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Megan [00:00:06] Before we get started with today's episode, I would like to quickly read you our podcast disclaimer.

[00:00:13] This podcast is for educational purposes only and it is not a substitute for professional care by a doctor or other qualified medical professional. You should always speak with your physician or other healthcare professionals before doing any fasting, changing your diet in any way, taking or adjusting any medications or supplements, or adopting any treatment plan for a health problem.

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[00:01:13] All right. And now we'll get started with today's episode.

[00:01:19] Hi, everyone. It's Megan Ramos here, and we're back with another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. Today, I'm joined by my lovely co-host, Dr. Terri Lance. Terri, how are you doing?

Terri [00:01:30] I'm doing great, Megan. Good to be here, bright and early, talking with you. How are you doing?

Megan [00:01:37] Well, I've got to apologize if I cough. Everybody who's listening, I know it can be so annoying because my house has just been filled with coughing for the last three weeks, but we're just getting over COVID and we've got a pretty hearty case of it over here. So my apologies to the listeners, but I'm finally starting to feel better just in time for Christmas, which is great [laughs] because my Thanksgiving was totally down the toilet with this respiratory thing.

Terri [00:02:07] Well, I'm glad that you're starting to feel better. And we have the magical Daisy editing, so she may be able to take out any coughing that happens. [laughter]

Megan [00:02:17] Well, we'll test her superpowers with today's episode. [laughter]

[00:02:22] So today, we thought we would talk about this week that we constantly hear just complete and total dread from our Community members about the week between Christmas and New Year's. And part of our messaging today is that it is a week, and what we really need to be focused on is not the week between Christmas and New Year's, but the time between New Year's and Christmas. Terri, what are your thoughts on this conundrum that comes up every year as we go into this holiday week?

Terri [00:02:56] I was kind of laughing this morning, Megan, thinking about what to say in this episode because I feel like I can sum it up in one or two sentences and I'm just going to keep saying it. But the idea that one week, one day, one weekend, one event, none of these things can ruin your journey. They can slow you down, they can be a hurdle, they can be a speed bump, but they only become a complete reversal of everything if you allow them to continue in the wrong direction. So learning how to see it as one week, see it as one weekend, one day, one meal, one event, whatever it is, rather than it is the start of

your demise because most of us have experienced, we have allowed these things to become our downfall. And so that's the big mindset piece that I hope that people will work on this year.

Megan [00:03:57] Something that I think people also struggle with is this all-or-nothing mindset and I know we've touched base on it on a recent podcast, but I really think going into the week ahead that we need to discuss it and bring it up another time. And, you know, many of you listening, you're doing a pretty intensive therapeutic intermittent fasting, you know - two 48s a week, three 42s, or a combination of three 24s to 42s - and that's intensive. And when we can't do that, we just feel that there's nothing that we can do and we've got to revert back to our old ways - this all-or-nothing, go-big-or-go-home type of mentality.

[00:04:00] And I mean, I've been there. I can relate to my earlier experiences with that, but we've got to reframe things and try to look at things differently. You know, it might not be that, "Hey, I can't do this intensive fasting this week," to, "What can I do that can still keep me moving forward?" "So what are all these foundational things that Megan and Terri and Nadia are always talking about?"

[00:05:08] You know, we've really tried to hit home the message of TRE just being the most critical thing. And it truly is. Like, I've worked with so many people that will fast like maniacs but don't practice TRE and they just are constantly treading water, they're barely inching forwards. The TRE practice is just so critical. So doing that for a week and practicing that. And I'll often tell people, you know, doing a five-day fast - sure, that's cool, like, people want to celebrate that. And, sure, if you can do one and you do one, that's great, but it's so much harder to do TRE. It's so much harder. So if you really want to blow my socks off in a Community meeting or in a client call, I want to hear about your week of super awesome TRE. Anybody can do a five-day fast, but doing a week of really well-controlled TRE, like, that is gold-star work. So I think, you know, this is a great period of time to practice that and just to see how much great progress you can make doing TRE, or at the very least maintain during this crazy time of the year when the foods are a little bit more out of our control.

