

4. The Difference Between Thoughts and Circumstances



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Dara Tomasson

4. The Difference Between Thoughts and Circumstances

Want to feel free from some of life's circumstances that are making you feel like a prisoner of your own life? You're going to love today's episode when I tell you how you can become free.

I'm Dara Tomasson and this is *Weight Loss for Quilters*, episode 4.

Did you know you could lose weight and keep it off for good? After 25 years of hiding behind my quilts, I have finally cracked the code for permanent weight loss and I've lost 50 pounds without exercise or counting calories. I'm Dara Tomasson, professional quilter turned weight and life coach, where I help quilters just like you create a life they love by losing weight and keeping it off for good. Let's jump into today's episode.

Welcome to today's episode. Back in August 2018 I truly felt like a prisoner in my own life. And can't believe it's been three years and it's so interesting to me because I have the same house. I have the same wonky kitchen, the same cars even. And I feel like I have a completely different life. How can that be? So, before I delve into this episode I just want to give a quick shout out to one of my clients who's such a great example of a tool that I'm going to be teaching you today.

So, I'm going to talk about Cheryl and you can look at my YouTube channel and see more about her, from her mouth. But when Cheryl came to me back in September of 2019, she was the heaviest she'd ever been. She'd had an incredible family tragedy that she didn't know if she could ever come out of. She was in such a fog. She wasn't sleeping very well. Her house was really unorganized. She didn't get a lot of things done during the day. She wasn't really feeling that she could ever have a different life.

And 10 months later she has lost 85 pounds. She's sleeping. Her house is super organized. She makes plans. She goes and does stuff, goes to in person classes. She went on a three day shop hop with her friends. She's quilting so much. And she is dreaming and she is planning all sorts of amazing new adventures for her life. And it's because she was able to really embrace this tool. So, are you ready? Let's go.

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So, as I was mentioning, back in 2018 I was a mess. Normally I'm a super happy go lucky person. I kind of roll with the punches. But there were just so many circumstances that kept changing that I felt like I was a total prisoner. So just as a backup, my husband was transferred. And it was one of those unfortunate transfers where you went from one province and city that was suffering an economic decline. So, it was a really bad time to sell our house. And we moved to a new province in a new city where it was a really difficult time for people to get into the market.

And so, we bought the smallest house I think we have ever bought for the most amount of money. And it was an island. And being a prairie girl, the idea of being stuck on an island felt very suffocating. It also had a lot of trees. So, I didn't have the expansive views that I was used to. I didn't have the freedom of just getting in my car and driving to wherever I wanted. I didn't have to worry about a ferry. The house we bought was not my favorite. It was dated.

It didn't have a lot of amazing features. It did have land which was nice and we lived on a mountain. But my brain just kept looking for all the things it didn't have. It kept looking for all of the awful and horrible parts about it. I also left a really successful quilting business where I had lived before where I had tons of clients. And I had all sorts of quilting fairies and worked at a quilt shop. And was a local quilter. And my business was going really well.

My kids, they could walk to school and we had a theater program that was amazing. We were close to family, we could do family dinners. My mother-in-law could just come up for the day. There were a lot of things in my life that I loved. And when we moved here I felt that I just couldn't be happy again. And that's when the weight started coming on. And it came on pretty fast.

I remember going to the doctors saying, "Hey, I don't know what's happening. I don't know why I keep gaining all this weight." And she just said some things about perimenopause and that's just the way things are

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and better just stop eating as much. And maybe moving some more. Really unapologetic and very discouraging. So again, as I looked around my life and all the things I just felt like all the circumstances were piling on top of me and I was drowning.

I don't know if any of you can relate to this story. But I want to teach you something that was such a huge game changer for me. And in fact, in that summer, I was just scrolling on Instagram and I came across a post from a fabric designer who I really admired. And she had mentioned that she had gone to The Life Coach School and that she was becoming a life coach and she needed to do a practicum. And if there is anyone interested in being a guinea pig, essentially, to message her and that we would get started.

And I'll never forget that moment where I thought I have no idea what a life coach is. I have, I think it's actually probably really weird. But I was so discouraged, I was so downtrodden and felt like I had said like I had a pile of circumstances were heavy weighing on me. And I couldn't see a way out and I thought, well, what do I have to lose basically? Nothing. I really did feel at rock bottom. So, we met over the phone and I was sitting at my kitchen table. I was a good student and I printed off the worksheet.

