

## 116. Weight Loss and Gratitude



— WITH DARA TOMASSON —

**FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT**

**With Your Host  
Dara Tomasson**

## 116. Weight Loss and Gratitude

Do you feel like if you hear one more talk about the importance of gratitude, you're going to just throw your arms in the air and walk away? I totally hear you. I'm Dara Tomasson, and this is Love Yourself Thin episode 116, weight loss and gratitude.

Hello everybody. So today's podcast is going to be a combination of practical things you can do to improve the gratitude and then the science behind why you are much happier emotionally and on the cellular level. We're talking the hormonal level when you can have gratitude. And I've got some fun research and I have just a bunch of different ideas about gratitude and Thanksgiving. I live in Canada and we have Thanksgiving earlier than our American neighbors. And so Thanksgiving just happened this past weekend and I spent a lot of time thinking about why we have Thanksgiving and what's so important about that holiday and why so many different countries have Thanksgiving as part of their holidays.

So before I start though, with our practical tools and why it's so important for permanent mental and physical weight loss, I'm going to give you an example of what happens in your life when you start applying these tools and being grateful. So every day at the beginning of all of our calls, I have the ladies share a celebration that they have. And today was really fun. One of my members, she joined the program 12 weeks ago. Tomorrow is actually her official 12 weeks exactly. And she is at 19 pounds down. She went on a two week cruise, which of course, as you know, cruises have all you can eat everything. And she is down 19 pounds and tomorrow she could possibly be down 20. But it's so exciting for her to be able to celebrate that because, you know, she loves food. And she loves being able to eat food and make food. She lives with her son and daughter in law and grandkids. And she's giving a lot of food away because it's just such a habit of hers to make food. And I absolutely love this celebration for her because she's learning what the role of food is, how she's caring for herself, and just that level of joy that she has and gratitude for what she's doing has made such an impact, not only for her right now, but, and especially as she is in retirement, she's able to do so many more things because of her improved health.

So, I'm going to share with you a quote by Amy E. Keller, and she's talking about how gratitude really helps as we move on. So gratitude not only contributes to positive emotions, but it also leads to reduction of negative emotions, which is really interesting. So how can we reduce negative emotions? So Keller she works with business people who are like super like high power business people. And what she does with them is she encourages them to do gratitude exercises before their big meetings. Now I have a client, a potential client who said, Oh, I'm not really into this, like feely you know, this feely stuff. And I said, well, don't worry, the weight loss practices that I teach you are based in science, but we don't always realize the science that goes on behind the scenes with our emotions. And so Keller said, it not only reduces their anxiety but it shifts their attitude toward one of cooperation. Think of what happens when we have that oxytocin kicking in, resulting in more positive and productive interactions, which in turn turns them into a sense of accomplishment. So what do they get? That's right. They get that dopamine, which now improves their overall feelings of satisfaction and self worth.

So I'm curious about your everyday life. Are you creating an environment where you can cultivate gratitude? And she talks about what are ways that you can do that? So there's ideas such as be thankful for the warm cup of tea you're enjoying. I right now, my hands are always, I always feel like they're cold. So I keep a kettle right beside my, off my desk. And I just always have this nice hot water that I can warm my hands. Do you look up and appreciate the roof over your head? Do you notice the small acts of kindness that you forgot to pay attention to? Are you thankful that someone waved your car through at the parking lot? Do you appreciate the friendly customer in line at Starbucks who allowed you to go ahead of them? Are you taking a moment to be

## 116. Weight Loss and Gratitude

grateful that your best friend texted you to see how your headache was? Do you stop to be thankful that your hardworking mother taught you how to work hard.

So these are a bunch of different ways that you can cultivate gratitude in your life. Now, going back to the science of it, there is a Harvard study that talked about, they actually did research on gratitude and how it can make you happier. And especially as you consider the holiday season that's coming up, you know, we have these expectations. When I was a school teacher, I had a student who didn't live with his mom. He lived with his grandparents who were his legal guardians. And he was really angry and really upset that he didn't have the, the typical mom and dad. And you know, you see the Christmas specials and it was really hard. And in fact, we would see a lot of kids, their behavior would escalate at the beginning of December when we started talking about Christmas because they just felt like they were just such losers and they didn't have that kind of happy, cozy life that they saw on all these movies. And so of course, as we know, this time of, coming up is, you know, sadness, anxiety, depression. We didn't have the kind of life that we wanted, or we have regrets that we didn't provide the kind of life that we wanted for our children if we did have children.