Terri [00:06:22] I think that's so important, Megan, that oftentimes people use words like 'just' and 'only' when they're referring to shorter fasts or TRE. They make it sound like that it's such a minimal effort that it doesn't even count, like they get no credit for it, but they're not giving themselves credit for it. As you said, it's actually so foundational we've had several episodes specifically focused on it, so it's super important and challenging to do.

[00:06:54] And I can think of, over the past few holiday seasons, I've had people come back in January, and I know they were really nervous and I stopped seeing them maybe end of October, early November, as the holidays were really ramping up. And they came back in January and they said, "Terri, I didn't gain any weight this year." I said, "Well, how did you do that?" And they start talking about like, "I don't know, because I did eat this and I ate all of these things and I even had these." And I ask about their TRE and they said, "Oh yeah, I did TRE all of the time. I never ate more than two meals on any of those days." And you can see the light bulb go off over their head. Like, they finally get it. It isn't just the food that they're eating, it's the frequency. And if they can work on that and keep that reined in, the holiday doesn't have to be a time where they unravel.

Megan [00:07:51] My first Christmas doing full, straight, perfect eating, I'll say, but I let myself eat for days. My husband had just moved to Canada (As strange as that might

sound, we weren't living together in the same country.) and I knew there was going to be a lot of temptation for both of us. And I just didn't want to start his journey in Canada, you know, on the wrong footing when it came to our lifestyle. So I went out and bought all of the great things. And then what did we do is we ate ten hours a day for seven days straight [laughs] and we gained four pounds each. It was pretty wild.

[00:08:35] And at that point I was a newbie to this lifestyle. I had practiced good TRE the holiday before, and the foods were perhaps not, you know, all of my foods, but I still did very well and I lost weight during that particular time. So we just don't give these principles, these basics, of fasting and this way of eating-- we don't give it a lot of love and we really need to embrace it during this holiday season.

[00:09:07] And then, so many of us, you know, we have a meal that goes sideways. We're all human. I've been there, I'm sure, Terri, you've been there, you know, Nadia's been there, our whole team. Right? It's a journey for all of us and what we need to remember is that it's not a failure, it's a lesson. So what did we learn from this? And this is just so critical with the people that I work with, is that if you just dwell on what you wish didn't happen then you're not going to learn from it and be able to apply it moving forwards. So you had that holiday work party and you were not in control of the foods, you were rushing around getting ready for your own holiday celebrations and you didn't have time to eat that fatty meal before showing up, so you show up hungry. And a lot of these foods that you're trying not to have, they're so much more tempting and you end up diving into them and feeling awful the next day, not just physically, but mentally and emotionally. And it's just like, okay. You know, so instead of just focusing on, "I blew it, so now this whole week's going to be blown," or, "I'll just start again in January." Don't do that to yourself. You know, think, "Hey, okay, I had an experience and I can learn from it. And that learning is great because it will help me next time. So what can I learn from it? Okay, well, maybe if I was really busy, maybe next time I can bring some cold bacon in the car, I can eat an avocado in the car, some hardboiled eggs or something," or, "I can just grab some dark chocolate and put it in my bag or my, you know, significant other's bag, so when I'm really tempted by some of the desserts and pastries, I've got that dark chocolate to go to. And no one will really know because everybody else there is eating stuff. But I've got something that I can learn." Or when you show up to these events, "No, I know I'm hungry. I'm going to go straight towards the vegetables and the meat and those type of things, and I'm going to make sure I start my eating there."

[00:11:16] We can always learn from that. If we don't learn, then we're never going to be able to improve the situation the next time. And these are constant things that are going to be brought up, not just at the December holidays but throughout the rest of the year. People really expect to have this perfect, linear journey of success, and that's not it. It's a very squiggly line with ups and downs. You want to be trending in the right direction, but how you get to your goal is really taking the lessons that are learned and applying them.

