

29. Decision Fatigue



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Dara Tomasson

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Do you feel like you just might snap in two if one more person asks your opinion on something? Listen to this episode where I'll uncover the main culprit for this problem.

I am Dara Tomasson, and this is Weight Loss for Quilters episode 29: Decision Fatigue.

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.

So, decision fatigue was coined by Dr. Roy F. Baumeister. And essentially it is the emotional and mental strain resulting from a burden of choices. So, if we are constantly being asked to make choices and then we're constantly stressing and worrying about the effect of the choices that we made, this will then affect our self-esteem and our confidence which for all of us weight loss people who are struggling it then results with our limited willpower and it also reduces how much brain capacity we have.

And the problem with this is that when we've burdened with so many decisions and we're so exhausted by them, when we're driving past a Starbucks we're in that episode of us beating ourselves up. A latte with caramel drizzle and whipping cream sounds like that would be a good decision to reinforce and feel better. When we walk past the kitchen and we see that there's just some food there, we're not hungry but we just want that quick little hit.

Or when we are online shopping and we're checking our emails and there's this amazing new fabric sale and we're so exhausted and we affected our self-esteem and our confidence, we have limited willpower. You see where I'm going, right? So, Dr. Tonya Hansel, she talks about decision fatigue and that it actually creates risky decision-making for us. It also creates a lot of avoidance.

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So, a lot of the ladies that I work with, with weight loss, they use food to avoid the situations, the problems, the issues that they are dealing with. And so of course this contributes to weight gain. It also contributes to the yoyo dieting because yoyo dieting relies on willpower, and it relies on you avoiding. So, you can know if this is you if you are spending a lot of time procrastinating. If you're doing a lot of impulse buying, a lot of impulse eating. How often are you avoiding things?

You have a to do list but you're not getting a lot of things done on that to do list. This is maybe one of the reasons. What about indecision? You keep going back to, well, I don't know. I need to go do some more research. I need to go consume some more things. All this is happening is because you suffer from decision fatigue.

So, today's episode I'm going to uncover how decision fatigue happens. I'm going to give you practical real life examples and then I'm going to offer my top five tried and tested methods to help you avoid this trap which of course sabotages our weight loss. And you know how G.I. Joe always said, "Knowing is half the battle." Well, today's episode is truly going to help you to have more success with weight loss once you learn this tool.

But before we go into the episode there's something that I wanted to share with you and it's kind of along the lines of our last week's episode about celebrating. And I really have seen how rewiring our brains to celebrate ourselves has been so beneficial. And so, every Friday in my email list I'm going to be highlighting one of my clients' celebrations. And something that I'm seeing as I'm doing normalizing celebrating, and highlighting women and asking them to look for evidence that they have things that they can celebrate themselves with.

What's happening for women is that it creates a lot of safety for themselves to really believe that they are amazing. Because one of our biggest issues is that we think we need to be worthy, we need to prove ourselves. And a few episodes ago we talked about this worthiness issue. And I'm just finding that creating these celebrations and working through this has been

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just so beneficial. So, if you're not on my email list already, I recommend that you do because you'll be able to read some of these celebrations.

And just I feel that more goodness that goes into the world is just going to help the world just to be that much better. And especially in our email box it's really fun to get uplifting and inspirational stories for our fellow quilters. So, let's go dive into today's episode. So, let's understand what decision fatigue is for you.

So, when I think about decision fatigue, have you ever had negotiations with a two or three year old about bedtime, about what you want them to eat? Maybe what they're wearing. If you want them to get in the car and put their seatbelt on, how has that happened for you? How does that turn out? Yeah, it's exhausting. And so, our brains, our lower brains are like a toddler.

And we, if we don't really want to do something and if we're having a lot of resistance and we're folding our arms across our chest, and stomping our foot and saying, "I don't want to." Then we're letting our lower brain take over and so now life is even more exhausting. So, as we think about decision fatigue and as we look through this episode I want you to think about parenting a two and three year old because we know that they have that tendency to be stubborn, or steadfast, or oppositional, or unaccepting.

And so how do you parent a child of that age? We're going to get back to that. And I'm going to give you some examples of, so not even just with negotiations with a two or three year old but these are just everyday common situations that can actually chip away at our ability to make the decisions. So how often do you get the flyers in the mail for grocery store deals? So, then you sit at the kitchen table with your pair of scissors, and you have the cover of every grocery store flyer is wanting you to come to their store.

And I know of a lot of people who will go to three or four different grocery stores so that they can save two or three dollars on each item. I myself love a good deal. But it's interesting that if we spend an entire morning driving

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around going to all the different stores, getting those deals, is that the best use of our time? Is that going to be exhausting? Is that going to be taking up our time?

