

65. Chronic Pain and Weight Loss interview with Shelby Hansen



— WITH DARA TOMASSON —

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

**With Your Host
Dara Tomasson**

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Hi there. So today's episode is going to be an interview with Shelby Hansen and she helps women with chronic pain, and I love this episode as she teaches us how to really be in tune with our nervous system and helping us see one of the responses that we are instinctually built with. We talk a lot about fight, flight and freeze, but she's going to introduce us to a new one and it's going to be so helpful for all you people pleasers out there.

So I am so excited to introduce you to Shelby Hansen. She is a certified. a coach and does incredible work in this world to help women to feel so much more empowered. And if you are suffering from chronic pain or having pain in your body this podcast is gonna be so helpful for you. So I'm so excited to have you listen and join us.

So here we are, me and Shelby.

Dara: Okay. I have a very special guest, Shelby Hansen, who helps women with chronic illness, and she is going to be sharing with us some amazing tools on how do we create harmony in our body, especially with our nervous system. So Shelby, can you just introduce yourself and tell us exactly what you do and why it's so important for people to keep listening to this podcast?

Shelby: Absolutely. So my name is Shelby Hanson. I am an Air Force wife. I'm a life coach. I've got four kiddos. When I was 31 years old, I was diagnosed with endstage kidney disease and I got put on the kidney transplant list and I went through a pregnancy while I was on the transplant list.

So life got very chaotic for us. I was not living next to any family members, so the support was pretty minimal. I had good church support, but it was, it was pretty intense and it was before I had found life coaching. And I was looking to find some sort of community, some people that were going through something similar to me so that I could find some, some answers and really there wasn't anything out there. And over the years I found out that it, that was on me. It was up to me to create this community and to be an example of what's possible given some really challenging health circumstances.

So what I do now is I do life coaching for women with chronic illness, and I help them to heal both emotional and physical pain and to have a lot of fun along the way because, gosh I have a lot of fun. I love paddleboarding. I love, um, anything outside with water snowboarding, all sorts of things with my family. I just went on a 30 minute hike this morning with my husband. So it's bringing joy back to life when things feel a little bit

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chaotic and crazy, and being able to really intentionally create a life that you love and that you can't wait to wake up to.

Dara: I love that, because in love yourself, then we talk all about like creating that unconditional love for yourself no matter what size your body is. So, I would love to hear your perspective on, especially when you have a circumstance that can't be changed. Like you have a actual physical ailment that requires surgery or you will die like. And so not only I think this podcast would be helpful for people who do have that, but I have women in my program and listening who have the husbands or children that also, struggle with these very like real problems that you can't just think them away like they are, they are your new reality.

So, as we, as you share about the nervous system, I think that's gonna be so helpful to women because we, truthfully, we have been disconnecting ourselves, our brains from our bodies for so long. That we don't even like trust our nervous system or we're like nervous system. It's failed me. So let's start with that.

Shelby: Yeah, so depending on how familiar your listeners are with it. When I say nervous system, I'm basically talking about the stress response that happens whenever you are believing a fearful thought.

Dara: I love that definition. Yes, thank you. Cause people are like nervous system. This sounds very confusing. I'm not smart enough to listen to this podcast. That is a lie. Okay, so Shelby, say that one again. Yes.

Shelby: The nervous system response, what I'm talking about is the stress response that happens in your body whenever you are believing a fearful thought that you have. So there's different degrees of that stress response that happens, and there's different ways that it manifests.

So take my circumstance, I'm like, I have kidney disease. I had a kidney transplant four years ago, but I will always have kidney disease. That's just part of my life right now. That's my circumstance that I can't change. And so I've thought lots of fearful thoughts about that. And sometimes it's just like there's a little bit of worry or that thought'll create a little bit of, frustration even. And then there's like, you can dial it up all the way to like panic.

So there's different degrees of these thoughts. Like for example, kidney disease, I'm just like, Oh, I just wish I didn't have this anymore. Like this is, this is really hard, you know, that can, that can dial up. Because it's like, you know, is this gonna be the thing that kills

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me? Like that's gonna cause some worry. And you have physical manifestations from asking yourself scary questions like that.