[00:11:50] And celebrating those lessons. It's like, "Okay, I'll learn what to do next time at a holiday party when I show up hungry and there's a lot of temptation and I get to try that next time." Then next time you make different choices and you feel better. And that's really how we make progress. There's no magic supplement that you can take. There's no magic protocol that you can do. You've got to live this and you've got to apply it to your life and you've got to learn from your experiences, and then you've got to apply those lessons as future events pop up.

Terri [00:12:29] I think another really important piece of that concept that you were just talking about, of learning from it and how to apply it in your life, is the idea of, as you mentioned, things are going to happen. There are going to be meals that you didn't plan to eat and you ate because, you know, it just fit better into your schedule or you had no control over what the food choices were. And I always talk then about the idea of recovery - how you bounce back from that. And you highlighted this, Megan, that most of us still struggle with a mindset that says, "Oh, I ate something that was off track. Now my whole day is ruined." "Now my whole week is ruined." "Now all of December is ruined." "Now all of 2022 is ruined." Instead of saying, "Okay, I ate a meal," or, "I had a weekend," or even, "I had a week that was off track. How do I get back on track?"

Terri [00:13:26] Again, going back to those basic skills, "Oh, I'm going to do some fat-fasting foods today because I was really off-track yesterday." So rather than seeing it as, "It's ruined," because part of our brain does this, it convinces you that it's okay to keep going down that negative path because you've already started down that negative path.

[00:13:48] And if you think about other areas in our lives, we don't do that. If you have been overspending money, you don't say, "Well, it's okay. I already started to. I have to finish it out now and just spend all my money." No, you recognize, "Okay. I spent too much last month. No guilt, no shame. What do I do today? What do I plan this week? How do I budget now?"

[00:14:11] And anyone in our Community or who has listened to me anywhere probably knows, I always use this analogy that I borrowed from Molly Carmel. It's the idea of while you're driving, you hit a, you know, some kind of-- you go over some nails or something and you get a flat tire. So this is you going to that holiday party and eating wildly off course. You recognize you have a flat tire. The ideal thing to do is to go back to the car, go to the trunk, get the tire-repair kit and the jack, or get your phone and call the auto-repair service that can come meet you there and fix your flat tire. And then you just keep going in your journey. That's recovering. But what many of us have learned to do with our dietary strategies is we say, "Oh, I'm really off course. I've got a flat tire." We go back to the trunk of our car and we get out the big machete and we come out and we slash the other three tires. Now we can't go anywhere. Now we feel defeated. Now we see this old messaging of failure seeping into us versus, "I'm going to fix the flat tire. That was yesterday. I'm good. I know what to do today. Today is a fat-fasting day," or, "Today, I'm going to do three meals because I'm really off track and I need to help my body reset."

[00:15:41] So recovering is such a huge part and we don't have to wait until January to recover. If you have a holiday party tonight, you can recover tomorrow. There's no need to wait. There's no need to write it off. And I know we already talked about that topic, but I just see that, you know, like you said, people just start to unravel with it because of these events that are happening. And the more you can see it as, "If I'm off track, okay, I can accept that. How do I get back on track? How do I recover?"

Megan [00:16:15] Something that I've found always works for clients is talking to them about the concept of consistency really just sort of being key for success. So let's talk about what consistency throughout this particular week looks like, and let's come up with some definitions. So it's going to be different for everyone, but sort of the standard one would be, okay, consistency can be good TRE. Consistency can be having something that went off-road, identifying lessons to learn, and starting to implement those lessons right away as the holiday parties progress throughout the week. And that leads to consistently strengthening, you know, your fasting muscle and health muscle and just moving forwards.

Consistency, too, can be planning what it is that you're eating at the holidays where you're aware, and having that plan so you're going in already understanding what it is that you're going to eat and how you're going to eat it. So we've talked about plating strategies in recent episodes, starting with the protein, fat, and fiber. If you eat them first, saving any starches or sugars for the end. But just planning out what this looks like and what this meal is going to look like. Reaching out to the hosts, as we've talked about, bringing things that doesn't sound like something is going to be there, but reframing it into (not that it is that you don't have food that I'll eat or a lot of it), "Hey, can I help you out and bring my famous Brussels-sprout dish?" And that's usually welcome rather than criticism.