So, another example would be if you're at the store and they say, "But if you sign up for one of our credit cards you get 5% off or 10% off." And again, now you're having to get the bill in the mail. You have to think about it. You have to then pay it. You have to set up another account in your bank for your online banking. It's one more thing for you to think about. Going along those lines is junk mail. How often do you spend time going through the junk mail?

I just thought about even those coupon books that you buy for fundraisers. And then you're having to keep track of all them and then you have to keep track of the due dates of them. And then you have to, you think, I've got to plan to use this one. And then you're spending all the time doing that. What about your scrolling. What about all the different thoughts that come to you while you're scrolling through Facebook? And then you're watching the videos.

And then you're going down rabbit holes and all of a sudden now you're a cake decorator and you're wanting to put a Barbie in a cake and experiment with all of these things. Meanwhile the morning you woke up you never even had one thought about maybe being that cake decorator.

So, some other examples of even when you're working, you're in the flow, you're cutting fabric, or you're quilting, or you're even making dinner, and someone asks you some questions. And so, you can answer their questions but then you have to spend some time to, yeah, okay, this is what I'm doing, refocus and having to go back into that.

What about taking messages or answering a phone call? Same thing in a job. So, these all disrupt the flow. Now, the main concept that I want to teach you which this actually really blew my mind when I realized this, it's we only have so much brain juice a day, we truly do. It's just like the battery life of our phone. So, if I said to you, "This is your phone, you can only

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charge it once”, I think you would be pretty careful of how you would use your phone because by two o’clock and you don’t have any battery, if someone’s trying to call you for the rest of the day, you’re out of luck.

And this is the exact same thing with our brain, we only have – and I love how Jody Moore calls it brain juice. This really resonated with me when she called it brain juice. And we have really classic examples of geniuses like Steve Jobs. He basically only wears the same clothes every single day because he wants to conserve his brain juice. We have things like the capsule wardrobe where you just have limited clothes in your closet, you just wear those clothes and then you can free up the rest of your time doing other things.

So, I’ll give you another example that’s really relatable to quilters, it’s when we learn how to make a half square triangle a certain way, or flying geese or whatever that is, we spend some time learning how to do that and then it just becomes really automatic and then we don’t have to think about it all the time. It’s just like this is just what we do.

When we only have so much brain juice and our brain doesn’t know the difference between something that is being super productive like writing, or quilting, or working, or organizing your house, or whatever that is versus scrolling on Instagram, or watching TV. You’re still using energy. We’re still using our brain. We’re still processing things. So, our battery, the energy is being sucked from it, we’re becoming depleted. And then our instincts kick in and so we want to increase our energy by getting more. We’re like, “I’m feeling tired.”

I mean advertisers get this really well. What goes into your brain, Snickers, it’s the best snack, all those things. And my go to would be peanut butter sandwich and chocolate milk. Oh, my goodness, I would just – that is the way to go. It’s quick. It’s easy. It hits the spot, and I can keep going. However, what that does it just creates more sluggishness and adds to our physical weight and to our mental weight. And we make bad decisions just like if we don’t have enough sleep. We don’t trust ourselves as much. So, this is what I’m talking about.

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So how much can you relate to this that I'm talking? So now that we know we only have so much brain juice, we only have so much battery life. I'm going to share with you five ways to really get the most out of your day. And before I go into those five, going back to those examples. Grocery store deals, extra credit cards, junk mail, scrolling, walking away from a job that you're doing, I want to give you permission to commit right now. You don't have to drive to three different stores to save maybe \$20. Your time is very valuable. Not only is your time valuable but you are valuable.

And to keep dividing yourself up in so many different places, you never really show up as powerfully for yourself. And so, I do want to just throw that out there because I think so many of the women I work with, and I can really relate to this myself as a mom of five kids, is we really need to start conserving our own energy and really honoring what we really need for ourselves.

So here are the five ways that you can have more success with really treasuring your mind juice, really treasuring your time, your life without having to be sucked away for other things. Maybe another way to look at it is it's like a sponge, all these distractions are like a sponge, and they take away. And the next thing you know you don't have that power anymore. You've basically given it away. I have another thought before I give you my five top tips.

So, this is a little story that I thought about when I was thinking about decision fatigue, it relates to it somewhat. So, there's a story about a little bird and he had beautiful, glorious feathers and just loved them. And he loved that he could fly. And he loved that he could do all these things. And one day this person came up to the bird and said, "Your feathers are so beautiful." The bird said, "Yes, my feathers are very beautiful. I love them." And they said, "Well, your feathers are so beautiful. Could I have one feather?" And the bird was like, "Well, I guess you could."

Because he said, "If you give me one feather I'm going to give you this nice juicy worm." And the bird said, "Well, I have a lot of feathers and that worm looks really good. And I don't have to do anything to get that worm so yeah,

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sure.” So every once in a while this person would come and say, “Hey, your feathers are really beautiful, can I trade you?” The bird thought, well, this is a pretty good deal, I don’t have to do anything. I just can give him one feather, I have lots of feathers, I mean I’m a bird.