And so Harvard decided to do some studies. Now, when you think about gratitude, the root of it is a Latin word of *gracia*, which means grace, graciousness, or gratefulness. And in some ways, gratitude encompasses all these meanings. So gratitude is a thankful appreciation for what an individual receives. So when you're given a gift, are you grateful for it? So with gratitude, people acknowledge the goodness in their lives. In the process, people usually recognize that the source of that goodness lies at least partially outside of themselves. So, as a result, being grateful also helps people connect to something larger than themselves as individuals, whether to other people, nature, or a higher power. So whether you're a Christian or not, or nature, whatever that is to connect to, there's something bigger than us. So as we know, in positive psychology research, gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. I often think about Oprah and how she really brought that gratitude journal out and what a great awareness that was. So gratitude helps us to feel more positive emotions. It helps us to relish good experiences, improve our health, deal with adversity, and build stronger relationships.

Now, I want to go to this research. And I'm reading this from [health.harvard.edu](http://health.harvard.edu). So two psychologists, so Dr. Robert E. Emmons of the University of California and Dr. Michael E. McCullough of the University of Miami. They did some research on gratitude. So one study, they asked all participants to write a few sentences each week, focusing on particular topics. So one group wrote about things they were grateful for that had occurred during the week. A second group wrote about daily irritations or things that had displeased them. And the third group wrote about events that had affected them with no emphasis on one being positive or negative. After 10 weeks, those who wrote about gratitude were more optimistic and felt better about their lives. Surprisingly, they also exercised more and had fewer visits to physicians than those focused on sources of aggravation.

So, here's another study that looked at how being grateful can improve relationships. So there was a study of couples found that individuals who took time to express gratitude for their partner not only felt more positive toward the other person, but also felt more comfortable expressing concerns about their relationship. There was another study from researchers in Pennsylvania who randomly divided university fundraisers into two groups. One group made phone calls to solicit alumni donations in the same way they always had. The second group assigned to work on a different day received a pep talk from the director of annual giving who told the fundraisers she was grateful for their efforts. During the following week, the university employees had heard their message of gratitude made 50 percent more fundraising calls than those who did not.

## 116. Weight Loss and Gratitude

So how do we cultivate gratitude? Well, writing thank you notes definitely can do that. Thanking someone mentally, even if you don't write it down, just thanking them can affect them. We do want to keep a gratitude journal. We want to look at our blessings of the things that we can see have gone right for us. That's going to help us to be more healthy. Definitely, there's a lot of research that shows people who are religious can use prayer to cultivate gratitude and that can affect them. But those who aren't, even this idea of mindfulness of meditation, also focusing on the present moment without judgment that can allow people to feel more peace. And then they can even just be more grateful for things like the sun on their faces. So as we can see here, when you can allow that oxytocin to come in. Oxytocin it's actually a peptide hormone that functions as a neurotransmitter. It plays an important role in various functions including pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and reproduction. It is naturally produced by the body in a brain region known as the hypothalamus and secreted by the pituitary gland. So this hormone also plays an important role as you can imagine in human bonding including the bonding that occurs in maternal and romantic relationship. So after a baby is born that skin to skin contact helps promote the production and release of oxytocin. This is what helps increase the bond between a mother and a baby. In a romantic relationship, same thing, that physical contact, hugging, massaging, kissing, holding hands. That also helps. Now this helps you with when you're nursing a baby, it helps to release that milk let down and you can nurture your baby better with your love, your understanding, your level of that romantic relationship, but it can go even further in those deeper connections.