[00:17:51] So we try to redefine what consistency looks like this week and actually put some thoughts, you know, to pen and paper. And so there is a game plan going into this week. I know it can be a really sort of chaotic week, especially if you've got kids or you're traveling with family. I get that it's busy, but, you know, throughout the rest of the year, we come up with a plan. You know, we come up with a fasting plan for that week, we come up with a nutritional strategy for that week. We can still do a modified version of that for this week so we can stay somewhat consistent throughout the holiday period so, you know, we're not starting January over, or fresh, or just deferring things. We've created some goals that are attainable, that lead to that consistency, and we know that we can complete those goals.

[00:18:43] And, you know, for some people, it's to, you know, keep it to one treat at each holiday dinner and make sure that they're keeping that treat to the end. And for some people, those foods are not foods that they're going to be engaging in. So it can be different for everybody, but what always works is planning, planning for what's ahead. And if you do have holiday parties, you know, planning the meals that you can eat at home around it. Or just in anticipation, you know, "Okay, I'm going to have a holiday meal and it's a crazy, stressful time. Then the next day I'm going to start my day off with a nice big, fatty breakfast - smoked salmon, avocado, eggs. And I'm going to make sure I'm setting the tone for the next day."

[00:19:27] So doing this meal planning, this meal-timing planning, and setting a few goals that you know you can be consistent with, that can really boost your success, your confidence throughout the week, and, really, you know, letting you start the New Year off on such a great footing.

Terri [00:19:43] I like that, Megan, the idea that consistency just looks different this week. And you used a word in there that is running through my mind now - modification. It makes me think of times when I've been in maybe a fitness class or doing some type of a workout program, and they do some things that physically I'm unable to do. I've had frozen shoulder, so the person that I was working out with needed to give me some modifications. We didn't just say, "Okay, you just don't work out because you have frozen shoulders." We said, "Okay, you still need to work out. You still need to get your body moving. How can you do that in a way that's feasible for you?" Years ago I was in a CrossFit class and I could not do standard pushups and he said, "That's okay," and he put a couple of weight plates on the ground so that I only had to come down a few inches. But I could participate then in the class. I didn't just leave. I could modify what was happening so that it fit me.

[00:20:45] So thinking about modifying your plan, like you said earlier. If you've been doing a really intense, therapeutic fasting protocol the last couple of months, you're probably going to want to modify that this week. Make it something that's doable. Hop into what Nadia, Coach Nadia, refers to as a 'holding pattern'. And that goes back to, as you've been

saying, our basic skills, our TRE, our fat-fasting foods. Using the strategies that we know, but modifying your overall plan so that it fits the reality of what this week looks like for you.

Megan [00:21:26] I think something that people have a really hard time dealing with is that they have been told that it's all their fault, that it's their problem, it's their behaviors, it's their mentality, it's their actions, it's everything. "You are overweight and unhealthy because it is your fault." Just like there was an election that happened recently in the US for a state senator, and one of the senators wants to work on some insulin price control and the opponent said, "No, just make better choices." And it was just so disheartening for someone who works on their side. It's like, well, stop giving them awful, awful information. Do you think anybody wants to spend \$1,000 a month on insulin? Do you think anybody wants to poke themselves once to four times a day? Do you think anyone wants to be bound to this medication that needs to be refrigerated, that causes weight gain, that increases the risk of heart disease? Nobody wants to do that. So maybe stop giving them such awful advice. My heart just broke for the people in this state, and especially those who that person represented their party because he was just saying, "Oh, no, if you're on insulin, that's because there's a problem with you."