And she started talking to me about my weight. And she asked me just to tell her, my thoughts, all my thoughts about my weight. And I just went on. And I was talking about perimenopause and this and that. And I just was downloading all these terrible, what I thought were circumstances. It wasn't fair, we moved here and now we have this big mortgage and all of these things. So, then she said, "So when you say, "I can't lose weight", is that a fact or is that a thought?"

And I was taken back a little bit and I said, "Well, it seems really factual, I can't lose weight." She said, "Well, is that a fact or is that a thought?" And essentially she was able to teach me that the reason it's not a fact, even though it felt very factual, it felt very real to me, was there is a difference

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between a circumstance and a thought. Now, a circumstance is something that is neutral. So let me tell you what that is.

So, for example, a circumstance would be if I asked five people would they all agree? And so, if I have this thought which I now know is a thought, which I did think at the time was a circumstance, I can't lose weight. We couldn't prove that and it's actually not provable because every day I lose some weight and then I gain some weight. Even in an hour I could lose some weight. So, it's all relative. So that is just a thought.

The circumstance would be the actual number on the scale because that's what our bodies are is just what is gravity's weight on the scale. So, when she told me that my weight, so at that point was 201 pounds or something, was a circumstance, it was just a fact. And then I could have a thought about it. And when she taught me that my thought was optional, my mind started to break a little bit. So, I'm going to share with you some examples of what I'm talking about. So, stay with me.

So, before I give you some examples I just want you to know that we as humans have approximately 60,000 thoughts a day. Now, some of these thoughts came from our parents for example, you're really talented. So, if your parents always said, "You're really talented." Then you have a thought, I'm really talented. And you could just keep that thought. Or if your parents said, "Why are you always the last one, why do you take so long?" You could have a thought, you could adopt that thought of I'm just always behind.

So, some thoughts that we have about ourselves come from our teachers in the past. They might come from our family of origin. They might come from our career, from our education. They come from all over. They might come from advertisements like your weight, how you look in a pair of jeans determines your value. There's lots of different thoughts that we have and we have lots of different influences of where they came from. So, the beautiful thing is a thought, we just get to choose the one we want to keep.

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So, I like to imagine our thoughts like just speech bubbles above my head. And they're on a conveyor belt and they're just coming along my head. And I am up there editing, yeah, I'll keep that thought, no, I won't keep that thought. No, that one's not going to stay. Maybe I'll keep this thought and maybe I'll keep this thought for later. So, can you just picture that in your mind?

Another way to look at it is if you were at the grocery store and you had gone throughout the grocery store and you put all these things in your cart and you started putting them on the belt to buy your groceries or your thoughts. And somebody behind you kept putting things, random things on the conveyor belt. And the clerk was going to ring it through and you say, "No, no, that's not the thought I want to keep. That's not what I want for myself." So, thoughts are optional. And one of the things I want to tell you about your thought is you are not your thoughts.

You can have thoughts, they can come to you but just because you have a thought doesn't mean that that is you and you don't have to keep that thought. So, you can always choose to think about your thinking. Another way to look at this is if you aren't controlling your thoughts, it's very much like a toddler in a candy store who is not supervised. So can you imagine the damage of a toddler just have a natter at a candy store. This actually happened in my family.

My two younger brothers, they got on their big wheels and my mom was cleaning the house and we were all getting ready for our cousins to come. And my brothers were two and three years old. They got on the big wheel and they went to a grocery store, yes, they crossed three or four roads, got to the grocery store and they were a mess. They had chocolate all over them. And eventually my mom, she realized they weren't there. She called the police. The police then called us and said, "We have these two little boys at a grocery store not too far from your house, do you want to come and get them?"

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And my mom rushed into the car and drove directly to the store. And she was so happy to see her boys safe. And she offered – this is just a sidenote, she offered the manager at the grocery store to pay for them. And he said, “No, just take care of your children.” But that is what happens if we do not manage our thoughts. And just in my class today, it’s week 12 of my Love Yourself Thin program. And we were talking about the successes and the reason why they love Love Yourself Thin so much.

And so many of the ladies said that they have been living their life at a default. They never realized that they could totally choose what thoughts they were having. And we all kind of had a giggle when I said, “Yeah, I guess we’re all kind of being crash test dummies.” When we aren’t the driver in the car, we just for the ride. And we’re at the mercy and whim of whatever comes our way. And then we are always reacting to our life and we’re not being proactive. And this podcast and this tool I’m teaching is helping you to become the proactive member of your life. You are now the driver.

