

Ep #128: When it Rains, it Pours



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Natalie Brown

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This is *Weight Loss Success*, with Natalie Brown, episode 128.

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.

Hello everybody. I have recently been watching a show called *Alone*. Oh, my goodness, it is crazy. People sign up, they raise their hands for this opportunity to go live alone in the woods for an indeterminate amount of time. I'm sure there's some sort of lengthy audition process they have to go through. So many of them are experts in primitive skills and survival which I didn't even really know was a thing and never knew there were that many people who dedicated so much of their lives to things like surviving in the wilderness.

Anyway, if they get chosen to participate they are dropped off in far North America like Alaska, British Columbia in the middle of the mountain wilderness far away from any sort of civilization. And the goal is to be the last person standing, to survive the longest. They get to bring 10 items with them is all like a tarp, bow and arrows, rope, wire, flint and steel, fishhooks etc. I mean 10 things is really nothing in the scope of life. I use 10 things just in my skincare routine at night I swear.

Obviously I am way too high maintenance for this show but I digress. They have a satellite phone so they can tap out at any point and so that they can be contacted by the production team that comes and does periodic medical checks and such throughout the process. But if they can just keep going, keep enough weight on their bodies and stay healthy once everyone else has tapped out or been pulled out for medical reasons then they are the last one left and they win \$500,000, a lifechanging amount of money.

The show is so interesting to me for so many reasons. First of all, when you are all alone outside and you can only focus on your basic survival, food, water, shelter, staying warm, not getting attacked by predators, it's really

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interesting to see what matters. They are eating what they can hunt and forage for, not for its taste or convenience but for its nutritional value pretty much only.

They rarely talk about whether or not it tastes good, eating is just another important task of the day, fueling so they can sustain the energy levels they need to get more food, build their shelter, stay warm and last as long as they can out there. The only time you hear them talking about how good food is and closing their eyes and doing that moan with food pleasure is when they haven't eaten any protein for days or weeks.

I think one guy in the season I just watched went for 27 days without any protein. He survived on wild onions, and berries, and mushrooms and stuff like that that he found. But it's amazing how good the food tastes when your body really needs it. And to me it's evidence that we are supposed to feel pleasure when we fulfil our physical hunger especially nutrients that we really need. We don't need to create or expect that we will, or have to get to a place where we don't experience food pleasure at all in order to lose weight.

I mean we don't want to get only our pleasure from food, which I know I think is where a lot of us are getting most of our pleasure in life from, from the food we are eating or overeating. We really want to diversify our pleasure for sure. But eating, satisfying our physical hunger with food and feeling pleasure in that, that's how our bodies were designed, there's nothing wrong with it. To give us the sensation of pleasure when we do survival ensuring activities like eat, that encourages us to do it more even with sugar.

The original or primitive mechanism in our brains that gets intense pleasure from sweet foods is there because in our hunter gatherer days the sweetness was a signal that this food had high energy yields and was important. So, when our brains eat a bite of cake, this kicks in, our body thinks it's a really important food. Makes sense why we seem to do anything for more cake.

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It's all fascinating how losing weight is their nemesis out in the wild. They have these periodic weight/health checks during the process where the producers and medical personnel come out and check their vitals, and their weight. And determine if they are healthy and well enough to continue.

And as time marches on and the contestants struggle to find food and continue to expend lots of energy every day in the process of finding food and surviving. As their bodies just work to stay warm and to climb up and down the hill from their shelter to the beach to get water and all the things they have to do, they lose weight. If they lose too much weight their health becomes an issue and they aren't allowed to stay, they get pulled for medical reasons.

They're nervous to get on the scale and see how much weight they have lost. They want to see those numbers stay the same or go down only in tiny, tiny increments. If in a week they have only lost .2 pounds they are pumped, they are overjoyed. This is just a reminder to all of you that the numbers on the scale, they only hold the meaning we give them. I have clients who get on the scale and see only a .2 loss in a week and they are so disappointed and frustrated because they see that .2 loss and interpret it differently than the contests on *Alone*.