[00:22:48] And it's just like the information is so bad. You are not here because there's something wrong with you. You have been given some really terrible advice. And unfortunately, due to doctors who just don't know a whole lot better, or government organizations who don't know a whole lot better, they blamed you for it, but you've been given bad advice. We have all been there. Those of you who are listening, you know you followed the advice that was given to you. You have spent thousands of dollars. You have been dieting since you were nine years old. You did everything that you were told to lose weight and you never did because we're just focusing on the wrong things - this whole 'calories in, calories out', energy deficit, move more - and we're following all of these diets that were the exact same, just labeled differently. They're all the same. Some of them count points, some of them flat out count calories, some of them are shakes and smoothies and juices, some of them are preplanned meals. They're all based on low-calorie principles, and it's insanity doing the same thing over again and expecting different results. But that's what the mainstream tells us to do, and then they make us feel bad about it. But this is not your fault. You're not here and you're not on this journey because it is your fault. We were given awful, awful advice.

[00:24:08] In fact, they just released some new guidelines for women and infants (particularly around pregnant and nursing women) and it's just like, oh, my goodness. We're seeing this epidemic of kids under the age of ten with type two diabetes and most of them are around seven or eight. Now we're going to start seeing it under five with some of this advice. The advice is awful. So it's not your fault.

[00:24:33] So when we have a meal that might have some holiday traditions in our family and we haven't quite worked out what our relationship with that is yet, or we eat some of these foods that were older foods that are no longer our foods, we always feel like such failures, but, you know, none of this is your fault, none of this. So we've just got to learn from the lessons and modify the behaviors moving forwards.

[00:24:59] There's just so much blame and all of you listening have been so blamed by mainstream and you know you're doing everything right. I took a year and dedicated it to doing everything right, and the end result was type two diabetes and nearly 60 pounds of weight gain. So it's all wrong. The advice is wrong. It's not your fault. So give yourself some extra love this holiday season and just really focus on, you know, sort of changing

that mentality. What can you learn? How can you apply it moving forwards? And, you know, how can you keep moving forwards?

Terri [00:25:38] I think that's such an important piece - accepting your decisions and not feeling guilt or shame because you've been blamed, because you've been told that it's just your fault, it's a weakness in you. So many of us have learned to think that way, that if I decide to have a dessert at this holiday party, it's my fault. "This is why I can't lose weight." And getting into that mindset is not going to set us up well for the decisions we're going to make tomorrow and the next day and the next day. We're going to feel defeated. We're going to feel stuck, and we're not going to see a way out of it. So working on getting out of that mindset of, "This is why I fail. This is why this won't work for me." Instead, to say, "It's okay that I'm making this choice right now."

[00:26:33] And, honestly-- and I know people in our Community and clients that I work with in coaching sometimes will say, "You know, maybe I should never let myself have those things." And you know, then you hear all these things about life is short. And if celebrating that holiday and having that traditional food or something is going to help you feel good in that moment, honestly feel good, I don't want people carrying around guilt and shame about that. Carrying around the guilt and shame, shoulding on ourselves, tends to make those decisions continue down a problematic path versus make the decision, enjoy that celebration, enjoy that food, and work right into your recovery process afterward. You don't have to carry it over with you in a negative way. We've all been, as you said, shamed and blamed for way too long. We don't need to do that to ourselves.

Megan [00:27:33] Something I think people struggle with a lot this week are traditions that are around foods. We had them in my family and I constantly hear-- even the other day talking to a woman who is pregnant, with gestational diabetes, "We all get together for baking sugar cookies. So does that mean I shouldn't eat anything while we're baking?" And it's just-- it's a real journey, I think. I'm struggling to try to find the words here, but I think it's just, it's a real journey and evolution as to what those traditions are and what they mean to you.