And there's a lot of research on how oxytocin can help impact anxiety and stress. It can help you with creating a healthier environment for yourself. They even have studies on oxytocin can help improve social communication with children with autism. And it helps you if you're treatment of alcohol, if you're addicted. It helps you with your digestion. When you have gratitude and it releases oxytocin, then you know that that is definitely going to be healing you. And then of course, dopamine, we talked about that physically. So dopamine again, and narrow neurotransmitters are chemical messengers that boost and balance signals between our neurons, right? And so dopamine, what that does is that those neurotransmitters, they go around and they help you to have that dopamine hit. That's why like sugar is like a fake dopamine that helps you to feel better. So dopamine is known as the feel good neurotransmitter and involves in like reward, motivation. So dopamine is what we want to have. We want to feel better. And when we can actually like create that dopamine from inside of really understanding, look at me, I'm doing such a good job. Then we're not relying on this fake dopamine from like a sugar. That's a quick acting. Another one that we get from having gratitude, that internal good feeling is serotonin and serotonin, that helps us with our mood stabilizers, it helps us to overcome depression and OCD because we're able to have that feel good hormone that comes inside.

So, as we talk about Thanksgiving, I want to challenge you in this podcast to really think about what are the practices that you do every day that build you up or tear you down? And my husband always says that the true measure of a human is how they build and how they, they help others to grow. And I often think about that. And I think if I am not giving myself that opportunity to, to focus on the positive, then I'm really giving myself a disservice. Because we know that to be a balanced human we know that we need to have negative and positive. So when the negative comes, we don't have to freak out about it. We can just welcome that. Another quote from Emmons and McCullough and the report that they did in 2004 said, gratitude is associated with a personal benefit that was not intentionally sought after, deserved or earned, but rather because of the good intentions of another person. So thanking others, thanking ourselves, mother nature or God, whoever that is, gratitude is a form that can enlighten the mind and make us feel happier. The benefits of gratitude are endless. And you can really truly do like so many Google searches and you could get lost. It's like I am in this podcast. I could just keep going on and on. There's so many amazing quotes like this one, enjoy the little things for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things, by Robert Brault. Like there's so many amazing...

## 116. Weight Loss and Gratitude

More researchers that talk about how important, like this one here, a survey on gratitude in adult professionals, British psychologist and wellness expert found that 65 out of 100 people selected happiness over health. Although they indicated that both were equally important for a good life. Like this, the importance of gratitude and how it helps us to be more optimistic and all the happiness that can happen. So Zig Ziglar said, gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions.

And so I do want to encourage you. I'm not going to keep going on and on, but I do want you to know that the more gratitude you have, the more you can produce that dopamine and that serotonin, but it comes from the inside. And when the more self sufficient you can be with your gratitude and your happiness, the less need you have to go and grab the food. Recently I was at the Garden of Quilts in Utah and I had one of my clients in my membership, she spent the day with me. So she picked me up and she was in the booth helping me and it was just wonderful. It was awesome. And it was a really long day. She came to pick me up around quarter after eight. She dropped me off at like 9.30 at night. It was such a long day and it was funny when we got in the car I said, oh, I just want to take you and get any sort of ice cream treat you know, like I wanted to treat her and I we just kind of laughed at each other and I just thought of that's such a bad habit thinking you need to have outside food or like buying something to make you feel better when really the inside is where it really comes.

Okay, this is another part of the research that I want to share. But the limbic system is part of the brain that is responsible for all of our emotional experiences. Not ice cream. Not like the treats that I could have bought her or buying her some fabric or something. Because the limbic system, okay, so it can consist of the thalamus, the hypothalamus, the amygdala, the hippocampus, and the cingulate gyrus. Studies have shown that hippocampus and the amygdala, the two main sites regulating emotions, memory, and bodily function, get activated with feelings of gratitude. And then Wang and associates, they did a study that conducted on individuals seeking mental health guidance revealed that participants of the group who wrote letters of gratitude besides their regular counseling sessions felt better and recovered sooner.

There is no end to this theory. So I am so glad that you are listening to this episode. But I hope that you go on your own tangent. I hope that you put this practice into being of like, I'm going to try this. I'm going to do some sort of daily practice of gratitude, or even when I'm doing the dishes, that's when I just say, I'm grateful for this, this, and this, right? Just letting yourself. Oprah Winfrey said, be thankful for what you have and you end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you'll never have enough. So let's really allow ourselves to have Thanksgiving all year long and as you approach your life with more gratitude, you're going to find that it's going to will truly impact your mental and physical weight. And as I always invite you, I want to hear from you what, what has happened when you do that? All right, my friends, I have an amazing day. Thank you so much for like, I am truly grateful that you listen to this podcast and that you share it. It means so much to me. Alright, take care. Bye bye.