

Ep #138: Before and After



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Natalie Brown

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This is *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown, episode 138.

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 Coach Natalie Brown.

Hello, everyone, I recently did a refresh of my website with new photos, some new copy and just a kind of new vibe overall. I have really evolved in the past four years, what I believe, who I am. And when I created my website it was a little bit different me, so it was just time. It was time for it to evolve like I did. It feels better, it feels like it better represents me, and who I am, and what I believe now and I really love it. So, feel free to check it out at itbeginswithathought.com if you want.

Anyway, I got messages from friends, and family, and colleagues after I kind of announced it on social media and to my people, just about how they love the changes and the aesthetic and all that. And I got one email from someone I don't know with their feedback about what they felt I should do differently/better. And based on that feedback I felt like it was important that I addressed what they felt was missing from my website so that you all can understand why.

Every aesthetic choice I made was thoughtful and deliberate, my clothing, poses, the pictures I chose, the words I used, the way I tell my story, how I describe my program, none of it was accidental or thoughtless. And so, I want you to understand those reasons, they are inextricably connected to what I teach and what I believe. One of the things this person thought was a problem was that I wasn't wearing clothing that adequately showed off my body.

She thought as a weight loss coach that I should be showing people more of my after body and level of fitness, basically my results. And that I should have somewhere on the site a picture of me before I lost the weight looking sad and miserable to contrast with that after. It's quite a popular thing to

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take before and after photos. I remember every year getting The People Magazine issue titled Half Their Size. You all remember that. I don't know if it's still a thing. I don't really look anymore.

But I would sit and look through all the photos of people standing in their old jeans and holding them out to show how much smaller they were now compared to how they used to be. And I would just wish for my own transformation from worst to better, from bad to good, from unacceptable to acceptable, from gross to hot like they had. I loved and watched the biggest loser religiously for the same satisfying result images.

And I have had my own before and after transformations throughout my life and pictures to show for it. But, and there's a big but here, a figurative one, before and after photos have us focusing on and valuing only the way our bodies appear to ourselves in the mirror, but mostly to others. Photos are just representations of our outsides, they only speak to our aesthetic. They only show our exterior transformation. And that is the easiest one, meaning you can do any number of quick fixes and take extreme measures and transform your outside.

I remember doing the LA Weight Loss Plan which was me basically starving myself and calling it healthy eating, but barely eating and losing 30 pounds in a matter of weeks. I watched the contestants on *Alone* and *Survivor* lose massive amounts of weight in short amounts of time every season. The most valuable, important and lasting transformations though are always on the inside. They are the hardest thought but the most valuable changes we can make. They're hard, but they lay the foundation for profound changes in so many other areas of our lives.

When we focus only on the outside appearance, we disconnect from inside feelings, we do things that don't feel good to our bodies in the name of outside change. We ignore what we need and instead do what we are told will yield visual results. We prioritize how we look over how we feel and we create collateral damage in the process. Lasting weight loss is not a visual exterior process, it's an internal process. It requires us to connect to our

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bodies, to investigate and heal our relationship with food and ourselves and feel our feelings.

All of those are inside things that is really not impacted by how we look. This is a huge problem with our western culture and the diet industry that was born of it. The messages we as women are sent is that our value is based on a body's appearance and that there is a right and acceptable appearance of a body, a particular size, and shape, and level of fitness, and absence of fat, and wrinkles, and freckles, and cellulite and visibility of certain bones and muscles.

All this has done is damage and disconnect us from ourselves and our bodies and encouraged us to spend money, and time, and mental and emotional energy on our appearance over almost everything else. We walk around in our bodies almost constantly focused on how our bodies look to other people around us. I want you to think about this and I want you to pay attention to it today. How often do thoughts about how you look and what other people think about it occupy space in your mind?

When you got up this morning and got dressed what were you thinking about? Because for a lot of us, the only time we see the makeup we put on, the clothes we put on, our hairstyle is when we look in the mirror, everyone else gets to view it way more than we do. So, think about your reasons. When you walked into that meeting at work, what thoughts crossed your mind?

