

126. Weight Loss and the Long Game



— WITH DARA TOMASSON —

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

**With Your Host
Dara Tomasson**

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Do you feel like you've been playing the long game on weight loss for so long and you've failed so many times that you've given up on weight loss? Well, I really want you to listen to this podcast episode because today I'm going to be talking to you about the long game and why our nervous system has so much to do with permanent weight loss. Are you ready? I'm Dara Tomasson, and this is Love Yourself Thin episode 126 Weight Loss and the Long Game.

When we talk about weight loss I think we can all agree that we all know how to lose weight. If we were to have a competition right now, and I was to give a prize of the person who could lose 20 pounds in you know, 60 days or something, you could figure it out. You could do keto for a while. You could do some fasting. You could go to Jenny Craig or do some herbal stuff. Like you could figure it out. I know you could because you've done it in the past. The problem is it's not sustainable. And so as I went down that journey of perimenopause and gaining this weight and feeling completely out of control, the thing that changed the game for me was learning the power of my brain. Now, I always knew that my brain was really important, and I've actually optimized my brain in so many ways, by raising my kids, by being a school teacher, by running a long arm quilting business, by writing books, like all the things. And I felt like I did a really good job at mastering my brain and learning how to overcome significant difficulties and stresses. But with weight loss, it felt like it was completely out of my control and I felt like I needed to have a personal trainer, a personal chef. I needed someone to tell me what to do all the time because clearly I was so unsuccessful and it just felt awful. And so when I got a life coach, I was just amazed at what happened in my brain when I was able to learn to go inside my brain to dissect what was happening, not to be afraid anymore and to see what I was already doing that was awesome and then relate that to weight loss.

Now one of the problems we have with weight loss and our situation where we gain a bunch of weight and then we lose a bunch of weight and then we put it back on and it feels so terrible and awful. One of the things you're missing in this puzzle is your ability to look at what's going on inside your body. Now we have our nervous system and I'm going to go to this excellent article written by a neurosurgeon and I love when really smart people can put something into a very simple way. So this is from the Mayo Clinic I will link it of course to the show notes, but I wanted to just kind of give you a little summary and I feel like Dr. Sharma does a better job than I do and I just like the way that new way of kind of looking at it And this week in my lifetime membership, we've been talking about the nervous system and the role that it plays in permanent weight loss. So I'm going to read kind of his description of that, and then I'm going to share with you my take on it. And then I'm going to share some thoughts on ways that you can change the way you're looking at the way you're thinking, the way that you're interacting with your own body. And when you do that, you are going to create so much more success for being able to lose the weight and keeping that weight off. And you never have to worry about the weight coming back on because you have much better skills, tools, and information. When you know better, you do better. And just like one of my clients said, she said, you don't know what you don't know. And so I love that you're here at this podcast and you're listening.

So this is how he describes it; "The nervous system is a complex and wide reaching network of nerve cells called neurons. Their connections called synopsis reach all areas of our body. The nervous system receives and relay sensory information like vision, sound, smell, taste, touch, and pain. The nervous system is fragile. It can be damaged, and it heals with great difficulty, if at all." So think about if you touch this is me talking now, if you touch something hot, you have a neurological response. Your neurons say, this is dangerous, this is not good, so our nervous system has several roles. And so first of all, we have what's called sensory input. So if there was a spider climbing down your arm, your skin will say, alert, there's something happening. You need to pay attention. So then you go to the next phase. of integration. Like, what do you do with that information? So

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you look at the spider, you say, okay, the spider is on my arm. Do I want that spider to stay on my arm? If I swat that spider away, will he bite me or whatever. And so we now have to think about what to do. And then the third part of this is our motor output so it's saying okay use the right hand to swipe the spider off the left arm or off your leg and then you're interacting with the nervous system saying what you're gonna do and what you're not gonna do.

Now the other piece of this is the central nervous system, of course, is our brain. And our brain is always in charge of everything that's going on. And so we have our peripheral nervous system, which will help us with our sensory and our motor systems and within that motor system, we have the somatic and the automatic. So the automatic is our heartbeats, our lungs are pumping, our food is digesting, like we don't have to think about it, but our somatic system that is broken into two parts. That's the sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system. Now, parasympathetic nervous system, think about a parachute so when you jump out of a plane and you have the, the parachute opens and it slows everything down and you can arrive safely. Now, the primary function of the sympathetic nervous system is to keep your body safe from danger. So when you perceive a threat, your sympathetic nervous system helps prepare your body and mind for impending danger. This is known as your stress response. So we've got that fight, flight, or freeze kind of response, okay? And then your parasympathetic nervous system slows everything down, just like the parachute does, and says, Is this something we actually need to worry about? Is this something that we need to spend time worrying about?

Now, it's interesting. So, I have a rental property and my mom lives in the main part of it and then I have a suite that's part of the house and then there's a roommate that lives with my mom. And she moved in recently and apparently there was a few spiders in the house. She, she kind of has like a separate living area in the basement and she shares the kitchen and the upstairs shower. And she messaged me with, with a lot of fear. So her sympathetic nervous system was in high gear. . Her sympathetic nervous system was on overdrive and she didn't allow for the parasympathetic nervous system to help inform her that she is much bigger and in fact I even went over because she messaged me several times and reassured her that these spiders their jaws aren't strong enough to really injure her. She's going to be okay. And just reassuring her that she's not in any danger.