And the next thing the bird realized is when he tried to fly, he couldn’t fly anymore because he had given away all his feathers. And this is the same thing with time. And this is the same thing with our mind juice, with our brain juice. And so, if we give it all away to things that seem kind of exciting and seem really awesome, I tell you, these reels on Instagram they are very fun. It’s really fun for me to watch. And I literally could, if I didn’t have a timer on my phone I could sit and do those for an hour, no problem. I’m very entertained, very easily entertained by those.

So, we have to be really cautious. And so, I love the little – it’s a cautionary tale of a little bird with his beautiful feathers. And it’s the same thing for us, we are all given the exact amount of time every day, no matter how rich, how poor, how thin, how big, what kind of house you live in, doesn’t matter. We all have the exact same time. And so, when we understand this concept it’s like I’m giving you your life back, I’m giving you your time back. Alright, so no more stories, let’s do this.

I’m going to tell you the top five ways that you can get your time back and that you can truly start living the life you want. And especially when it comes to weight loss we have been relying on willpower for so long and we can only resist for so long. And one of the reasons I am recording this at the beginning of February is because so many of you have made goals for the beginning, 2022 it’s going to be different. And you’re a month in and you’re not perfect. And so, a lot of you will just give up and say, “Well, maybe 2023 is my year.” So I want to avoid all of that.

Number one, I want you to decide who you want to be. I don’t want you to decide what you want to do or where you want to go. I want you to decide who you want to be. This is really a significant switch because you decide who you’re going to be every day by your actions. And so, you’re always making decisions, so is it from your lower brain or your higher brain? And

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when you decide who you want to be, your higher brain now decides is this what she does if this is what she does? And so, then you are now in your own authority.

So, when you have that decision of who you want to be you now have this north star and you know where you're going. And so, you're very directed. So even if, just like if we said, "Okay, we're going to Kansas." And you put it in the GPS, and there might be road construction, there might be weather, bad weather, there might be a really bad accident and they have to close the highway. But you know you're going to Kansas. So, you might have to take some detours but that's okay. You will eventually get to Kansas.

Number two, don't rely on willpower. So, the five vital steps of permanent sustainable weight loss is going to be coming up fairly soon in a podcast. One of the pitfalls, and I talk about this in that next episode, one of the pitfalls that we fall into is that we think that we need to have motivation. We think that we need to have willpower. We can't rely on willpower especially when we're tired, especially when we have had an emotional drain. And so, we need to start creating habits that are healthy and are default thinking in a healthy way. And so, we don't have to be fighting against that.

It's like imagine you walking upstream all the time, that is exhausting. It is physically impossible to walk upstream all the time. At some point you have to sleep. At some point you have to get more energy. At some point you need to rest. And if you're always relying on willpower you're not going to have success. You're just setting yourself up for failure.

Number three, stop judging yourself and instead use that energy to understand yourself. I want you to stop using that mind juice of talking to yourself like a punitive, mean, school matron. I used this example before, but the classic story of Roald Dahl of the story, Matilda. And she goes to this private school and there's Miss Trunchbull who is terrible. She's so mean, and she has this torture chamber. And she walks around with the strap and all these terrible things.

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And then there's Miss Honey who is the most loving, and lovely, and sweet teacher. And I think about how are you speaking to yourself? Are you speaking to yourself like this really terrible, mean matron? Or are you being very compassionate and loving? Because either way you're speaking to yourself. You're using up energy. So, are you using energy for your good or energy for your bad? That's going to be so punitive, and difficult.

So, saying things like, "What's wrong with you? Why haven't you figured this out yet? When are you going to learn? How long is it going to take? This is ridiculous. Smarten up." That's what I'm talking about. And when you can learn to evaluate yourself from a place of love or of really wanting to understand, you can learn from yourself and stop judging yourself.

Alright, number four is infinite commitment. So again, we want to stay committed to ourselves. And if we're looking at ourselves from a disciplinary action, like when are you going to figure this out? What's going on? Why haven't you done it yet? You're not able to see what is happening? Why can't I get this yet? Why do I keep – this one stumbling block, it's like you're playing a videogame. I don't play videogames, but my kids do. And they get really into it, even just that – what was that one when I was a kid? It was when videogames first came out.

It was a frog wasn't it? You're on one side of busy, busy roads and you've got cars going. And you have to figure out how to get across the road without getting hit by a truck. And the best way to really start figuring out why you're getting the results you have is that you can actually start looking at what's going on. You can see the patterns. You can see where you – your pitfalls. You can see how much you rely on other people's accolades or whatever that is.