So, let’s just review this for a moment. So, I’m telling you that we have circumstances which are neutral. And so, everyone would agree that it’s neutral. And in a court of law, we’d be able to prove that that is neutral. So, for example, COVID is neutral. The number on the scale is neutral. Even what people say to us, for example, if someone said, “I don’t like your quilt.” That is neutral because it’s a quote, it’s directly, we can all agree that that’s what the person said.

So those are circumstances and then we get to decide what thought we want to have about that circumstance. And so, we talked about thoughts, that we have 60,000 thoughts a day, some come from our parents. Some thoughts come from our culture. Some thoughts come from societal views. Some thoughts come from something that we thought of when someone said something to us, a reaction or whatever that is. But what I wanted to remind us all is that we are not our thoughts.

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When we think about our thinking we can then choose what thought we want to keep, just like at the grocery store. And then we can supervise our thoughts now, unlike if we don't supervise our thought we're like an unsupervised toddler in a candy store.

So let me give you an example here. For example, let's take COVID. So COVID is a circumstance, it is neutral. We all know what COVID is. And we all now get to decide what are all our thoughts about COVID. So, some people have thoughts like COVID has restricted me from travel. So, they have a thought, COVID has restricted me from travel so then they feel stuck. Some people have a thought, I have gained so much weight because of COVID and the feeling is disappointed.

One of my thoughts about COVID is COVID has brought our family together and I feel connection. COVID, that's the circumstance, my thought is spending so much time with my kids and not running all over the place has been a real relief. So, we have all different thoughts about a circumstance. Let's take the example of the number on the scale. So, the number on the scale is a circumstance. So, we can have all sorts of thoughts like I don't really like that number. That number doesn't serve me well.

Or when I know what the number is then I can know how to help myself. There's so many different thoughts about it. I always can decide what weight is best for me and I get to work to accomplishing that goal. And the last example I gave about a circumstance is let's say you're at a quilt meeting, a guild meeting and somebody said, "I sure don't like that quilt you just made." That is actually a circumstance, that was a quote that someone said. And then you get to decide what you want to think about what they said.

So now you are totally in control. You can totally decide what you want to think about that. So here are some options. So, circumstances, quilt guild member said, "I sure don't like that quilt." Thought you could have is everyone's entitled to their opinion. I love how everyone is unique and

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different. What I think of what I create is more important than what other people think. So that brings me into the third point of what I want to share about the difference between a thought and a circumstance.

When we create a thought, our brains really like to be efficient. So, let's say for example, and I want to acknowledge that we are conditioned in society. So, if someone says that, "I really like your sweater." We are then conditioned to believe they are being positive to me. So now I'm allowed to feel positive. I mean it started in school. Our teachers said, "Good work." And then we believed I can believe what they say so that is good work.

If someone said, "I sure don't like that." Then we have been conditioned in society and part of that is our ability to stay connected and to be part of the tribe, to listen to what they said and we have been trained or in our training to then believe that what they said is true. So, if we have been able to make that change then we can decide if we want to continue that tradition or if we want to change it. And so, if we have created that thought and those thought patterns then we can uncreate those thought patterns.

And that to me is really exciting, talk about liberation. Anybody can say anything to me and I totally get to decide what I want to think about the words that they say.

So, one of the ways that I suggest to my clients to break from that old thinking pattern of if someone says something positive then I'm allowed to believe. If somebody says something negative then I need to believe them too, is we have what's called practiced or go to thoughts. And I will talk a little bit more about this in the episode I do about anxiety.

So, for example one of the thoughts that I go to is everything is figureoutable. And my kids always laugh and they say, "Mom, that's not a word." And I say, "Well, I can just make up my own words." And so, when I'm struggling with something or if I'm feeling a little bit at the mercy of a circumstance and I'm forgetting that circumstances are neutral. I will say,

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“Well, everything is figureoutable.” I also would say, “I’m in the process of figuring this out. Or I just haven’t figured out how to do it yet.”

So, when I have those kinds of thoughts, they’re actually called bridging thoughts. So those bridging thoughts help me to (a) accept myself where I’m at. And then (b) take the pressure off so that I can eventually get to where I’m wanting. This is really helpful when it comes to weight loss with my clients. So, if they aren’t seeing the results that they want immediately, or if they’ve plateaued, or if they gain five pounds. They are able to realize that the number on the scale is a circumstance, it’s just neutral. And then they get to decide all the thoughts that they want to have about that circumstance.

So, one of the things that I want to share with you, and this one I totally love, one of my clients, she came to me and she had gone to so many doctors. And she had read so many books about losing weight, and how do you lose the weight? And she kept saying to the doctors, “I don’t have a knowledge problem. I have a thinking problem.” And as I share these examples with you and help you see the difference between a circumstance and a thought, I want you to see this can apply.