[00:28:10] During the start of one's journey, or even the first few years, you're very tied to these traditions and these foods and you're trying to move away from them as being 'your foods', but you're not quite there yet. But what I've found, at this point in the journey when we haven't really sort of separated ourselves and our foods from these things quite yet, is that just having a plan. When it comes to them going into that family baking session, you know, with a plan, "Okay, I'm going to eat one or two fatty meals before I go and I'm going to bring X, Y and Z things like maybe some olives, maybe some meat, maybe some cheese, something that is still an indulgence for me that I wouldn't necessarily just have in the afternoon, but at least I can go to that so I'm not nibbling on, say, these cookies that we're baking with everybody. And then, you know, if I'm going to have one, I'll have one, but I have all of this other stuff, all these great fatty foods to lean into while I'm doing it." So coming up with sort of these different strategies, not just showing up to, say like, a holiday baking session totally, you know, unprepared for what that is going to look like for you.

[00:29:26] And then as we really start to separate ourselves from these foods (and I find this usually takes a few holiday periods when we really celebrate), then, you know, working on those traditions. So something in my family was baking with my grandmother and my female cousins. It was a thing and I had to modify that. It's like, "Okay, I'm going to bring these foods for me to have so I'm not just stuffing my face with shortbread cookies, but I'll let myself have one at the end of it all." And that worked for me. And then, you know, she

passed and things changed and I was the oldest and it was just like, "I don't enjoy that anymore. I don't want this for my cousins." I had entered a new sort of mentality and mindset about how I wanted my relationship with these foods. So I talked to my cousins and I'm like, "Hey, you know we're leaving out the guys here, first of all. Let's just do something all together. We're getting older. It's not like we see each other at grandma's on Sundays anymore. Let's do a games night so everybody can be included and make it fun." I gave them these, you know, stocking stuffers of scratch tickets and people would win \$10. It's super exciting for an 18-year-old. [laughs] And we would have good food and we would play games. And that became our new tradition. And shifting that or, you know, even with family now, like, we have a nephew and, you know, there's the whole desire to want to build gingerbread houses. So I bought a Lego gingerbread house for us to do that together. And make sure that there's more healthier treats for when they're around rather than the traditional Christmas stuff.

[00:31:13] So there's different ways to sort of shift these traditions. So I just kind of randomly segwayed this topic, Terri, [laughter] onto traditions. So I'll throw it over to you because I think you've got a lot of great words of wisdom about managing these traditions during this week.

Terri [00:31:30] I think what you just described is a nice way to look at it - working on new traditions. And they might not all happen this year, it might take time to develop them and even spot where you need new traditions.

[00:31:43] And I think the other piece, it's just a reminder to people to really focus on what is this event about for you? And unfortunately, we have learned to focus it so much on the food, the specialness of the food. And so to really focus on, like you did, "I want to spend time with these cousins. I want to laugh together. I want to talk about old memories and things." I had a client talk about, as she's been going through this journey and also trying to help her adult children and grandchildren not go down the path she went down, they started doing games at family gatherings, not board games, but like physical games, like outdoor running and doing things and, I don't know, scavenger hunts and things because it's really just about laughing and enjoying each other's company.

[00:32:33] So I encourage people to consider looking at their traditions and moving them away from the food into some other things. And even if the food is still there, because other people are holding onto it, working internally to make that celebration about something more significant to you than the food. Decreasing the power that that food has over you.

[00:32:58] There is a Christmas treat that my mom loved. I always thought they tasted kind of gross, but because they were something she really liked, I would always eat them. And after she died, every time I go shopping around the holidays, I always see these treats and I think, "Oh, should I get them?" And then I realize my memories and the holiday things with my mom are not tied up in that food. I can relive those memories without chewing on that food to spark it.

[00:33:32] So if you have nostalgic kinds of traditions and food traditions that feel emotionally loaded for you, I hope you'll give yourself some time this holiday season to acknowledge the memories, the feelings, the relationships that you want to be able to acknowledge and start to disconnect them from food that harms you, giving it less power.

[00:34:00] I can see those now and think of fun things. I can think of my mom liked to put the icicles on the tree one by one, and my brother and sister would just throw handfuls at a time onto the tree. So when I see those treats now, I laugh about something like that, but I don't need to buy a bag of them and eat them to get those feelings.

[00:34:22] So starting to work on, this holiday season, disconnecting the emotional ties to things and to connect it to things that actually support you during this season.