My guess is that even when you're home alone and no one is looking you have thoughts about how crazy your hair is or how mismatched your sweats are, and maybe you suck in your stomach, or you pull your shirt down over your butt out of habit. And maybe you think I would die if someone saw me like this. I hope no one comes over. I bet for some or maybe a lot of you, your favorite clothes, your most comfortable clothes, are clothes you would never leave your house in, because we don't value what it feels like to be in our bodies as much as we value what it looks like.

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I encourage and guide my clients to step out of the sea of the body objectification that all of us have been immersed in by our media and culture and to start to get back into their bodies, to start to pay attention to what it feels like to be them rather than just what it looks like to be them. When we can start to develop compassion, and acceptance, and love for our bodies, and value what it feels like to walk around in them more than to be viewed we start to take care of our bodies differently.

When we love our bodies and we value how we feel over all else, we nourish them differently, and we hydrate them differently, and we move them differently, and one of the byproducts of that relationship change and that subsequent behavior change is weight loss. So, the clothing I chose to wear in my most recent photos and the pictures I chose for my site reflect what I value when it comes to dressing my body, how I feel and what I like. The clothes I wore are comfortable, the fabrics are soft, I love the patterns and colors, they spark joy for me.

I'm not putting pieces together based on a specific style that I label myself, or others might label me as, or covering up parts of me, or showing parts of me to be more acceptable to other people viewing me. My hair is curled and I'm wearing makeup because I think it's fun to play around with and experiment with colors and styles, not because I'm only okay to be in a picture if I have makeup on. I am as much me with makeup and a dress as I am with no makeup, day three hair, sweats and flipflops.

I don't have pictures of me looking sad and distraught at my 'before weight' and happy and triumphant at my 'after weight' because the reality is the number on the scale does not determine your feelings. I have plenty of sad and distraught days in this body as I did happy and joyful days in past versions of my body. Some of the happiest days of my life, the births of my children were my very highest weight days. And some of my low points have happened when I was at my low weights.

I never want to sell weight loss as a way out of your misery because there is no way out, there is only through. You will never find outside solutions to inside problems and therefore I will not model on my site or elsewhere that

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happiness is found in the number on the scale. I help my clients lose weight, yes, but not just physical weight on the outside. Most important to me is helping them lose the mental weight of shame, and inadequacy, and self-loathing, the weight of the past and the worry about the future, the weight of objectification, those are what we focus on first and most.

Some of my favorite things about my work with my clients is what they gain, emotional literacy and resilience, self-love and acceptance, the skill of honoring and keeping commitments to themselves, valuing how they feel over how they look. This list could go on and on. One other issue I have with before and after focus is that my before weight is some of my clients' goal weight. And my after weight and appearance is not something that some of my clients could achieve without serious medical intervention or surgery.

So, for me to put a picture of me up and essentially say, "Look how gross, and miserable, and awful I looked before and look how amazing, and perfect, and acceptable I finally am now. And I can help you do the same thing." I'm sending a message to people about what's right, and wrong, and good, and bad about how certain bodies and certain scale numbers look, that I just don't want to and I don't believe is true. I want my clients to conceptualize their future selves based on how they want to feel and move in the world, and what they want to experience, and think, and be.

How they will look will change, yes, but it's such a shallow disconnected guide, to think about the person you want to become, the relationship you want to have with yourself and with food, the life you want to live, that is such a rooted, authentic aligned way to structure your journey. It allows you to develop a rich deep connection to you and your body and a love for it that just doesn't come when all we think about is what we see. So, I don't and won't be posting before and after photos, or retouched or Photoshop photos of me anywhere.

What you see is me and who I am, and what I believe reflected in an image. If you haven't read the book, *More Than a Body* that I have talked about 50 times on the podcast, I am surprised, and also do it, it's so good. I

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join with the brilliant Kite sisters, the authors of that book on their mission to 'create a new more habitable and joyful environment for ourselves and everyone else, one where we have the freedom and security that come from not just believing that our bodies look good but knowing that our bodies are good regardless of how they look'.

Have a fantastic week everyone. 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.