

Ep #129: The Swinging Pendulum



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With Your Host

Natalie Brown

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This is *Weight Loss Success*, with Natalie Brown, episode 129.

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. So, this episode is part confession, part information. I woke up this past weekend from what I am going to call a comfort coma I have been in for a little bit. Let me explain. A couple of years ago I found myself really burned out. For me burnout was the deep fatigue that comes from doing and living according to someone else's ideas. My business and my program was designed around what someone recommended I do and experts that I listen to and pattern things after.

My faith was based on how I was raised, not necessarily what I searched out and experienced and believed to be true. My relationship with my body was based on the past and on cultural messages I bought into. Some of my friendships were based on ideals, not reality. I just felt like in so many ways I was living a life of suggestion rather than intention. My response to this burnout was to let my pendulum swing the other way. Meaning I was like I'm going to do everything the opposite way that I have been doing it because this way is not working.

So, for example, I was being very vigilant about calendaring my days. I would sit at the beginning of the week and I would make a list of everything I needed to do and I would plug it into my calendar and then I would live by it religiously. It was very different than how I had always done things which was a lot more flexible and it was therefore very uncomfortable. But I was like, "Successful people calendar everything and so therefore I should." But I mostly hated it, and I resented it, and I was powering through because I wanted to be successful and do it the right way.

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Another example, I was eating one meal a day basically and no flour and no sugar. I'd been doing an intermittent fasting protocol based on someone else's suggestion as to what the best way to eat was. And as with most things I was taking it to the extreme, 24 hour fast most days because that's what worked with the ultra-vigilantly calendared schedule I was living. I was pushing myself to do, and achieve, and accomplish the way that everyone said I should and I just got really tired of it.

Interestingly this coincided with the onset of the pandemic, it was around the same time which really shook things up considerably in all of our lives, fundamentally and logistically. And I don't think I'm alone in feeling like 2020 did not really temper my burnout or fatigue, did not help the situation. Not only was I burned out with living a life that was suggested but now I was facing uncertainty about things I'd never even thought to think twice or worry about.

I was much more hyperaware of and concerned with what was happening in the country and in the world. And I felt a deep divide in my family, and in my community, and everywhere more than ever. Everything felt like it was in question or at least should be. And on top of it I had some personal ongoing stresses that compounded during this time and made the fatigue even deeper. So, my pendulum swinging to opposite life was facilitated in part by the sort of upside downness of everything.

I went from getting dressed to wearing sweats, from intermittent fasting to making and eating three meals a day at home for all of my people who were now home. From scheduling everything to flying by the seat of my pants. From the gym daily to walks outside or nothing at all. I just opposed, that's a new word I just made up, pretty much everything. Well, I guess not everything because I didn't go to an all sugar and flour diet. But I definitely let more of both of those things in than the zero or once a week of before.

This is so often what our brains do. When we are living or doing one extreme we get tired of it, we can't do it anymore and our pendulum swings

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the other way for a time, to the other extreme before eventually and hopefully settling back in the middle. Sometimes it's just back and forth, back and forth from one extreme to the other. This is what happens when we aren't aware, when we are living by default, or in survival mode, it's very black and white. We don't look deeper at what's going on, we just swing back and forth.

Think about your food life, for most of us we're on a diet or we're eating all the things with no regard to anything. We're restricting and white knuckling or we are on the F-it eating plan. We are losing weight or we're gaining it. There's no middle ground, or at least no middle ground we ever step foot on. You may be the same with other things in your life, exercise for one. You may be all in on a new workout program, or a fitness app for a few weeks or months until something happens and you miss a day or whatever and then you don't work out again for six months.

Or maybe it's writing in your gratitude journal, or meditating, or date night or any number of other things, you're all in doing it consistently and then you don't do it at all until your next burst of inspiration when you dive back in. Life is cyclical, or if you prefer, seasonal. Things naturally come and go so I'm not trying to say you should be striving for doing the same things, the same all the time in some form or another no matter what. Of course not.