So the four ways that I like to talk about that your body responds to those fearful thoughts is, you either have, you're probably familiar with the first two, the fight or flight response. So you're like, a lot of people when they get a diagnosis, they're like, Okay, I'm gonna, I'm gonna challenge this. I'm gonna fight this. Don't get me wrong, we need some fight. Like you can't just roll over and pretend like things aren't happening, but it can get too much where you're like expending a lot of energy because you're always fighting or you're trying to run away and avoid the problem and then you're not going to the doctor and doing things that you need to in order to take care of yourself.

The other two though that don't get talked about as much are freeze and fond. Now freeze is when for me, I am thinking something and it is causing me to feel very overwhelmed. That feeling of overwhelmed I can almost feel like this energy shift where it's just the energy just leaves my body and all I'm like, I need to go lay down, I need to take a nap. When there's not really a good reason for me to be feeling that, that tired, like I haven't done anything really physically exerting except for belief thoughts that are overwhelming.

Dara: Yeah, so I find my women, they do a lot of like scrolling on Instagram. There's like they do a lot of those things and they feel like they're trying to like be a part of a community or be attached, but it's actually like false because like you're not really doing that. So it's like a way to numb out. And also, of course with food, we're all really aware with numbing out with food, so that's another way that people do it. Yeah,

Shelby: Exactly. And even if you have a freeze response and you're feeling like less energy, sometimes there's this thought like, Oh, if I just go eat something, I'll have more energy. But I don't know if you're if you're like me, but I sometimes I've done that and then I'm like, and then I go take a nap. I'm like, The food didn't solve the problem .

So, but the, the last one is the one that I don't think people hear about very much, and that's the fond response. And that's when people go into people pleasing to try to control their way out of feeling the fear. It's not actually addressing the fear, it's trying to control other people around you so that you don't, you can stop feeling so scared.

Now there's ways that you can work with your nervous system in order to calm the nervous system. When you're in a calm state, a lot of the terminology is that you're in the parasympathetic state, and that's the state where you're more aligned with like your true self and what you actually wanna be doing. You're open, you're curious, there's

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flow, You're feeling more abundant in that one because you're not believing the fearful thoughts.

It's okay for the fear thoughts to come up and sometimes like the, the train leaves the station and like you cannot stop like you were in this response. And it is there to stay in those moments, you can't outthink your way from that and you don't need to. That's when it's time to go into the body. That's when it's like, okay, what is the next most kind and loving thing I can do for myself right now? And you know, I'm like, This might be like anti what you teach, but sometimes it is going to eat a cookie sometimes. But it's knowing I'm doing this to help to let my body know that I'm actually safe. Like if you're like eating the cookie quickly, trying to avoid something that's actually not gonna regulate your nervous system.

Dara: Yeah, so we, we talk a lot about like accepting what is and we, we really have to like embrace it. Like a lot of my women do the other, this other thing where they buy fabric online. They buy a lot of fabric online, and so they like, they know it, they're very aware. They're like, I am buffering right now. I am spending this money. And so they're aware of it, but I say like, Okay, so I am buying fabric online because I am buffering. Okay. What's going on, girl? But like you can allow yourself just to do it instead of like being hiding and feeling shame. So I'm on the page with you on this.

Shelby: And you know, it's just helpful. You don't really need to go into like figuring out exactly which nervous system like response you're going into. I think it's really fascinating to do that. You don't have to, but like looking at like, I'm scrolling, this could be a flight response. Like I'm trying to run away from something. I'm trying to run away from something that I think is scary.

So when that's happening for me, it's bringing myself back to present and like starting to narrate what's happening. It's like you said, like I'm buying fabric right now.

So we called them the truth.