Megan [00:34:35] There was a period of time throughout my journey and throughout most of the people I've worked with who've been really successful for this where we've just sought out so much enjoyment and comfort and just sort of our overall delight and zest for life through food and our relationships with food. And it's not that I want anyone to go through a period of time where food isn't something to be enjoyed (we don't want to associate it with negativity), but it's really about identifying those feelings, or the reasons why you might need to feel those things, and look for other outlets to find that enjoyment and comfort and excitement.

[00:35:17] And it's people who really, I think, focus on this that are able to make a lot of headway. You should enjoy every meal that you have, and there are certain foods you'll really learn to enjoy. I went from, you know, plugging my nose when anyone made Brussels sprouts around the house to learning how to make them better, and that's all I want to eat all the time. So, you know, your relationship with these foods will change and evolve, but it's really about finding these other outlets and, you know, so it's to speak to the traditions. You know, finding ways you can really connect with people that your love doesn't need to be around food. Even in partner relationships, you know, certain spouses of partners will say, "That mealtime with my significant other or person in my household, I mean, that's when we really connect." Okay. Well, you know, if you're not going to be eating a couple times a week when you're doing more therapeutic fasting, what are other ways that you can connect? So we talk about board games and puzzles in wintertime or picking up a hobby together that's separate. In the summertime, going for walks and connecting with friends in nature versus at restaurants.

[00:36:27] And I think we need to apply sort of the same lessons to the holidays. You know, how can we connect with people and get what we want doing things that aren't necessarily food related? And if I'm seeking comfort in food during the holidays, what is it that I'm really looking for? And what else can bring me joy?

[00:36:47] So we've got some holiday visitors coming and the morning after they arrive and my husband's going to take them around to get them a little bit situated, do the grocery shopping thing with them. I'm going to go get my nails done and I'm going to go have a holiday massage for myself. Because otherwise, you know, I'm seeking de-stressing during that time about visitors, they've just come there, there's all the stuff, they're staying for a week, we've got the holidays, oh my goodness! I'm cooking, you know, for all these people. It can get overwhelming and there's a lot of temptations that are available at this time of year. So, you know, I'm just looking to de-stress. So these are things at the holidays that I don't necessarily do all year long. I don't have, you know, four hours to go to a spa on a weekly basis or even on a monthly basis. But for the holidays. I'm going to do something special for me to get that de-stress period, you know, as my guests kind of descend upon San Francisco.

[00:37:50] So I think, yeah, you've got to start becoming mindful of these things that are triggering and seeing what you can find that really helps. We have one mentor, and I've

never been so inspired by our mentors (so she's a volunteer in our Community), by someone's self-care strategies. And she will fill that bath up with Epsom salts and nice smelling oils and she will just plop herself in there and listen to a podcast or call a friend, immediately, you know, when she's feeling stressed or overwhelmed with life. And as soon as she's done - 20 minutes, 25 minutes - the cravings for all of those foods are just gone and completely out the window. So I think that it's just-- and she's made great progress; she's lost over 100 pounds. And throughout the pandemic, she held pretty great, especially during some rough times and rough winters where she lives. And I think it's just because she identified there are other things she can do to help herself cope with stress and to sort of fill those gaps that food used to fill.

Terri [00:38:57] I like that. Looking for other ways of taking care of yourself, so other self-care strategies, because problematic food or overindulging or bingeing is not self-care. And then the other piece that you talked about is kind of giving yourself that holiday spa experience. It's a way to celebrate yourself, treat yourself, reward yourself. We talk so often in the Community that so many of us have learned to reward and treat and reinforce ourselves with problematic food. And so you really took that step to say, "Okay, I'm going to have a lot going on that week. What things can I do that would be good self-care?" This person does the Epsom salt baths. That's great self-care. Rather than, "Oh, eating this really problematic food is self-care." That's an old habit. Replacing it with these new habits; I love that way of reframing it.