But just think about the places where you want to make progress, where you are dissatisfied with how things are going and notice where your pendulum is. If it's on one extreme or the other, that's where we want to think about how we get it to settle in the middle. You have to be aware that it's happening first. So, let's circle back to my comfort coma. Prior to the onset my pendulum was on the extreme discomfort side. Like I said, I was living according to someone else's prescription and following it without regard to how I felt or what I wanted.

I was uncomfortable most of the time, feeling stretched out of your comfort zone completely will do that. I was making some progress and I was growing, absolutely. I built my business in that time, and I lost weight in that

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time, and I learned a lot about myself and being an entrepreneur, and how brains work, and what I'm capable of. Yes, all of that but at what cost? For me it cost me connection to myself. It cost me deep rest. It cost me time with my family. It wasn't free and easy. And so, my response was to try and recoup some of those costs.

It didn't just happen overnight, it was more like a frog in a pot of water scenario where the heat got turned up one degree at a time, slipped deeper and deeper into that comfort coma. And then at some point I realized I'd been cooking in this pot. I realized my pendulum was on one extreme and little by little I then let it swing to the other.

I started to put my family above everything else. Now, they have never been less important than my job or myself per se. But I was definitely saying no to requests from my kids for things they needed or for time they wanted to spend with me in order to honor my calendar. And I was participating in things and traveling for work, and missing out on some stuff by choice, but I decided that I was going to choose differently. I stopped saying no to them and I started saying no to work that needed to be done.

I stopped participating in work related groups and traveling, obviously in part because of restrictions. But I even stopped participating in things that I could just do from home. I started to allow myself more downtime where I wasn't thinking about or focusing on work. Instead of listening to podcasts on business, and mindset, and learning, I started listening to the news, and true crime, and watching documentaries about cults and bingeing shows on all the various streaming platforms.

I stopped journaling, and setting goals, and meditating regularly. I let my stack of to read books and novels just start collecting dust and I started sleeping in longer and staying up later. My workouts went from four times a week to four times a month on average. And I did a lot less moving and a lot more sitting and relaxing. And more candy eating to manage the stress of uncertainty. Gosh, candy really snuck in there and it settled down, it got real comfortable.

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Like I said, none of this happened the moment, the instant I recognized my burnout, it wasn't an overnight and a split second thing. Over the past two years I slipped deeper and deeper into my comfort coma. And all of that comfort had a cost as well. It cost me growth and progress. It cost me 10 extra pounds. The candy and the lack of meaningful and consistent movement raised cortisol from all the stress, all that's a recipe for the extra weight. It cost me some friendships and connections. It cost me some pain and stiffness in my joints. When I do not exercise that is what happens.

And it was all in the name of seeking comfort from the extreme discomfort I was in. Our brains often think the opposite of the current misery or challenge we are experiencing will be better. So, I think a combination of watching my favorite new show alone, if you listened to the last podcast you know this. Where they strip their lives down to pure survival and spend a lot of time thinking about what is most important to them and a long four hour motorcycle ride this past weekend was really what kind of awakened me from my comfort coma.

I had a lot of thinking time and I was thinking about what is most important to me. I started to really think deeply about the kind of life I want to be living, the things I love to do that bring me joy and inspire me, the way I want to be spending my time. And the truth is that life it's a combination of comfort and discomfort. This very, very comfortable space, my opposite life I've been living, it's been pretty stagnant. I haven't been challenging myself. I haven't been pushing myself.

I have been indulging in comfort in the name of self-care, at least that's how it began but I don't really think it's me taking care of me in the way that I want to forever. I read a quote yesterday that kind of captures it for me. Comfort is a drug, once you get used to it, it becomes addicting. Give a weak person consistent stimulation, good food, cheap entertainment and they'll throw their ambitions right out the window. The comfort zone is where dreams go and die.

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Now, when they say give a weak person consistent stimulation, I don't really think of myself as weak but I feel like sometimes when we're in that extreme discomfort or the deep fatigue that I was feeling, there is some weakness in my ability to make good judgments. A lot of times we're going from one extreme to the other because we're in that kind of low place where we feel desperate for something else.

