

36. Punishment Default



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Dara Tomasson

36. Punishment Default

Are you convinced that in order to get anything done you need to be super strict, disciplined or hard on yourself to get it done? The funny thing is that some people think that doing taxes requires a great deal of self-discipline with a heavy dose of grinding it out and grinning and bearing it. However, there are a lot of happy, super happy accountants and bookkeepers who love doing taxes. They find it exciting, interesting, and fulfilling.

On today's episode I'm going to show you how to get great success with the weight loss while being happy, excited and that white knuckling is no longer allowed.

I am Dara Tomasson, and this is Weight Loss for Quilters episode 36: Punishment Default.

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.

Okay, so today I'll be explaining why we have a history of using negative punishment in an effort for positive behavior. We're going to talk about why these methods have been used, what we have learned from our history. What can we do to interrupt this cycle that we have put ourselves through which leads us to yoyo dieting, exhaustion, and quite often, hopelessness, which then leads to apathy. So, we just give up on our goals.

You can expect to leave this episode with an increased understanding of why you have so many figurative bruises about weight loss and compassion for why you are still a little gun-shy of having another weight loss approach.

Alright, so just before I started recording this episode, my daughter walks in. Now, she's 17½, she's just finished high school early and she's working at her first full-time job. And she is driving our vehicle and she kind of ran a yellow light and got honked at. And it was a little bit scary for her. And she

36. Punishment Default

walks into my studio and says, “Mom, I did this really terrible thing. I feel so bad. I cried and I’m just so worried about things.” She’s been beating herself up the whole time. And she even says, “You know what? Here is my phone, you can take my phone away from me.”

And I just looked at her and she said, “Well, aren’t you going to give me a punishment?” And I said, “Well, I think you’ve kind of given yourself enough of a punishment.” So interesting that this is all happening as I’m recording this episode because we truly are learning how to rewire our brains.

In fact, one of my clients, she was actually one of the reasons why I decided to do this podcast is because she has, her whole life has worked really hard. She’s had a really important job and a lot of responsibilities and pressures on herself. And she had to keep everything together. And food was one of her treats, one of her rewards, one of the ways that she could reward herself. And so, she joins my program, she heard about me and was really drawn to the things that I said. So, I asked her about how things are going and she said, “Not good.”

And so, we kind of delved into it and this was on one of our live coaching calls. And we basically realized that she has this thought, I’ve failed so many times before, which created the feeling of defeated. So, this is her model. We talk about our thought model. So, our thoughts always create our results. And I have a structure that teaches you how to recognize your thought and then see what feeling fuels that which then leads to our different actions which of course then create our results.

Because whatever we spend our time doing that’s what we’re going to get. So, I asked her, okay, so when you have that thought, I have failed so many times before, she felt defeated. And when she feels defeated she white knuckles it, she uses a lot of negative self-talk. She treats herself with disgust. She grinds it out. She uses all of her willpower. She has an internal argument. She uses a lot of scolding. So, then I asked her, “Okay, so when you spend all your time white knuckling and negative self-talk and all of these things, your result is you guarantee your failure.”

36. Punishment Default

Because instead of spending all of her time learning all the different ways that she can manage her mind, and love herself, and have acceptance, start really seeing what's happening, she's just beating herself up. So that's why I talked about those figurative bruises. And so, if the process is really awful and terrible, it's not something you want to keep doing. It's like when someone says, "This is disgusting, do you want to have a bite?" No, of course you don't want to have a bite, that's awful. And it's the same thing that we've been doing with weight loss.

And so, it was interesting, when I asked her what she loved best because one of the reasons she wants to lose weight is because she's just been retired and wants to spend all this time with her grandkids. And she wants to be healthy and strong for these amazing grandkids. And I said, "What do you love best about being with your grandkids?" Her face lit up. She said, "I love how much laughter, and wonder, play and imagination we have together." So, I asked her, "What would it be like if you could approach weight loss with laughter, wonder, play and imagination?"

And she was able to see that that indeed would be so much more fun and more sustainable. And that's what I offer to all of you, that is the reason why this program, why what I do is called Love Yourself Thin. Because truly you're learning to accept yourself of how you are. And able to make changes from a place that is super sustainable. I'm always going to have fun losing weight. I'm always going to laugh. I'm always going to use curiosity.

