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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.

Terri [00:01:19] Hi, everybody. Welcome to The Fasting Method podcast. This is Coach Terri Lance and I am here with a very special guest, one of my clients and Community members of TFM, Heather Shuker. And I was so excited to have this opportunity to have Heather come on and talk about her story. I wanted her to do a Town Hall meeting and, finally, I said, "Wait, I have another opportunity. Will you come record a podcast episode with me?" So I'm very excited to be sharing this with you all today. Heather, how are you doing?

Heather [00:01:56] I'm doing great, Terri. Thank you so much for having me.

Terri [00:01:59] Absolutely. Absolutely. It's my pleasure, for sure. So, Heather, as I started to think about what we would talk about today, obviously, I want everyone to get to hear your story and everything, but I thought maybe a little bit of context of how I know you and how I came to the point of wanting to have you on this episode. So I met Heather in June and it is December now, so we've known each other for just under six months and I have watched you go through an amazing transformation in so many ways during that time. So I couldn't think of someone I would want more to share with everyone right now.

[00:02:39] So Heather, would you feel comfortable just kind of sharing some of your background of your story, prior to June when you and I met?

Heather [00:02:48] Absolutely, Terri. First of all, I do want to reiterate that I'm so grateful to be here. I think I've told you multiple times that I was ready to stand on the street corner with a sandwich board and a bullhorn and spread the good word of The Fasting Method. And I really think that my, you know, my loved ones and my employer, you know, appreciate the mental stability that this demonstrates, or that method of communication.

[00:03:11] My story starts really long ago. It starts when I was born. So I don't know that our listeners today want to hear all of it, so I will certainly skip ahead to the pertinent areas of fasting. But, you know, I must reiterate the fact that obesity is something that I've struggled with my entire life because I don't think without that frame of reference, you could possibly understand what this part of my journey has meant to me. And, you know, actually, when I was preparing to be here today, I thought, how could I possibly go through

my entire weight-loss journey and then this part, in the time allotted? I was thinking, "I've got to take lessons on how to speak as fast as an auctioneer." Right? [laughter] I've got to go rapid fire. But like I said, I'll just skip ahead.

[00:04:01] So yeah, I've struggled with obesity my entire life. I was literally ashamed of my baby pictures because I was a fat baby, and my earliest memories of myself were as a fat person. So there was never any other identity for me. You know, I tried from my earliest days to lose the weight and to be a thin person, and I was never successful. The closest that I got was when I was introduced to a low-carb way of eating in 1999, actually. I worked with a guy who had lost a bunch of weight and I was always interested in how somebody else lost weight. He had read a book by the Drs Eades called Protein Power. I read it and I was like, "This is it. This is it. I have this figured out." And I started doing it and losing weight. At that time-- I mean, even now you talk about low-carb eating and people are a little put off by it, but back at, you know, 20-some years ago, it was unheard of. I was literally alone. I didn't know anybody else that was doing that. And it was working. I got to the lowest I had been, which at that time was 169 pounds. I was wearing a size 12. I felt great.

[00:05:11] And then life kept happening and there was no one else doing it. I wanted to have babies and I didn't think that you could eat that way and get pregnant. So I stopped and, of course, everything I had lost came back. And then life kept happening. I had three children and, you know, I stayed obese. I kept trying to go back to the low-carb eating as it got more and more popular. You know, it seemed like it would be easier, but it was just not something that I could ever sustain on my own.

[00:05:35] And then I was listening to a keto podcast - the 2 Keto Dudes - and they mentioned a guy named Dr. Jason Fung. I read his book and I was like, "Ah, right. This is it. It's the same thing that I learned all those years ago." And when I read that book, like we sometimes do, I picked out the part that was pertinent to me, the low-carb part, right? The fasting part, I just glossed over. [laughs] I was like, "There is no way," because the reason I failed so many diets so many times, especially like the commercial programs, is because I was hungry. And I hated that feeling. From the time I was a child, my mother used to say, you know, that I turned into a bit of a gremlin if I was hungry or tired. And so they were like, "Feed that child so she doesn't melt down." And I really never outgrew that I'm embarrassed to say. So, yes, hunger is something that I wouldn't tolerate and so when I read Dr. Fung's book, that part didn't resonate with me.