They attribute a different meaning to the number. Losing weight on this show is being interpreted differently than losing weight on say *The Biggest Loser*. Here it is a problem, there it is the goal. I just think it's good to remember to look at our obstacles and stretch your mind to think of it in some different ways from some different perspectives. When we have some wiggle room around our beliefs that are keeping us stuck or stagnant we see things from different viewpoints.

We then have more space to be able to choose how we feel and how we show up in the face of those obstacles. So, there was this one scene in this season that really just hit home to me and my life, and in its particular landscape right now. And so, I wanted to share it with you just in case you may be needing the same reminder. Let me set the scene.

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This season they were dropped on the shores of Chilko Lake in the mountains of Northern British Columbia. It's the largest high elevation freshwater lake in North America. It is crystal clear and Caribbean blue, so beautiful. Surrounded by mountains covered in snowy thick pine forests. Being at high elevation isolated there are lots and lots of fish, and game, and predators, black and grizzly bears are everywhere. And it was the fall so the bears were super hungry and eating a lot as they tried to gain as much weight as they could for their hibernation through the winter.

Bears would love to step on the scale and see the number going up. Their weight gain ensures their survival. Isn't nature just so interesting? One of the contestants decided after really struggling to catch fish from the shore that he was going to invest time, and energy, and materials into building a boat so that he could go offshore and catch bigger fish. He spent the better part of a day building a frame and wrapping it with his tarp material that he brought, and carving paddles out of a log.

He tested the boat and it stayed afloat but it was super unstable. So, he then spent the rest of the day making basically two identical mini canoes and attached them as outriggers so it was more stable. And then he paddled out into the middle of the bay and he was able to catch a fish. It was a calm sunny day on the typically stormy cold lake. So, he was able to just float out in the sun in this boat he had worked so hard on, full of hope that this investment was going to get him to end of this challenge with a belly full of fish every day. He was so happy.

It was even sunny enough that he decided to go for a swim/bathe in the ice cold water once he got back to shore. He stripped down, he dived off a log that was jutting out of the water like a diving board. You can tell he is just having the best day, spirits so high, so much hope for the possibilities of the future, feeling some confidence that he might win. Super proud that he had built a boat, his first one he had ever built in his life and that it floated and it would allow him to feed himself.

And then as he pulls himself from the water high on this day he notices something just down the beach. He turns the camera in that direction, they

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are their own camera crews on this show since they are in fact alone. And also need to document their experience for the viewing audience, anyway. And just down the beach close enough that you can see the details and color of its fur is a huge grizzly bear walking slowly toward this happy, naked, defenseless guy and his brand new boat.

And it just hit me. This is life. This is actually how life works. We have beautiful moments sprinkled in with challenging ones. Whether you are warm and safe in your house or naked on a beach in Canada, there are bears, real and proverbial that threaten us, scare us, worry us, create doubt and fear, interrupt the peace with their presence. We think that we are supposed to live a life bathed in sunlight carefree focused on the positive, heart full of hope. Not sure why we think this.

I don't know a human on Earth who has lived that kind of life, even the humans that you think have lives like this, they struggle. They have bears sprinkled into their moments of sunshine for real. Everyone has a mixed life of pleasure and pain. It's not useful to compare our pleasure and pain to other people's, pain and pleasure are relative. The most painful thing you have experienced is the most painful thing you have experienced, period. The thing that I think is useful to notice is that pain and pleasure exist for everyone.

I feel like I have been living the idiom, when it rains it pours for four years now. It's just been a torrential downpour in parts of my life. There's a reason that that is a saying that everyone knows and relates to because it happens that way so often. It happening is not the real problem though. The problem is that we think it shouldn't happen that way. We fight it and resist it. I'm not sure how we think it should happen, maybe one challenge at a time with a bunch of space in the middle filled with peace.

I kind of think that's how my brain keeps telling me it should be going, one challenge then things go well for a while, a few months or a year and then another challenge. But I can handle it so much better and it seems fair and normal because I had a break from challenges where things just went well, and worked out, and I didn't have to worry, or stress, or deal with anything.

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Yeah, that's how the world should work I think. And yet here we are, it doesn't work like that.

It is interesting that we don't have a saying for the opposite phenomenon, where a bunch of good things happen all at once or one after the other. I think the reason why is best explained by Kacey Musgraves' song, Rainbow. This is one of my favorites and one of the songs that gets stuck in my head for days on end so you're welcome. It goes like this. When it rains, it pours. But you didn't even notice it ain't rainin' anymore. It's hard to breathe when all you know is the struggle of stayin' above the risin' water line.