I'm always going to be using – it's like you have this rusty rotary cutter, you have this kind of chipped up ruler. You have the sewing machine that sometimes works, doesn't always work. Versus a top end sewing machine with a nice crisp rotary cutter with a beautifully clean line, nice beautiful rulers. You're obviously going to want to have the best materials. And that is, when we use this creativity, and curiosity, and fascination, and wonder, all those things, those are the best materials. And that's going to get you the best results. It truly is.

36. Punishment Default

So, let's dive into this episode. Now, I am not going to go into a history of why we've used capital punishment and negative punishment. I'm going to do a very brief summary of that. And we're going to talk about why that was so common. So, the first thing I want to cover in today's episode. When we think about the history of using negative punishment in an effort for positive behavior. So of course, we've all driven down the road kind of like my daughter. She has a lot of fear. She's very afraid that they have those little cameras at the stop lights.

She's worried that she could actually get her license taken away. And so, she's going to have a consequence of her actions. And just like in the previous episode to this one, I talked about how we can't argue with science. We can't eat donuts all day long and not gain weight. We can't eat chocolate over and over and not have a bunch of extra stored fat. It's just not the way, we can't break the machine. The machine is already broken. We have to learn how to use the machine of weight loss.

So that's why we had to decrease our desire for those things and increase our own ability to create our own desires, and our own joys. And so, with punishment what's happened in the past is we have said, "Okay, I'm going to use a lot of fear and I'm going to use a lot of negative consequences so that you will change your behavior." So, we have police officers who, and think about it, the last time you drove and all of a sudden you caught a police officer in your rear view mirror, what was your initial reaction?

Yeah, you put your foot on the brake. You're like, "I don't want to get a ticket. I don't want to get in trouble." I don't want to get in trouble. And so that has served us. And there's definitely times and I'm not saying, especially when I think about my little kids, when my kids were really little. If they were going to go across the road and they could possibly be hit by a car. I would use a very forceful voice, "No, don't go." And if they were around a fire it would be like, I use a lot of fear. Yes, you don't want to get hurt.

Even at the playground you have to be careful because if you fall you could break your neck. And I would give them those warnings. One time I had –

36. Punishment Default

one of my sons was thinking it was really fun to play with matches. And I showed him pictures of people who have had their skin burned. There is a place for saying, “This is actually the consequence of your actions.”

And of course, for punishment, as far as going to jail, if you take the life of somebody, if you rob a bank, if you do these things there is a very serious consequence because there are a lot of ripple effects of what you have done on, and on, and on. And so, in a society, in order to curb that, stop that, there is this level. Now, that’s one side of the spectrum.

Now, I taught at school for 10 years and I do have five children. So, my oldest at this time is 19, my youngest is nine. So, I’ve kind of gone through my own personal anecdotes and my own personal experiences with how do I truly get someone to change their behavior. So, what we’ve learned from history is we have learned that there’s certain behaviors that require a certain level of a consequence. And the other thing I want to say just with that is there is a level of safety that we all need to have.

And so, if someone is out there who is going to kill people that is a safety risk. And so, we have to take that in consideration. So, it’s all a level of scale. I remember sharing the story about my little boy at the grocery store and he really wanted something and he got frustrated and he just started crying. And I knelt down and I just hugged him and I said, “I’m sorry you’re feeling this way.” And my sister was so – she’s like, “No.” She didn’t have kids yet. She’s like, “You’re supposed to yell at them and that’s going to really help them.”

And I actually wanted to address that because even myself and my husband, when we yell at our kids we’re literally conditioning them to not take action until we have yelled at them. And the same thing with being a school teacher, if I kept yelling at my students they just thought this is just normal. This is how she gets our attention. There was lot of techniques that I used in my classroom where I would clap my hands and they’d have to repeat. Or I’d say a little rhythm and then they’d have to say the words back, cross cross and they’d all say apple sauce.

36. Punishment Default

There's lots of different ways for me to get their attention that was really loving and really helpful. So, I want us to think about our experience with weight loss and why we think that we have to be so negative, and so punitive, and so white knuckling to get the results. And something that came up for me was the cycle that we go in. And we have this vicious cycle of weight loss. And so, I have the podcast I talked about, the eight phases of weight loss and how we look at the number on the scale. We feel really disgusted in ourselves so then we turn outside of us to find a solution.