[00:06:35] And then life kept happening and I kept staying obese. And I decided that I was at the very end of my rope. And he had another book come out with Megan Ramos and a woman named Eve Mayer called 'Life in the Fasting Lane' and I decided to just-- I just wanted to hear what they had to say. And in that book, I believe it was Eve Mayer said something that just hit me like a bolt of lightning. She said, "Hunger is a liar and it goes away, basically, if you don't feed it." I don't know why that that struck me as just profound, but it was because I didn't think that hunger went away. I thought that that was something that made you more and more miserable till you exploded. And so I decided to take that first leap of faith in fasting and see if she was right. And that was in June of 2020. So that was not recent. [laughs]

Terri [00:07:29] No. So two years before you and I met, you had started fasting.

Heather [00:07:33] Yeah.

Terri [00:07:33] Can you say a little bit about-- So, so far you've shared a lot about weight being a big motivator for you, and wanting to lose weight. Any other reasons why changing how you were eating and incorporating fasting, any other reasons why this was appealing to you any other goals or things that you wanted to work on?

Heather [00:07:56] If I'm being really honest with you, Terri, no. No. Losing the weight has been at the forefront. Now, if I got to answer that question in retrospect, I would give you a different answer. But at the time that I started this journey, I had one goal in mind and that was weight loss.

Terri [00:08:19] So the other things that you and I have talked about in our work together and this part of your journey, my sense is you've expanded your goals to many other things, but when you initially came to this lifestyle change for you, it was very wanting-to-lose-body-fat focused.

Heather [00:08:41] Absolutely. When I started this journey and, you know, I started fasting and it started working for me, and then it stopped working. And I came to you guys because I was like, you know, "This is the only thing that I can think of. This is all that's left. So I need help." It was truly just to lose the weight. And it wasn't until I became part of the Community that I realized that that wasn't maybe the most important thing. And so when I prepared for this podcast, I was actually thinking, "Well, now, Heather, you've gotten to where you wanted to go, and now you can look back. What are the most important things?" And like I said, I originally thought I needed to go rapid fire and tell you everything that I could possibly tell you, but then I realized, you know, that people don't really want to listen to a laundry list. They would really probably want the one thing, right? This girl that was fat her whole life, who finally lost the weight, what is the secret? And I couldn't come down to one, so I came down to two and a corollary. And so I will certainly share this over the course, but let me get back real quick to this story.

Terri [00:09:53] Yeah.

Heather [00:09:54] So in 2020, I started fasting and I was doing one meal a day, and I did lose weight. At that time, I weighed about 215 pounds and I lost 20. I got to Onederland, which is a huge deal for anybody who has ever been obese. I am five [foot] four, so I was in obesity class 2, I think, because I spent a lot of time in the 220s. And then the weight came off and then it stopped, doing OMADs, and then it started coming back on. And when it started coming back on, that's when I decided I needed a coach, specifically. So I came to The Fasting Method with the sole purpose of finding a coach to help me lose the weight and I realized, after spending my whole life learning weight-loss strategies, that I didn't need somebody to tell me what to do. I needed somebody to tell me, please, how on earth do you do this?

[00:10:47] And when I saw you and your therapy background, I was like, "That is exactly what I need." And it's not like the second you go on the website, there you are ready to have a conversation, you know, it's a process. And so I was like, "Well, I can join the Community now and, you know, hear her voice, make sure that we click. And, you know, I don't really need to be a part of a community. I don't need to be a part of a group. I just need a therapist who is, you know, knows how to fast, who can tell me what to do." And yeah, famous last words. The Community is amazing and has been a huge part of this lifestyle for me.

Terri [00:11:29] It's interesting that you say that, Heather, because, oftentimes, I think many people struggle with coming to us. They join the Facebook group, or they read the books, or they watch YouTube videos and they feel a little awkward about joining a community. And, you know, sometimes we see it as extra - "I don't really need that," as you said. And I think about so many things that we learn to do; if you want to learn to play the guitar, yes, you **can** look it up online, you can watch a hundred videos on YouTube about how to play the guitar, but there's something about having someone there with you, explaining it to you and walking through and giving you feedback as you're doing it. And so I think joining the Community, getting the support not only of the coaches and Megan, but also all of the other members, that it's really pretty life-changing for so many people, once they really kind of allow themselves to take advantage of that opportunity.