Well, the sky has finally opened. The rain and wind stopped blowin'. But you're stuck out in the same ol' storm again. You hold tight to your umbrella. Well, darlin', I'm just tryin' to tell ya that there's always been a rainbow hangin' over your head. If you could see what I see, you'd be blinded by the colors, yellow, red, and orange, and green, and at least a million others. So, tie up the bow, take off your coat, and take a look around, everything is alright now.

We are so focused on protecting ourselves from the inevitable storm we don't even notice when the sky opens and it isn't raining anymore. We have our umbrellas up, our eyes down just bracing for the next thing. There's no saying for the other parts of life where the sky is clear and there's a rainbow hanging over our heads because we are attuned to anticipate danger and it shuts us off from noticing the sunshine moments most of the time.

My life has not been a total disaster for four years straight, every moment of every day and every way. No. The challenges I face have been punctuated by lots of goodness. In fact, if I were to sit and calculate and balance it out I bet the peaceful moments where it's all relatively well and what matters most is okay far outweigh the rest. But my brain is really good at protecting my vulnerable parts. If I am on guard, if I feel protected all is well. If I open up to seeing the good and relaxing into the peaceful moments who knows what treachery I am inviting in.

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I'm like a potato bug, or a roly-poly, whatever you refer to those tiny grey armadillo ish bugs as. Safer to roll up into a ball than to leave my tender underbelly exposed to predators. Over and over, I see examples of the human spirit triumphing over struggle. People in really tough circumstances noticing the good in their lives, people stretching to see the possibilities in the midst of their challenges. People pausing to appreciate what they have even as they survey what they've lost. That takes so much courage.

I see how even though I think I'm being strong and protecting myself that it would be even braver to as Kacey sings, tie up my bow, take off my coat and take a look around at the rainbow that has always been hanging over my head. If you're feeling like when it rains it pours describes your life in this season too, let's both try being brave and taking a look around at what else is happening. Not to feel better about the bad or pretend it's not happening but just to be willing to see our full human lives, rain, and rainbows and all.

I hear this so often from my clients and I see that the when it rains it pours seasons of our lives can adversely impact our weight loss efforts. First of all, many of us eat in response to the discomfort anyway. And when we add on the it's not fair and it shouldn't be this way to the equation it usually just compounds our response of eating all the things. This is where the importance of riding the waves of discomfort and making friends with our feelings become so apparent.

When it is pouring challenges and discomfort, being able to get present with the emotions you are feeling in the moment open up to them, cry when you need to cry, feel when you want to run away from feeling, this is a difficult but brave response that allows the emotion to move through us instead of getting buried under a pile of food to just rear its head louder later. Any time we can feel instead of eat we are shortening the processing time and making it possible to eventually see that the sky is open and there's a rainbow hanging over our heads.

Getting present and opening up to emotions in the moment begins with acknowledging they are happening, naming them, noting where and how

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they're showing up in your body. And then reminding yourself that this is just an experience in your body that will last about 90 seconds and that feeling it is okay. I like to put my hands on my heart, close my eyes and imagine the emotion as a ball of energy of light, of some color in my body that I can breathe space around. I practice taking deep breaths and imagining I'm opening up that space, expanding the space around the emotion.

I have some phrases I love that bring me to that peaceful presence like relax behind it, I'm opening up to this whatever feeling is, disappointment, this frustration. This is what I am feeling right now, anger. I am here feeling sad. Try it. You can also check out episodes 12 and 13 for some more exercises to help you with this skill of navigating emotions. Learning how to navigate uncomfortable emotions is a key part of weight loss because any time we're eating outside of physical hunger, our eating is being driven by a desire to either escape or to create an emotion.

This is where the majority of our overeating troubles are found. So, weight loss and emotional skill building are inextricably connected. This is why we spend a whole month in Love First on emotions and emotional skills. This is the real hard work of weight loss. If you want some help to build your emotional skills, come join us. Applications are open for my September group right now. You can apply at itbeginswithathought.com/apply. 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.