from this time period, even better. Start listening to how you talk to yourself and imagine you have to say these same things to that little innocent human, the hateful words, the unkind sentiments, the cruel judgments, you're talking to her. She is you, your value never changed from there. You are still that little girl with just more years under your belt.

If what you tell yourself, what you say to yourself, the way you judge yourself based on how you appear and the choices you make. If those conversations feel mean and inappropriate to say to little you, then they are mean and inappropriate to say to you. This is one place where I won't tell you it takes time to speak kindly and be nicer in your words to yourself. You can decide right now to not speak to yourself that way anymore. You don't

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have to turn into your number one fan in an instant. But you can stop talking to you like your worst enemy in one second.

Just say, "I'm not going to say those things about me anymore. I'm not going to talk to myself like that anymore." If the conversation is always focused on the negative then practice counterarguing some positive. If your brain is always talking about what you lack, expand your thinking and the conversation to what you possess as well. Maybe you don't feel like you're great at keeping your commitments to you but do you keep your commitments to others? What else are you great at?

If that feels too hard then practice neutral statements, for example, if you think mean thoughts like I am disgusting on the regular, you don't have to go straight to practicing, I'm perfect the way I am. You can start with, I am the way I am right now. This is what I look like, this is me. This is the size of my stomach. Stop arguing with reality and making it worse than it needs to be. This is what you look like. This is what you weigh. This is the way you are, neutral acceptance is a step toward compassionate acceptance and eventually love.

Awareness and understanding leads to forgiveness, leads to speaking and regarding yourself with love and kindness. Loving yourself is not just thinking you look good or are good. It's how you show up for yourself in each moment and each area of your life. You know my favorite John Mayer line. Love ain't a thing. Love is a verb. Show you that you love you.

One last little bonus challenge for you. Decide what makes you valuable and worthy now. Not what you've been taught or picked up along the way. What do you want to derive your value and worth from? You get to decide.

Okay everybody, applications are opening this week for my next Love First Weight Loss group that begins in September where we go through this process in even more detail and with help, and guidance, and support. Head to itbeginswithathought.com/apply and 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

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last time, come on over to itbeginswithathought.com. We'll see you here next week.