[00:12:32] And then you also said that you knew at that point you already knew you wanted to work with a coach. Sometimes people struggle with that. "As long as I have the information, I should be able to do this on my own," and, "Investing in someone to be with me in this journey," often feels like a luxury that maybe we don't deserve. And I think especially in this whole weight-loss journey, for so many of us, there's so much negative thoughts and feelings about ourselves - shame, embarrassment, whatnot - that we think we really should be able to do it on our own. So that was a big step for you to join the Community and make a decision about coaching. So, do you want to talk a little bit about how that turned out for you?

Heather [00:13:20] Absolutely. So I think in order to properly answer this question, I have to kind of divulge a little bit about myself. I am a nurse practitioner by training, and right before I joined The Fasting Method Community, I had finished up a doctoral program, and part of the Doctor of Nursing Practice is to do a project. In all of my nursing education, I've always studied obesity because I've always been looking for the answer to cure myself. So $n=1$ is something that I brought to the Community with me because that has been an ongoing thing for me - to try and figure this out and try to crack this code. And when I was studying obesity, it was very clear, first of all, that obesity treatment is abysmal. But more importantly, in the literature and in the evidence that I reviewed, repeatedly it said that the best way for someone to successfully lose weight is to do what's called intensive lifestyle intervention. And what that means is, basically, being in contact with someone on a very frequent basis to help you with your weight loss.

[00:14:32] At that point, I was 45, 45 years of unsuccessfully doing this by myself, and two years of, you know, looking into obesity treatment and seeing just how awful it was that this is what the evidence said that had any chance. I was like, "Well, what kind of fool would I be if I didn't adhere to that research and take a chance?" because I too felt the same way that you're describing. I didn't think that I wanted to be in a group. You know, what do these people know about me? I thought having a coach would be embarrassing and awkward, but more than anything, I wanted to lose the weight. And so, so be it. So I dove in, specifically, for that reason - because it was literally evidence-based. And then, well, the proof is in the pudding. [laughs]

[00:15:16] I think that the next thing that people should probably know about me, you know, I said I was 215 [pounds] when I started fasting in 2020. I went down to like 195 and then I put I was putting weight back on when I joined. I joined The Fasting Method on April 30th of this year at 200 pounds, five [foot] four, So I was an obese person. Soon after I joined, I realized what I had been doing wrong. One meal a day is not an effective strategy for obese women, I understood and learned. I listened to Megan Ramos talk about what **would** be an effective strategy for someone like me and she was very clear. She said,

"Alternate-daily fasting," or, you know, "Three 42s a week," which means not eating three days a week. And she also said that if you did that for six months, you could knock it out. You know, if you treated fasting like a therapy, like physical therapy or chemotherapy or dialysis or any other medical intervention, that you, too, could, you know, get to where you needed to be in six months, that this wasn't forever. This was a therapeutic intervention.

[00:16:30] And I thought she was crazy [laughs] which sounds hateful for someone that I respect and appreciate so dearly. And I have told her this - I thought she was nuts. The idea that, after spending my entire life battling obesity, that I could lose this burden in six months. I thought she was insane. But, like I said, I was at the end of my rope. I took that leap of faith. I jumped off the cliff. I said, "Okay, challenge accepted. Three days a week. Let's go." And I did. And I was consistent. I showed up for those fasts three days a week for six months straight. And so my six-month anniversary was October 31st and I weighed 144.8 pounds. I had gone from an obese body weight to a normal BMI in six months, exactly as promised.

Terri [00:17:26] Fantastic. But I'm also aware that was not the only part of the story, as you mentioned earlier. While in this process, you also started achieving other things that maybe you hadn't set out to achieve, but some really nice benefits of these lifestyle changes you were making. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Heather [00:17:50] Absolutely. So what the coaches at The Fasting Method like to say is, "We lure you in with weight loss, but, once we get you there, this whole program is really about the healing." And when I first heard that, I was like, "Yeah, okay. [laughs] I'm in it for the weight loss, y'all. Heal what?" Right? Like, I wasn't diabetic, I was pre-diabetic, but, you know, I didn't have any gaping wounds. "What are you going to heal? Yeah!" So that became evident very quickly.