Dara: Yeah, we, we call them the red flags. It's like, Oh yeah. So you're just so aware. You're like, Oh, look at me. I'm like, eating cookies. Okay, what's my red? Like this is a red flag for me. What's it for? Right. So then, now you're like being the leader of your own life. You're like, Oh yeah, that's right. You know the red flags of your kids, like when they come home from school and they're like really sad or they're not really talking to you, that's a red flag that maybe someone said something uncomfortable, and so you can maybe, they'll be like, Hey, let's go play a game and or go for a drive. So then you give them that space where they can talk to you, right? It's what we, what we expect for

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our children and other people, but we are like starting to build that for ourselves. We're gonna be like the best humans to ourselves.

Shelby: Yeah. Oh, that's so beautiful. And I, I really think that part of this whole process is understanding like what's going on for you and really like showing yourself that ultimate self-compassion because once you have that and you have like allowed those emotions do, I'm sure you talk a lot about allowing emotions in your program, when you allowed the emotions and especially like any of those fear emotions when you like open up to that experience of fear, then it allows you to have space to make another decision that is in alignment, that's more in that parasympathetic state. Like now, I'm back aligned. This is what I want.

Dara: Yeah. I say when emotions are high, intelligence is low.

Shelby: Amen.

Dara: So that's why the importance of accepting, Cause you're like, Yep, this is how it is, and now you're not, you're not using all your energy to like avoiding it, resisting it, or pushing it.

Shelby: Yeah, because people think about, Oh, I, I just have so much low energy, and I'm like, No, you are using all your energy. You're using all your energy to resist something. It takes a lot of energy to resist. Like, like when you're, you know, if you're working out like with resistance, like that's a lot of work. Even if you're like pushing a rock. When you're working out, like the rock may not look like it's moving, but you are working really hard and it's actually so much easier, like when you get into the flow, like I think about like a river and if you are allowing yourself to go down that flow, you're actually going pretty quickly. But when you turn around and like try to paddle upstream, it's like, eh, this is not who I wanna be. This is not what I wanna be eating right now. This is not what I wanna do. Like it freaks you out. So it's like, turn around and work with yourself, not against yourself.

Dara: Yeah, totally. Yeah. So let's talk like, because the, the people pleasing, I find this is a huge, a huge, and the, the thing that's so hard about it, and especially in my program is that we have been trained ever since we were, pretty much, since we were little girls, to be people pleasers.

You know, at, at home, at school you know, we, we got certificates for things, like being the good student, getting the extra attention in our families and communities and schools. So it's like such a subconscious thing that now that we are bringing it up, and, and this is one of the problems when you learn these tools, you're like, Oh my

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goodness, I have control. But then it feels so scary because you didn't even realize that you were out of control because it was just what you did. So let's talk a little bit more about that people pleasing part.

Shelby: So it's so funny because we'll think that we are not stressed out cuz we're just like, Oh, I'm just doing everything for everybody. Everybody needs me. Like, I need to be here for this person and I need to be here, there for this person. But like, what is the driving factor behind being there for everybody and trying to say yes to the bake sale and yes to like this, you know, church activity. All of these different things.

Like you gotta look at what energy source you're using. And if it's fear, of course it's gonna like not feel good while you're doing those things, because you're gonna overextend yourself. That's part of the people pleasing. You don't feel like you can say no to anybody. You're overextending. And so again, like that's depleting your energy because you can't really do anything well when you're using fear as your fuel.

And so part of that, is taking a step back and recognizing, what am I scared of? Like what am I believing that's scary right now that's leading me to people please? And to not say no when I need to say no or to not say yes to me when I need to say yes to me in this way. And so some of those things might be like, Oh, well if I don't do this, like, you know, my kids aren't gonna be happy. That's one that I hear like all the time. Like, I just need my kids to be happy, so I'm just gonna run myself ragged and not care, like I can take care of me later.

Which it doesn't really work that way because you're building a pattern for yourself where you're always putting you last, and then you're like, why am I depleted? Why do I not know what I like to do? Why are my hobbies all going to the side? Like I don't understand this. And it's because you're operating from this fear and trying to do everything for everybody without pouring into yourself first.

I heard this beautiful analogy today where somebody was saying, You don't pour from a full cup, you pour from the overflow. So it's like we need to keep doing those practices that really fill our cup until it's overflowing, and then people will get from the abundance rather than pouring out our full cup and then ours is empty.