And then we use a lot of punishment because we're judging ourselves. You're overweight. You're out of control. These are actually some of the thoughts. These are the beating ourselves up ones that gives us those figurative bruises. What's wrong with you? When are you going to learn? Why can't you figure this out by now? How many times are you going to mess up? Why bother trying, you're just going to fail anyway. The way you talk to yourself, that is the vicious cycle.

Because what happens is, you make a goal. Okay, so top of the cycle is I make a goal. And for this purpose, it's like I want to lose 30 pounds or I want to be able to wear this dress. I want to look good in my daughter's wedding pictures. I want to feel comfortable in my body by Christmas. I don't want to feel embarrassing to my kids anymore. I don't want to feel embarrassing to my grandkids. So, you make a goal. And then you try to achieve it. So, you take some actions and say, "Okay, I'm going to not eat sugar", or whatever that is. And then you fail.

You said, "I'm not going to eat sugar for two weeks." And by three hours later you've eaten some sugar. So, you're like, "Yeah, I'm a failure." So, then you start beating yourself up with these questions. What's wrong with you? When are you going to learn? Why can't you figure this out? How many times are you going to fail? And be really negative to yourself. And so, then what happens is you then can't move past it so you just change the goal or you give up on the goal.

And in fact, as I was preparing this podcast I realized that there is actually a name for this cycle that my business coach teaches and it's called, this is

36. Punishment Default

called a low value cycle. And it's quite funny because she has been teaching me this for two years now, a year, just over a year. And finally, I was like, "Okay." I can see it in the weight loss are effective so it makes it so much more – it clicks so much easier for me because I can relate to it so well. I have so much experience with that.

But what I want us to learn to do in this podcast is I want to interrupt that cycle. And I want to inject a high value cycle, or I call it the permanent goal success cycle. So, these are my names, the vicious cycle, and the permanent goal success cycle. Because I want you to learn that permanent weight loss is totally doable and this is how you do it. So, we make the goal of I want to lose 50 pounds and keep it off for the rest of my life.

So, then you take your best guess, okay, well, I think that if I cut out sugar and flour that will probably really help. And so, when you've made a decision not to eat the sugar and flour and then you eat the sugar and flour. Instead of punching yourself in the face and saying all those really mean things like, what's wrong with you, when are you going to learn. You say, "What happened? Why did I eat that thing?" And so now what's happening is you're evaluating.

And these are the three things I want you to use for evaluating. What went well, what didn't go well, and what am I going to do next time. So now this way you're actually evaluating what's happened in your life, why did you go off your commitment to yourself? What actually happened to not be able to just say, "I'm just not going to eat flour and sugar." It's easy.

It's because my father-in-law phoned and said that my mother-in-law is sick and she can't come and visit. And so now I need to find another babysitter. And then I have a whole other set of problems that I had to deal with that I thought I had already dealt with. And if I'm not feeling that I want to just feel that disappointment and looking forward to all that extra energy I had to spend in finding a different solution, then chocolate would be a pretty good little buffer for me there. It's going to give me that little extra energy that I'm not giving to myself.

36. Punishment Default

So, then I'm like, "Okay, now I see why I turned to the chocolate. It's because I was feeling disappointed and I was feeling like I needed to have a whole bunch of energy which I don't really feel I have right now. And I thought I had solved it and now I have to solve something else. I have to use a bunch of energy. No wonder I'm turning to some chocolate." But I don't really need to turn to the chocolate, I can just feel the disappointed and I can just plan to use that time later on this evening or I could delegate that to my husband, or whatever that is.

And so, I don't need to actually have any food. I can truly just solve the problem for myself. So, we evaluate, then we decide, okay, what am I going to do the next time. And so now we have a new action and now I'm going to do a new approach. Remember, I'm not starting fresh. I'm using what went well and so now I know and I know what didn't go well. So now I don't have to do that part over again. And then I can try my new theory of what can I do better and then I'm going to try that. And then I'm going to go back to evaluate.

So, this is how you break your cycle. Now, one of the things that I see a lot happening for myself and my clients is that we have some very internalized behaviors. So, for example, it would just be automatic pilot for us to beat ourselves up because that's what we learned. Think about school. Think about what your teacher said to you, he or she gave you a test and said, "Study harder. Work harder. Memorize these things. Don't bother learning it, just memorize it." All of these messages that we got. Even at school if you're being too creative, it's like, "No, just do what I said."