[00:18:23] I said earlier that there were two takeaways that I really want people to get from my story and from what I have learned over this 46-year journey of struggling and struggling and then finally finding the answer. So even though I did not have something I felt was specific to heal, there was certainly a lot going on. As an obese person, I happened to have a condition called obstructive sleep apnea. And what that means is that I stopped breathing while I was sleeping. In practical terms, you know, the way I thought about it was that the fat in my body was trying to strangle me to death in my sleep. And it wasn't that far off. When I was diagnosed, I stopped breathing 37 times an hour, and my pulse oxygenation (which is the percentage of oxygen in your blood) would drop down into the 70s. And that number should be, you should get an A, like on a report card. It should be in the mid-to-high 90s or even 100%.

[00:19:21] And it was terrible. It was a really awful thing to have happen. It got worse after my mother died in 2015 and I was putting on weight because I was numbing with food. And it got so bad that, you know, my husband and my sister begged me to get treatment and I finally did because my sister said, you know, "We just lost our mom. I don't want to lose you too." And so it wasn't a hard sell because I used to have nightmares that I was being choked or drowning. And so I would wake up in terror like I was dying most days, and it was really incredibly awful. I got treatment and that is a machine that you wear on your face at night, which I was terribly ashamed of. I actually used to sleep with my head under the covers every single night because I didn't want anybody to see me with that mask on because, I mean, comedians make fun of it, right? It's something that, you know, people shame fat people for having. And um yeah. So I wore that machine for six years. I

took it everywhere. It was just a part of what I had to deal with as being a person with obesity.

[00:20:35] When I joined The Fasting Method, it didn't really occur to me that that was something that would go away, right, it had been with me for so long. And in October, mid-October, so, you know, like five and a half months in, I had scheduled an appointment with my pulmonary provider that I was working with because my machine wasn't working right. I couldn't sleep anymore; it just kept me up. And so I was like, "We need to figure out what's going on." And she was like, "Well, I think we need to retest you. You've lost a bunch of weight." And so she did. And it was resolved. I didn't have sleep apnea anymore. I didn't have to wear that machine anymore. And it really started to click, you know, like there is more to this healing thing.

[00:21:23] But, you know, when we talked about true healing, Terri, I think that I would have to say that it wasn't even the biggest thing that I have gotten healing-wise. Now, I said earlier that there were two things and a corollary that I have gotten from this journey that I want people to know and really understand and really take away, if they take anything from this episode. And the first is that you need to love your body. Like, right now, today, as it is, you know, with no equivocation. You need to love your body. And the reason I say that is one of the most important things that I have learned in this journey is because I did not love mine this whole time. I was in a Community meeting, in one of your meetings, and one of the Community members had watched a movie with an older actress who I guess was dating a younger man and looked at herself naked in the mirror. And the Community member was talking about that exp-- you know, seeing that and trying it. And I was like, "Well, that's something I do every single day." I was thinking about it and, you know, sitting there in the meeting like it was starting to dawn on me because we talk so much about habits and how important they are and, you know, how what you do every day affects your mindset, right? These are all things that you work with us on. And I just thought about what my daily habit was. I'm very ritualistic in the morning; I do the same thing every day. And what I was doing was I was getting up, emptying my bladder, making my bed, taking off my pajamas, walking to the mirror, and then starting from the top of my body down, scanning and finding everything that was wrong with it. Every day. And there was a catalog of things. It didn't even take me very long because I had them all memorized. I would, you know, look at all the ways that my body was disappointing me and then I would get on the scale and feel further shame. And that's how I would start my day. And so when this Community member said something about standing in front of the mirror, it almost was like a smack in the face. And I was like, "What is this habit doing to me?"