And so the reason we were talking about our nervous system is that when we don't have good coping strategies, what do we end up doing? We end up turning to food or we end up not paying attention to our body. So when we are eating food, we're overeating. Now, let me go back to Dr Sharma who was talking about the nervous system. He said, "the nervous system is fragile. It can be damaged and it heals with great difficulty, if at all. This affects the brain's ability to communicate with our muscles and sensory organs. Nervous system injuries can be painful and cause weakness, tingling, numbness, and even changes in blood circulation. All the neurons in your body start and end in your brain or spinal cord. The brain and spinal cord make up the central nervous system, which is usually what first comes to mind for many people. So, think about how in tune are you with your body? How well do you take care of your body? Or how well do you listen to your body? So then he continues "the peripheral nervous system on the other hand connects the central nervous system with your internal organs muscles and sensory tissues. These nerves fire muscles, sense temperature and control your heart lungs and other involuntary functions essential to life. To put it simply neurons are like electrical wires that are lined on the outside outside by special cells that provide insulation. Each neuron has a head called the cell body and a long tail called an axon. The head is connected to the spinal cord or brain and the tail connects to a muscle organ."

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One of the reasons I'm also talking about this is really connecting you to understand how the brain and the body are very connected. A lot of women who struggle with weight loss are very disconnected with their bodies. And when you're disconnected from your body, you're not paying attention to those signals that the body is sharing. So for example, if you have back aches or if you have arthritis or if you have these certain kinds of aches and pains, it's your body's way of trying to get your attention to say, Hey girl, slow down, things aren't going well. So, a lot of women who have pain or discomfort, a lot of it comes from us not paying attention to ourselves, not paying attention to our emotions and not allowing ourselves to slow down and see what's going on. There's two books that I will link in the show notes and they talk about our back pains and how if we can pay attention to what our fears are and really look at that, we can actually heal our back without having to have certain surgeries.

So let's talk about our ability to be connected to our body. When you see the connection to understanding our stress responses, understanding what's happening, then we're not needing to turn to the food to quiet our mind. Now this brings up another point of when we had childhood trauma. Now, trauma is, according to Brianna Weist, such a very well informed expert in this area. She says anytime you felt afraid and you didn't know how to solve that. That was traumatic. So that's why a lot of our traumas come from when we were little kids because when we were little kids, we didn't have the coping strategies. We didn't have those ways of seeing what was really going on. And we didn't feel very empowered because as kids, we were dependent on adults to help us with all of the things. And so if we have a lot of fear in our body and don't know how to deal with it, then we tend to try to disconnect from our body. And one of the way we vacate our body is through overeating. And some women even, they under eat because they don't really know how to feel their feelings. And so if they have that feeling of starvation, it is a way to kind of feel something.

When I was a school teacher, I took a group of kids skiing and there was a young, I think she was about 14 and I didn't even realize that teenagers did this, but she slashed her wrist, not her wrist, her skin. And so it is a common, thing that kids do when they're feeling out of control. So they, they use a blade and they feel powerful because when they slash their skin, they actually feel something, they feel pain, and then they see the blood and it feels good, kind of like some form of, of power, just like with anorexia or bulimia. It's like a way of trying to control their environment where they don't feel like they're in control. So all of this comes together because we are finally putting together the clues of what's actually happening when you're overeating. And when you're turning to the food all of the time for some form of pleasure.

So when we think about our nervous system and we think about what it means to play the long game, I want you to spend some time being honest with yourself. How often are you actually available to yourself? How often do you spend most of your time just being busy? You know, you talk about being a human doing or a human being. So are you constantly just doing everything for everyone else? How uncomfortable is it for you to spend time with yourself doing something you want to do? How much easier is it for you to say to yourself, well, I'm just so busy. I'll deal with that later. After Christmas, I'll take care of that. After this thing, I'll take care of it. And the problem is you are always putting things off. So you never get to the root of what's going on.

Now we have made short term goals and long term goals. And of course this episode is coming to you right before New Year's on December the 20th, right before Christmas. And so as you are going through your, your holiday bustle and preparing all of the things, I want this podcast to kind of sit in your brain because remember what I always say about your higher brain is a CEO and it always wants to solve problems for you. It's always wanting the best for you. So as you think about this concept of your nervous system, how safe do you feel in

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your body? How much trust do you have with yourself? How willing are you to be open with yourself? And if you find yourself buffering from yourself all the time, of course it doesn't feel good. Of course it feels scary. Of course it's a struggle. And the more that we can be honest and loving and compassionate and creating that safety in our own body, the more that we can feel safe just being with ourselves, we don't always have to be buzzing around doing everything for everyone else. We can sit with ourselves. We can go out on the porch and have a nice drink of herbal tea. We can reflect on our day. We can you know, talk to ourselves and give ourselves credit for the things that we loved about ourselves and things. And we can really be having that level of kindness.

And I'm really glad that you're listening to this podcast and I really am glad that you are being open to thinking about your relationship with food and body in a new way because unless you create safety in your own body at that cellular level, you are not going to change. Nothing will change. You will just keep doing the same thing, hoping to get different results. And the problem is you keep looking to all these other experts for them to give you the, like I call it the magic ticket, right? The golden ticket like in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. The problem is the only way that you are going to have success with your own weight loss is when you finally, take control of you. You become your own CEO of your life people can give you suggestions people can give you help and guidance and you know you can have a coach like me that will show you your thoughts that you can't see for yourself and then you can make a decision if that's the way you want to keep acting or not.

So as you start considering, what do you want next year to look like? Who do you want to be in 2024? What is the mark that you want to leave? And as you reflect on 2023, what are the things in 2023 that you're super proud of? And what are the things that you keep saying, I'll do it later. I'll do it later. And you've never done it. So, I want to hear from you, I'm here for you, and I'm really excited for you to come and listen to episode 127, where we're talking all about growing pains. All right, can't wait to hear all your input from my podcast. Remember, I love connecting with you so much. Go and follow me on Instagram, message me what you got out of this. I can't wait to hear from you. Bye bye.