Megan [00:39:56] I don't know if I ever shared this on the podcast before, but back when we had the clinic in Toronto, I had this one patient, she was a single mom. She was a widow. She had this young son who was about ten years old. She was primarily a sugar fueller. She was diabetic when she came into the clinic. We know that people who are just total sugar burners are more prone to anxiety, depression, being on edge, struggling. And she was just at her wits' end in her life. She was working two jobs, she and her kid were always fighting, just in tears. Like, she could not get a break in life. So we started going through the motions of learning to fast and learning to eat. And she just realized, like she said, "I'm diabetic because I just eat all of the time." She's like, "It's not even that my foods are all that terrible, terrible. I'm just eating all of the time to help cope got through life. Like, this is my outlet, is food." She was like, "I have no other coping skills other than eating," And that was really alarming to her. So what she did was she set up this jar. If she didn't eat, she would add 50 cents to this jar, so every time she resisted snacking. Well, within a couple of months, she had enough money saved up that she stopped having to do her second job. And then a couple of months after that, she had enough money saved up for her and her son to go on a trip; they hadn't been on a trip since his father had passed. And she just kept doing this any time she would have gone to eat. And she's only putting 50 cents in, but she was like, "Think of how much that muffin costs, that cookie costs, that donut costs, that bagel costs, you know, that bag of pretzels costs." Like, she's still saving additional money, too. So anyways, throughout the course of the year, she and her son went on like four trips. She became healthier. She and her son had this great relationship. She was saving all this money from her constant snacking on processed and refined food. Her son, who was young, was really impressed by his mom's turnaround and knew a lot of it had to do with the dietary changes and he stopped eating a lot of junk food. Like he told her, "Mom, don't buy pop anymore. We can put that money in the jar when we want a drink pop." In Canada we call it pop. Soda to our American friends. "We can put that in the jar instead and maybe we can go to Disney World." And it was just such a cool thing just to see them transform so much. And she just learned all these other great outlets and traveling became a huge stress outlet for them and something that they just financially could never have done before.

[00:42:44] So, I've shared this before with people that I work with and over the holiday season. You know, they'll do it, and then they'll use that money to help fuel some self-care indulgences or things that they really enjoy. I was inspired by this particular patient and I was well into my journey, but still had some struggles with food, and I saved up enough for a fancy purse [laughs] that I wanted, and I felt that was really cool. Then we have these experiences, and the purse was silly, but it just reminds me that, "Hey, I don't need those foods." And that there's other things that I can do because each time I resisted, you know, the pretzels or the popcorn or whatever I was struggling with, I found something else to do and enough of it that I ended up getting the sort of prize at the end that I found really rewarding.

[00:43:38] So, I mean, that's something people might want to think about this holiday season, too, is, you know, what are some of these things that you desire to do, that you want to do, that you want to gift yourself and your family? Or maybe next year for the holidays that you want to go on a trip with your family or receive loved ones that you haven't been able to see. Try some of these strategies. They're playful, you can put a quarter in a jar or you can put a penny in a jar. Well, not if you're Canadian because they got rid of the pennies. [laughter] But, yeah, it's cool to see some of the fun things that you can do. And I've just found that's been a unique strategy to help people, force people, through good motivation (money's always a good motivator) to find other self-care strategies to help get them through those snacky, tempting moments.

Terri [00:44:26] And it really highlights the reward piece. People, we really do, most of us respond to being rewarded. Unfortunately, we have learned to reward ourselves with indulgent food. So learning new ways to reward the behaviors you want to create. "I want to create my non-snacking behavior, so I'm going to reward that. I'm going to reinforce it." I think that's a great idea.

Megan [00:44:52] Well, thank you so much, everyone, for listening today. And we hope that you just have a really wonderful, safe, healthy holiday season with your loved ones. Stay connected to your communities, too, during this time. I know it's not always a happy season for everybody, but, you know, make sure that you lean in and you work on finding what consistency means for you this holiday season.

Terri [00:45:20] And we'll be back next week with something more for you. Take good care, everybody.

Megan [00:45:25] Happy holidays.