My daughter in high school had a teacher who was past retirement age and so had been teaching a long time and was really old school teaching. And I mean I taught from 97 to 2007 or so. There's lots of ebbs and flows of different teaching, it's kind of like a diet. There's all these different new ways of doing things.

So, she was supposed to interpret this poem with a group of classmates, there was three of them. And he gave them a really bad mark. And they were really surprised and so she went to speak to him about this mark and

36. Punishment Default

he said, “No, no, I’m not going to talk to you about this. You knew the assignment and you didn’t do it right.” And she’s in grade nine. That was a lot of courage to go up and talk to her teacher. So anyhow I said, “Well, I’ll go talk to him. It’ll be fine, I’ll see what’s going on.”

And the other mother was really upset and she’s a former school teacher as well. And I said, “I’ll go and talk to him.” And this is the thing that was really interesting and this is actually what I came up with as a teacher was that we were starting to teach students how to problem solve and have their own voice. But there’s a lot of teachers that were uncomfortable with kids having their own voice.

And so, I went to speak to the teacher and I asked him about the assignment. And basically said, “So did you want my daughter and her classmates to regurgitate what you had told them? Did you want them to say basically what you had and how you interpret it, is that what you wanted them to do? Or did you want them to use their own brains and come up with another way of looking at this poem?” And he was really upset. He got pretty upset with me.

And I said, “I’m not mad or angry, I’m just trying to understand what the purpose of the assignment was.” And so that was just so interesting because I was able to say, “Well, what is the purpose of the exercise.” And it’s the same thing with making a goal. What is the purpose of making your goal? In some ways it doesn’t really matter why you want to lose the weight, there’s not one magic motivation. There’s not one magic answer.

But you’re not setting yourself up for success if you are constantly saying, “I need to lose weight because I’m so pathetic and I’m just such a failure.” Because that energy is going to just carry through. And even if you do, even if you say, “I don’t want to feel so pathetic anymore.” Okay, great. But you have to get yourself to a place in that high value cycle of being able to evaluate what didn’t go well, what did go well, then you can try a new theory on, it’s going to get better.

36. Punishment Default

So, I have a fun example on this of when my son was about five and he just raked our front yard and we had trimmed some of the bushes and things. And he thought it would be really fun to have a picnic. And he called it nicnic, so he we went to the fridge and got the first thing he saw, pretty much, I'm sure, it was mustard. So, he gets some bread. It's the first time he's ever made sandwiches by himself. He get some bread and he just pours so much mustard on this sandwich. And he come to me and he says, "Mom, let's have a nicnic." And I was like, "Okay."

So, we go out the front and we sit on the blanket, and I scarf it down, was kind of challenging. And it was interesting because what would be my best approach with that? How do I teach my son to make sandwiches. How do I teach him to be successful with making sandwiches? Because I encourage, my kids started making their lunches when they're in grade one. And so, I thought about, what's the best way?

So, we have a little song. I love sandwiches, sandwiches are wonderful, sandwiches are fine. I love sandwiches, I make them all the time. I eat them for my breakfast and I eat them for my lunch. If I had a 100 sandwiches I'd eat them all at once. So, we would sing this little song and I would show him, when we make a sandwich, we get these things out, we get a plate. And I walk him through the whole thing and it's a little song, it's fun. I'm leading by example.

And it just becomes this really lovely experience for him to learn how to have this ability to make his own sandwiches. But if I talk to him in this punitive way which we are doing, a lot of us don't even realize how punitive we are being to ourselves, this client of mine that I gave the example, she didn't realize that she had this thought, I've failed so many times. And then she had the feeling of defeated. And so, when you feel defeated you go into these punitive actions.

And so, I was thinking about as a parent with my kids, and even as a school teacher at the beginning, oh my goodness, I did, I'm embarrassed to admit it but I did yell a little bit. But it was interesting, over time I would just say to my students and to my kids, "These are my expectations. This is

36. Punishment Default

what I wanted you to do. This is what I expected from you. And if you don't do it then this is just the consequence. You have to do an extra chore, or you have to do an extra piece of homework. Or you have to get your parents to sign this."