And then now you can start becoming your best advocate because you can see what's happening. You can use your brain for good. And one of the things that I wanted to offer is I believe we all have our own answers inside of us, but we hold ourselves back from believing that we can achieve it. Because you know what the most beautiful thing is? You are unique. You

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are your very own person. You know the kinds of parents you had. You know the kind of house you grew up, you know all of that.

And so, when you can just allow yourself to see, I can see why I'm really struggling with my mom, or I'm struggling with that coworker because it reminds me of how my mom used to speak to me. And so now you have this ability to start problem solving for that. And that only comes when you just decide ahead of time, I'm committed to myself.

I'm committed to creating the best life. And you're going to use that brain juice for solving for that instead of blaming, that woman, who wants to work with her? And using your time and energy, giving it away to other things that aren't going to create the person that you want to be.

And then number five is I want you to focus on the process, not so much on the result. So, I want you to focus on learning to monitor the way you're speaking to yourself, monitor the way you're using your brain juice. And one of the ways you can do that is to create a time tracker, just seeing, how did I use my time today? What did I use my time to think about? How did I spend time in my brain? And so, when you can learn the process of honing your brain and looking at your brain then that process now comes really cleaned up.

I love how Jody Moore once said that the results are the most boring part. And at first I thought, what are you talking about? Getting to that number on the scale is really exciting. And when she explained it, the problem is if we go to the process that so many women have gone through, of just get me the number on the scale and then I can relax, and then I can feel better. I just want that one house and then I can relax. Or I just want to finish this one quilt and then I can spend more time with the grandkids.

Or just let me get this job promotion and then I don't have to work so much, I don't have to go in every weekend. That's a very conditional way of living and is exhausting. And it's going to deplete you.

So those are the five steps and as I tie everything up in a bow like I like to do at the end of every episode. I want to just give you a few more tips that

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are going to help you. And one of them is what I talk about actually in free motion quilting about tension problems. And of course, tension is like a swear word for quilters. It's like, oh my goodness, what are we going to do? And I have a very simple process, it's called TNT. I learned this on a handy quilter YouTube video years and years ago.

And the first thing you do when you have tension problems, you just rethread the thread, so that's T. And then you try it, you do one thing and then you try it. And then if that's not working you change the needle. And we have, what's the needle size? What's the thread size? What's the purpose of the quilting? So, we have specific needles, but you change the needle. And then you try it and see if the tension has been fixed. And then the last one is tension. And so, then you dial back your tension to zero and then you just increase a little bit, try it. Has it changed? If not, increase it a little bit and try it.

And this is what I want, as I think about this idea of you really looking at the routines and deciding which routines serve you and which ones don't. And then you're going to change. So, you decide, I always fall into this one trap and so I just want you to do that one thing, just change that one thing. And then you can start solving for that. But as you look at your life and as you see, am I living the life that I want to live? And if it isn't then I want you to, again, one, decide who you want to be and you get very clear on who that is.

Then you don't rely on willpower, you just start understanding this is just my path and this is where I'm going to go. And I'm not going to be talking to myself like a jerk. That's what willpower tends to do. It tends to go to very punitive disciplinarian kind of actions. And then I want you to stop judging yourself. I want you to start really embracing that you can understand yourself and I want you to believe that you really do have the answers.

I mean when it comes to weight loss there is only one reason we're overweight and it's because we're putting more food in our mouth than our body needs. And then our body becomes a storage unit. So, we know the answer. We know the reason why we're overweight. But if we are spending

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all of our time judging ourselves, being jerks to ourselves and not really trying to understand what the problem is we're just going to keep living the same recycled life.

And then number four, I want you to just truly have infinite commitment to yourself. I don't want you to be a disciplinarian, finger wagging, you better change, you better smarten up or else. That's not going to help you. And then the last one again is just to focus on your process. Don't focus so much on the result, it's like no matter what, I don't care what it's going to take. At least I can get to that number. I don't care what it means. I want you to focus on the process of loving yourself, and caring for yourself, and taking care of yourself. That my friends, that it will make the difference.

So, thank you so much for joining me. It's been so much fun to deliver this for you. I actually brought this to my clients a couple of weeks ago. I said, "Hey, guys, I'm doing this podcast on decision fatigue. I'd love your feedback on it." One of the things that we got from our discussion is that they are fearful of not getting the results that they want and then it would mean that they would fail. So, I want you to know that failure is the path to success.

We can only fail so many times before we figure it out. It's like how does this pattern go together? How can I get this block to work? You've just got to keep trying. And the more you try it, the more you learn, and the more you're going to put that block together and it's going to be amazing. And you're going to learn how to figure it all out. So go for it. I would love to hear who you want to be. It's so much fun when I get your feedback from these podcasts. Alright, take care everyone. Bye bye.

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