[00:23:37] And so my very next meeting with you, you know, I brought it up and I was like, "Terri, I'm not sure this is serving me." [laughs] And you were like, "Heather, you don't say," [laughs] and you gave me an alternative idea. And the reason you gave me that idea is because you said something. And I know it's attributed to someone else, but I heard it from you and I hear it in my head in your voice so, as far as I'm concerned, it's from you. You said, "Heather, you cannot heal a body that you hate." And I'm not even sure that I recognized that I hated my body, you know, in a visceral sense because I always thought that I had self-love, you know? I was a very optimistic person and I always, you know, thought I had a lot to offer the world, but, you know, this indicates that I did. I hated it. And I hated it for as long as I can remember. And that's how I spoke about it. And so, you know, your recommendation to me was to do the process instead of, you know, cataloging all the awful things, to start saying the three things that, you know, just three things that, you know, that my body had done for me. And I did start doing that. And to look myself in the

eye and say, "I love you." And when you first said that, even hearing that, sent chills down my spine, "I can't possibly do that." And the first time I did it, I was so embarrassed. And I was in a room by myself, but it just seemed so awkward and so hard. And then I would still get on the scale, which you recommended against because, "That awful scale," but now when I do it, I say, "This number does not define me," before I get on the scale, and I know that it doesn't. But that practice became a whole lot easier after the first time. I don't know how long I've been doing it now, a few months, as opposed to the shame ritual that I had done for years. And it's just night and day. It's night and day.

[00:25:35] And so when I say my big takeaway for everyone who is on this journey, what I'm saying is you're not likely to get to where you want to go if you also hate your body, if you also don't recognize that you're enough, however, it is right now. It's much like we see what happens to children that aren't shown love or pets or a yard that isn't shown love, right? Bad things happen to those things. And, you know, if we're not showing ourselves love, then maybe when we're making those decisions about what to eat, or whether to exercise, or whether to get appropriate sleep, or whether to smoke or drink or do drugs, all of those things that we can do to hurt ourselves or treat ourselves well is probably dictated somewhat by how much we love our bodies.

Terri [00:26:28] Absolutely.

Heather [00:26:29] And so when we talk about healing, I would say that that was a pretty big breakthrough for me.

Terri [00:26:35] Absolutely. And I'm just sitting back. I'm not even interjecting because everything you're saying is, you know, the message that I hope people come from everything that they're working on with that in mind. You have personified it so well (in my experience in working with you) and I have used you as an example with other people. I don't identify who it is, but I have said, "I have a client who does this," and, "what about this?" It's been really empowering for other people.

[00:27:10] I happen to follow you on social media and you wrote a post about this around the time-- I think it was at the time that you had had your sleep apnea diagnosis removed from your chart and you wrote a really powerful post. This is the paragraph that really stood out to me and I just wanted to share it here with everyone. What you said is, "Healing isn't a number on a scale, a pant size, or less problem list in my medical chart, no longer pre-diabetic, obese, or obstructive sleep apnea. Healing is sleeping better, breathing better, having less painful and swollen joints. Healing is feeling better, not looking better."

[00:27:57] And this was so powerful for me when I read it. And, of course, I get to talk to you about these things all the time, but it is so easy for people to celebrate, "I got smaller pants," "My blouse fits now," "My dress fits," "My suit coat fits," "My shoes fit again," or, you know, "My ring is falling off." Those are so tangible and easy to celebrate. And as you said, you know, if you come in with the goal being fat loss, those are the things you're watching for and those are the things people are measuring. But to get to have this whole other discussion with you about what healing truly is for you, and it hits me when I hear a conversation like this, Heather, because I'm thinking, "I wish we all could experience that at any time in our lives." Not once we've lost the weight, not once we've accomplished the goal, but to start working on that self-acceptance, loving and appreciating our body. And that is not an easy feat for most of us. So the fact that you have really tackled that-- When I told you, you know, here's a suggestion I have for this strategy that you're doing and

switching it up to this, I didn't know if you would really do it. And you came back and you're like, "Oh, my gosh, here's what's happening now when I do that." And since that time, I have seen you just light up even more. And it's not just about, "Oh, Terri, this many pounds," or, you know, "My running has gotten this much faster," or something, but it is this acceptance and partnership that you're creating now with your body versus, "My body's betraying me," or, "My body's not serving me well."