Or if you bully, you have to write an assignment and get permission to come back in the classroom after your parents have signed it and we've had a discussion with the kid. This is just the way it is. It became really neutral and it was just this is just the consequence, there's not all these huge emotions with it because you're now evaluating.

So, the other example I thought of when I was preparing this podcast was, could you imagine if you decided, you saw this beautiful quilt and you were like, "That is going to be so great. I'm just so excited of having this quilt. My house is going to be so much more beautiful. And it's just going to be really fun to have this quilt. But the whole time you're thinking, what's wrong with you, why haven't you done that quilt yet? When are you going to learn? Why can't you get all of your points perfect the first time?"

Then when you get it done you're, "Okay, now I have to free motion quilt it." And you're not getting your feathers like that lady in the picture and what's wrong with you, and why can't you do this? When are you going to get this together? Could you imagine ever wanting to make another quilt ever again in your life? No, of course you wouldn't. it would be horrible. You'd be like, "Quilting is the worst, I hate quilting. I'm going to sell everything, or give it away, I hate it." That's what you've been doing with weight loss.

And I'm here to let you know that it's not necessary. And in fact, it's not – well, I'd say sustainable, if you quilted like that, if you spoke to yourself like that, that is not a sustainable way of enjoying yourself. That is not sustainable. You would not keep doing that over and over again. But that is what we've done with weight loss. One of the best ways to use this episode is to take an inventory of your thoughts in the way that you speak to yourself.

36. Punishment Default

So, I want you to imagine putting a little microphone in your brain with your thoughts. I want you to record all of these. So, we have a little microphone going in your brain. We're turning up the volume and recording them. And then you're going to listen to the replay. And I want you to listen to the way you're talking to yourself.

So, if you are saying a lot of things like, "What's wrong with you? When are you going to learn? When are you going to get this figured out? You should have figured this out by now. Why bother trying." That is literally you beating yourself up in the face. You being mean, and punitive, and terrible. It's like me saying to my son, "What are you thinking? You're five years old, what kind of sandwich is this? This is awful."

So, if that's how you just normally talk to yourself, I want you to interrupt that. I want you to stop it. I want you to say, "No, no, no, I'm not speaking to myself like that anymore." Aren't we so glad that the makers of the iPhone and of computers, didn't treat themselves like that. Because I can guarantee you, we wouldn't have an iPhone or a computer. It's just so overwhelming. It wouldn't have happened.

So, when I think about all the most amazing things in life that have been created, I think of them using creativity and curiosity, fascination, experimentation, wonder, play, imagination and patience. When you use those feelings, that's a fuel that truly creates a sustainable change. I would say, people ask me, "How did I lose this weight and keep it off?" And probably the number one emotion other than love, and unconditional love, by the way is curiosity.

I truly went to curiosity over, and over, and over again. I said, "What would it be like if I could just go through the day without having to turn to chocolate for my medicine, or to take the edge off?" Who would I be? This is where I spent my time. This is where I was able to truly see. And even with my business, a podcast, I had no idea how to do a podcast, and having a life coaching business, and having a one-on-one client, and then having groups, and now I have a lifetime membership.

36. Punishment Default

It's all come, all of those results have come because I was willing to be curious, I was fascinated, I experimented, I had a lot of wonder. I spent so much time wondering, well, how would this happen? And playing with that. And using my imagination, being patient with myself and saying, "Oh yeah." And then the other one is compassion, being super compassionate. And compassion by the way is act of love. So actively loving on myself. That is how we achieve our goals, not from being afraid of being you.

And I have talked about creating safety for losing weight. And I want to re-emphasize the importance of not giving up on yourself and being able to use the second model. So, I have created a handout for you that outlined the two models. And really allowing yourself to evaluate and then tweaking, and then going on. That is how you learn to quilt. That is how you learned to make a sandwich. That is how you've learned to do everything. You've failed, you said, "That didn't work. What can I do different?"

And then you tweaked it until you got it right, that's how you learn to drive. That's how you learn to use an iron, all of those things. So, allow yourself that opportunity with weight loss, I promise you when you learn these skills, when you can implement these skills you literally can create anything you want and I invite you, if this is really resonating with you, I invite you to join my lifetime membership.

Also, I am really excited. I am offering a popup group in middle of April and it's going to talk all about how do you get yourself out of weight loss jail so you can have freedom around food forever. I can't wait for you to join me. I'll see you next week.

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