So, I’m sure a lot of you feel the same way. You don’t have a knowledge problem. You know that if you eat lots of sugar and flour, you’re going to put extra storage in your body that your body can’t handle. And you will store that extra energy that you’ve given your body. So even though you know that, you continue to eat more food than your body needs. So, this is where this episode is so helpful to get clarity. So, we have a circumstance like a Twinkie or, or a cholate bar, or an ice-cream, or cake.

And then we have a thought like this is going to make me feel better. I don’t know how to take care of myself other than eating food. These are all the thoughts that come, when I eat food I can feel better. I feel depressed so I need to eat something. I can’t take care of myself so I must rely on food for a hit of joy, of dopamine. So, these are all the thoughts that run through our head. Now, they’re just thoughts, they are just options.

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They are just like you've gone to the grocery store and you're putting all your groceries on the conveyor belt and some weirdo is behind you putting all sorts of things on the conveyor belt. And you are now getting to decide do I want to buy that or am I going to put it back on the shelf? It's the same thing. We have a circumstance like COVID or the number on the scale, or things people say. And then we get to decide what we want to think about it.

So just like today in my conversation with my clients in week 12 of Love Yourself Thin, they realized that when they learned this model, this tool of the difference between a circumstance and a thought. When they learned that thoughts are optional, that we are not our thoughts, that we can learn to control our thoughts. We can develop good patterns of thinking that become automatic. When we can supervise our brain we can have practice thoughts that are going to help us. And we are now operating out of our higher CEO brain that makes decisions ahead of time. And we start to live a life on purpose.

So, as you listen to this episode I want to invite you to just practice this concept I am not my thought and there is a difference between a circumstance and a thought. And when I was sitting at that kitchen table back in August of 2018 and my coach said to me that, "I just can't lose weight", is actually a thought and not a circumstance. That helped me calm the heck down. And I love, I love imagery, we're all quilters, maybe not a quilter yet, you can become one. We are very visual.

And I literally felt like my life, I was just in this awful storm. I felt like I was being tossed and turned. And everywhere I turned I was looking for evidence that my life was terrible. And I truly felt like all these thoughts like I can't lose weight, and now I have perimenopause. And my life is over. I'm just going to gain five pounds every year. And I have bursitis in my hip. And I can't run like I used to. And this house is so ugly and the kitchen's so wonky, all the things. And it was like as soon as she showed me this tool, it was literally like I had an anchor attached to me.

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And so, I was now grounded. And so even though the waves come and they keep coming because hello, welcome to being a human. I am anchored. And I have so much more safety and freedom in my mind because I now know what the difference of a circumstance and a thought is. So again, our circumstances they need to be, if you ask five people about what it was they would all have the exact same description. Or if you went to a court of law a judge would agree, yes, that is correct. So, a circumstance is neutral.

And then you get to decide what thought or thoughts you want to have about that neutral circumstance. Then when you decide your thoughts, here are some tips. We have 60,000 thoughts a day, we can totally decide what thoughts we want to keep and what thoughts we want to throw away. So, we are not going to buy all our thoughts, just like on the grocery cart, some weirdo was putting all these things, or your grandson, or your child's putting all the chocolate bars on and you're like, "No, we're not buying all these chocolate bars."

We get to decide the thoughts. And if we don't control our thoughts we are like my brothers who went to the grocery store and ate whatever they wanted. They were unsupervised toddlers. And they just made a big mess and got really sick. So, if we're not doing that with our thoughts we're having the same problem. And if we are struggling with trusting ourself to have the ability to have the thoughts that we want we can have some practice thoughts like everything is figureoutable. I'm in the process of learning, I just haven't figured it out yet. And those are going to help you.

It was so fun to connect with you today. I am looking forward to hearing what happens when you learn to supervise your brain and become more of your higher CEO brain who makes decisions ahead of time and creates and lives a life of intention. Take care everyone.

To celebrate the launch of the show, I'm going to be giving away \$100 gift cards to Lisa Bongean's Primitive Gathering shop to four lucky listeners

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who follow, rate and review the podcast. It doesn't have to be a five-star review, although I sure hope you love the podcast.

My goal for this show is to provide you with tons of value. So please let me know in your review if there's a topic you'd like me to cover. Visit daratomasson.com/podcastlaunch to learn more about the contest and how to enter. I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode.

Thanks for listening to *Weight Loss for Quilters*. If you want more info, please visit daratomasson.com. See you next week.