[00:29:50] Because as you said, if we feel like we are separate from our body and one is the enemy, we're not going to take very good care of it. We're going to make problematic decisions when those tough decisions are in front of us. So, like you said, if we can get in that place of accepting and loving and caring about our body, choosing to go to sleep instead of doing something else that might be more entertaining, that's self-care. Choosing to not eat and finish the fast, that is self-care. That is self-love. To choose a healthy option at this meal rather than this problematic food, that is self-love and self-care. So as you can probably tell (You get to see me while we're recording this. Other people can't see me.), I get very geeked out about this stuff. I get very excited because this is the transformation I really hope everyone experiences when they come to us. And again, you have just personified it so amazingly.

Heather [00:31:00] Thank you. Thank you for saying that, Terri. That is so kind coming from you. The reason that I really wanted to kind of bring that up today and tell that story is because I know what it's like to struggle. I have lived this shame and this problem my whole life. And if someone had just kind of come to me-- you know, if you were there, where were you, Terri? If you had come to me in my 20s and said, "Just love it right now. Love that body right now." And imagine, you know, the different choices that I could have made.

[00:31:34] And so that's why I want that message out there. You must accept that, you know, that body that you see in the mirror got you here, right? It's got you this whole way. It's the only one you're ever going to have. Love it. Love it because you're not going to, you know, kind of get where you want to go without that. And you mentioned pant sizes. I have multiple times told you that I wanted that to be on the outside and maybe carry a sign because, you know, I am wearing a size 6, everyone, just so you know. I came to this wearing 16s, 18s, 20s my whole life, right? My whole life. I pick up those small pants now and they look like child pants. And I thought that that was going to be the thing, Terri. Like this whole time, I was like, "Oh, getting into those pants, that's the finish line. That is the magic. That's it." That isn't it, everybody.

Heather [00:32:31] I think that Jim Carrey said something about, you know, being rich and famous and he said that everybody should be able to experience it because then they'll know that that's not the thing. The pants is not the thing, you guys. The weight loss is not the thing. And because it's not the thing, I feel like I should mention the second takeaway that I want everyone to get. And we did kind of touch on this earlier when talking about joining the Community and hiring a coach.

[00:32:59] The second takeaway that I want everyone to hear me loud and clear on is that you will need more support than you think along this journey, and you're going to need that support for longer than you think you will. And I really want everyone who, you know, is struggling with obesity and has a lot of weight to lose to just hear me loud and clear on this.

[00:33:21] And let me put it to you another way. If I was a gambling person, which I kind of am, I was married in Vegas. It didn't work out, frankly, [laughs] but I got 23 years and three kids out of it, so it wasn't a total loss. But if I was a betting person and you came to me and said, as an obese person, you came to me and said, you know, "I bet you I can lose this weight." I'm not a hateful person. I root everyone on. I want us all to win. But if a person came to me and asked me to gamble on whether or not they could lose the weight, I would bet against them. And that is because I know how statistics work and I like money. [laugh] That's just the reality, because evidence indicates that if you are an obese person and you try to lose this weight on your own, you will not be successful. Unfortunately, the evidence gets worse. If you are successful in losing that weight and you have no support system in place, odds aren't with you that you're going to keep it off for two years, and they're even more desperate in five. People just put it back. And the reason that they do is because they don't have anyone there with them. And so when you're starting this journey, or as you navigate this journey, know that it's long. It's a long journey, and you just need to accept the fact that it's actually forever.

[00:34:47] In my work, I work with people that struggle with addiction. And, you know, there's a thing in AA meetings where people introduce themselves as an addict or as a recovering addict or alcoholic, even if they haven't touched a substance in 20 years because they know that that's always there. And I'm sorry if you don't understand this, if you can hear me, but if you've struggled your whole life with obesity, it will always be there. And you need to kind of come to terms with the fact that you will always need to manage it.

[00:35:23] When I hear people who are in this journey, whether they're fasting or using some other method, I hear them say things like, "Well, when I'm done and I can get back to normal," or, "I can't wait to get this over with," or anything that indicates that this is a limited-time thing, I have no faith that they're going to be successful. And that's because if this journey is one that you can't see yourself sustaining, then, you know, you go back to your normal, your normal got you here. You're normal got you to be an obese person and so you must create a new normal.