Dara: Yeah, I love that. So if you were, because I always make a little handout for everyone in my podcast. Oh, I know. I'm so fun that way. I love that. So if you were to do like your top three tips on how do you, like, first of all, how would you recognize you're in the fond response? And then how do you then move past the people pleasing? Because it really is so ingrained. So what would you say?

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Shelby: So the reason that people are in the fond, like I said, is you're believing something that's fearful, but you're also believing that there's something dangerous here. So it's really like top three tips.

The first one is to really get this full understanding that in this present moment you are safe. Is when you can have your body like believing that and your brain believing that it takes you out of that state. Like you're safe right now. There's no danger that you need to people please your way out of.

And then the second thing is to pay attention to your body. Notice what's coming up because like you said, we get so disconnected from our brains and our bodies and open up to that experience of the fear that you're having and know that fear's there for a reason. Like it keeps us alive. It's a good thing that it's there. We don't wanna never feel afraid. But know that it's safe to feel it in your body. And so open up to that experience and let it just flow through. Like you don't have to let it get stuck and then ramp up until you're just like people pleasing everybody. You're like, I gotta do this for them and I gotta do this for them. Like it's just, it's opening up to, Oh this is coming from me believing something scary.

And the third thing is to really, I've like, I didn't even talk about this one, but I'm gonna put it in there, is to find ways to bring joy into your life. One of the quickest ways to bring yourself back to that aligned nervous system state back to that parasympathetic is to really savor and enjoy what you are doing. And if you don't have those practices like that connecting with community or being with people that you really love, maybe you need to add some of that in and like enjoy and savor that time because it's pretty impossible to be scared and like really enjoy and savor what you're doing at the same time. So those are my top three I would say.

Dara: Yeah. I love it. Okay, so just to add, so with the paying attention to your body, one of the things we do in my program is we play hide and seek with our emotions. That we literally put our hand on our heart and we're like, Okay, where is that feeling? Like, what is the feeling? Because it's so hard. And then I actually have this amazing idea that I'm gonna make for my list. We're gonna have a joy inventory. Is that so fun? In the handout, Make sure you get it. And I want you to write down all the things that bring you joy. And that can be even just like hummingbird coming to your feeder. It could be like that you have your own teeth. Like, like some people you need to like make a stretch. Like it could be, you know, just like listening to the, the wind as it goes through leaves. Like joy, literally, ladies, it is whatever you want it to be.

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Like. I love coconut. I love the smell of coconut. And so I have this like really nice body, better coconut, and I put every time and I'm like, Ooh, this is so, I love this smell, right? Like even something like that, that brings me joy.

Shelby: I'll tell you the thing that brings me the most joy that I say Thank you for every single day: running hot water.

Dara: I know. Aren't you so glad? Some like, I'm sure it was some woman finally was like, Okay, husband, we are done with with buckets and we are done with cold water. Like I'm sure we could figure this out. I'm sure it was like just a lot of really loving women that were like, Yeah, you know what? We can like challenge ourselves even more. I know. I talk about indoor plumbing all the time. I'm like, too. That's amazing. I love it so much. And doing laundry is like a breeze. It's so awesome. You know?

Shelby: We live in such an amazing time, and I just like to remind myself of that.

Dara: Yeah. I know. It's so awesome. Okay. This has been so helpful and so. How do people find you? So remind us, like, again, because people speak, a lot of times people are like quilting or walking. So, but all the show notes will be on my website, but just remind us where they can find you and how you can help people.

Shelby: Awesome. You can find me on my website. It's <https://shelbykhansen.com/> I'm also very active on Instagram, so you can find me there if you are on Instagram. It's Shelby creates a beautiful life. And I also have a podcast too called Creating Your Beautiful Life.

Dara: I love it. Okay, so all of those will be in the link. Shelby, this was so awesome. Thank you so much for spending this time. I love my podcast and I love, like there's women from Singapore that listen to my podcast like it is so cool. It's like going around the world. So this is gonna be so helpful to so many people. So thank you so much for taking this time with us.

Shelby: Mm. I feel so honored.

Dara: All right. Bye.