I did a podcast a while ago on the growth zone, it's episode 64 if you want to go check it out. It's kind of the sweet spot between our comfort zone and the discomfort zone, between what we are currently capable of and what we want to become capable of, who we are now and who we want to eventually be. I have been seated solidly and squarely in the comfort zone, my pendulum swinging there from the discomfort zone that it was in before. I am ready to find the middle again, my growth zone, create the life I want to be living instead of just consuming what's already here.

That life includes walks outside, moving my body every day, good quality rest, reading and watching things, listening for fun and for learning, time with my family and my business, fasting for my health and honoring my body's hunger and a treat here and there. Saying no and saying yes. The middle is not exclusive, it's inclusive of all the things that matter and the balance that I feel is best. My best life is an intentional one based on my intentions.

Living with purpose isn't always comfortable but honestly seeking only comfort really wasn't totally comfortable either. I really crave growth, and evolution, and creation, not 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year but more than I have been doing. I also require and desire rest, and fun, and connection. And so, I'm awake and I'm going to start working on bringing my pendulum back to the middle with all the discomfort and comfort that it will bring.

So, I want you to think about where in your life is your pendulum on one extreme or the other and what might the middle look like for you. I am reading, yes, I picked up one of those dusty to read books and I started

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reading it. I am reading a book called *When* by Daniel H. Pink. It's so interesting. It's about timing. He says this, "Human beings don't all experience a day in precisely the same way. Each of us has a chronotype, a personal pattern of circadian rhythms that influences our physiology and psychology."

You've heard the term 'night owl', he says there are basically three types, owls, larks and third birds, translation, late nighters, early risers and the rest of us. No matter which chronotype you are, all of us experience a peak, a trough, and a rebound period. For the majority of us that's the order, morning peak of productivity and focus, a trough in the afternoon where we're less alert, less able to focus. Often we're feeling tired and kind of in a low mood. Followed by a rebound period where we are best at creative and kind of less intense work but ready to go again.

One of the things that I want to be more intentional about is rest. So much of this comfort coma was me seeking deep rest, me working really, really hard in a way that wasn't really my idea and in sort of like a timeframe that wasn't honoring my chronotype. But I have been doing a lot of haphazard resting, this me seeking comfort has been me getting a lot of downtime but not as much intentional quality strategic rest. So, this book is helping me with that and I want to offer you one of the tools he teaches to help us with that together, it's called *How To Take a Perfect Nap*.

Step one is to identify your trough time which will be the ideal time for you to take this perfect nap. For many people it's between 1:00 and 3:00pm, or about seven hours after waking. If you want to be really precise for yourself you can track your afternoon mood and your energy for a week and just notice your own personal patterns and you can find that middle ground.

Step two is to create a peaceful environment, so turn off your phone, lie down somewhere comfortable, shut the door, use headphones or earplugs and an eye mask, make it as comfortable and peaceful as possible.

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Step three is optional but interesting. Down a little bit of coffee or other caffeine right before you go to take this nap. This may sound a little counterintuitive but the caffeine won't engage in your system for about 25 minutes just in time for you to wake up and get back to work in your rebound phase with a little extra energy.

Step four is to set a timer on your phone for 25 minutes. If you nap for more than a half hour, sleep inertia takes over and your brain will just get confused and have a hard time recovering. If you nap for less than five minutes you don't get a lot of benefit. But between 10 and 20 minutes, that's the sweet spot, it boosts your alertness, your mental function, it doesn't leave you sleepier than you were before, 25 minutes gives you the seven ish minutes it takes most people to fall asleep and then an ideal nap length.

Step five is to repeat this consistently. Habitual nappers get more out of naps than infrequent nappers. So, if you can take regular afternoon naps, try it. If you can't then prioritize it on days when you're really dipping in the afternoon, you feel yourself yawning, slowing down, you'll know what that dip feels like, or when you didn't get enough sleep the night before. This is something I'm going to incorporate now especially since I'm still getting up early with my puppy and staying up late for my teenagers.

And I'm just perpetually tired in this season, so join me in our perfect napping. Here's to waking up from our comfort comas to choose a life of intention in the growth zone, yeah. And just a quick reminder, if you want some help changing your relationship with you, and food, and your body, come join my next Love First Weight Loss group. Applications are open now and we get started September 9th. 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 last time, come on over to itbeginswithathought.com. We'll see you here next week.