[00:35:59] Coach Larry loves to talk about CEE, right? Consistency, enjoyable and effective. Consistency is first. It has to be something that you're willing to do for the rest of your life. And if you're not, you're not going to be successful. And I think that the only way that that is something you can do for the rest of your life is if you have support and a community to be there to help you along the way because it's not easy. You will fall off the wagon and you need somebody to help you get back on.

Terri [00:36:28] Absolutely. It's interesting to me, Heather, the summary of that last piece you were sharing is what I wrote down on our planning sheet for future episodes. And I have one scheduled for Megan and I to talk about the difference between the therapeutic phase and the long-term lifestyle. Earlier, when you were talking about that you had heard, you know, "If you hit this hard for six months, you can accomplish the goal," I always want to put a caveat with that. For many people, there is a period of time that is more intense and it might be six months for some people, it might be nine months or eighteen months, but it is a period of time where (I always talk about the fasting dial and the food dial.) the intensity dials are turned up. But what I always want to make sure people understand is that doesn't mean after six months, you turn off the dials and walk away, like you said, "Go back to normal," because that means going back to being unwell, going back to gaining weight, going back to that struggle. And so I love that you highlighted that, yes, there is a therapeutic phase for people and you can accomplish a great deal in that therapeutic phase, but the real work is much beyond that. It is the lifestyle. It is the creating the habits

and the mindset that will last forever, not just those 6 months or 18 months, but 20 years, 30 years, 40 years, however long you're still living, you're going to do this that whole time.

[00:38:06] I like the way you phrased it, probably nicer than the way I phrase it sometimes to people is it's unrealistic to think, "I'm going to do something drastic and change this," and then go back to the same behaviors. We've all done it before. We've all experienced that that doesn't work. But really shifting that mindset, coming in and doing what you've done, you made a commitment, "I'm going to do what it takes now, but I'm going to do what it takes long-term, forever. I'm not done with this until I'm done done." [laughs] So thank you for kind of highlighting that and, as I said, Megan and I, I think we'll be talking about that in a future episode because it's really a powerful message.

[00:38:52] I think a lot of people shop online even now for weight-loss tools, mechanisms, programs that offer, "You can do this in three weeks," "...four months," "...two years." It's a lifetime of change and commitment to yourself and I hope everyone really takes that message to heart.

[00:39:17] So, Heather, earlier you had mentioned two takeaways and a corollary, and I don't think we've gotten to the corollary yet. What is that that's still lingering out there that you wanted to share?

Heather [00:39:29] Absolutely. So just to summarize: the first one was to love your body and the second one was, you know, you're going to need more support for longer than you think you will.

[00:39:39] The corollary is start with a baby sweater. That's my corollary. In our Community, we have a Community mentor that runs a sip-and-stitch class. And I believe, although I am not 100% sure, that the reason that was created is because fasting gives you a lot of time. [laughs] Like, you no longer have to prepare as many meals. You no longer are spending that time eating those meals. And so, you know, you find yourself want of something to do during that time frame. My main craft is I throw pottery, which I cannot do in my car over my lunch break, but I was also taught to knit when I was a little girl by my grandmother. So I decided to kind of check in on this sip-and-stitch group because you want to keep those hands moving instead of-- I think Coach Veronica calls them 'grabby hands'. You want to give those grabby hands something to do instead of getting food. And so I started into that group and the leader, Karen, is a fiber artist, and I had said something to her about wanting to make myself a sweater because I've always made, you know, hats and scarves and things that I give away, but I was like, "I want to make something for myself." And her advice was to start with a baby sweater. She said, "You need to learn the skills to make a baby sweater before you go all in on the big sweater. So make a baby sweater. Get that all figured out before you really commit to something that you're going to make your size." And I did. I made a little baby sweater, and it was very cute, but I have no babies. [laughs] And then I went on to make myself a sweater. And that was the first time that I've made something like that for myself to wear. And I proceeded to make another sweater because you do have a lot of time [laughs] when you're fasting over lunch.

[00:41:23] And so the reason I call that my corollary is because, as mentioned earlier, we talk a lot about habits. And I think sometimes people come into fasting, you know, ready to do a five-day fast and all this crazy stuff. And, you know, anyone who's listened to this podcast or is in the Community knows that's not where you start, y'all. You know, we want you to start with time-restricted eating, no snacking, right? You start at the thing that you

can achieve, right? The smallest possible step so you get that win under your belt, and you can build from there, right? And people get upset because they're like, "I'm not going to lose weight with this." And some people do, so that's not even true. But that's not the point. The point is to, you know, get the gears going, to figure something out, to, you know, have that knowledge behind you so that it can give you momentum to do the harder things. That's something that I like to say all the time is that that your best evidence that you're capable of doing something is that you've done it, right? I knew I could make an adult sweater. I had already made a baby sweater. You know that you can do a longer fast if you've already been able to make it to lunch, right? You've already been able to do those little baby fasts, and you build from there. So no, I can't wear the baby sweater, but I kept going. I wear the adult sweater. And as a matter of fact, when I cast on my second adult sweater, I cast on a size smaller than I was wearing at that time because I was so optimistic of my ability to keep going.

[00:42:51] I actually also got that, you know, kind of lesson from the Community, even though it's not necessarily food related, but it just applies. It applies to this, it applies to fasting, it applies to weight loss, it applies to self-acceptance, it applies to anything that requires good habits. You start with a small, achievable habit and you build from there. And I think that that is the crux of most things in life that you want to achieve, but certainly weight loss.

Terri [00:43:15] I love that analogy. I had never heard that one before, so I really appreciate you sharing that, and I was chuckling to myself as you were describing it because I thought, "You know, by the end, she's probably going to fit into that baby sweater." [laughter] But that's a great analogy of how to approach so many things in life. Do the level of the skill that you can tackle first. Learn the skill, build the skill, build the confidence, and then expand from there. So brilliant advice that you received and I appreciate you sharing it here.

[00:43:49] So, Heather, you have covered so many very valuable things. Your story, you know, the takeaways that you hope that other people carry with them. And we are approaching transition times in year - ending of one year beginning of New Year - and oftentimes I know people set goals of, "Oh, by this date, I want to do this," and, "By this date, I want to do this," or whatnot. But I'm just curious if you want to take us out of here today with just something about something that you're working on as you transition from 2022 into 2023.

Heather [00:44:27] Well, Terri, as you know, we have been working together for the past six months, and that is generally the length of a coaching package. And so one might think that here I am, I have lost the weight, I've met goal, I've quote-unquote 'crossed the finish line', but if you've been paying attention to me at all, [laughs] you know that I know that that is not the case. There is no finish line. This journey is long. And so, you know, I fully plan to have another six months to nine months to a year, to however long you're willing to put up with me, you know, as far as keeping you as my coach. I'm not done. I'm far from done because losing the weight was only that first piece. Now I just have to live the rest of my life in a healthy way, that's all.

[00:45:13] So, you know, I generally go to at least one meeting every day, right, whether I have my camera on or not. You know, I can fold laundry and listen, I can do dishes, I can drive my home commute. That's how I stay connected and that's how I continue my plan to continue to stay connected is.

[00:45:33] I think that sometimes people really struggle at this time of year, and what I'm trying to, you know, tell all-- I have a Facebook group that is like an accountability group. I have an accountability partner. I truly am all in. And, you know, my advice to everyone is to just hold the line, you guys, right? This is a tough time of year. You know, we've all been told, "Christmas is one day. It's not a whole season." That doesn't mean you eat cookies every time they're offered to you or whatever it is, but do your very best to hang on. And give yourself grace if you regain a little or you don't lose anything because staying in the game is winning. That is what I want you to understand. That, you know, you've only kind of lost-- which isn't even permanent, by the way, because you can always get back in the game. But walking away and disengaging is really the only failure, and that's the hardest thing to come back from. But if you keep showing up and you keep staying engaged, then you'll get right back on track. It might take a little while, but you'll get there, and then you'll get to where you want to be to.

Terri [00:46:46] Very good. Heather, thank you so much for this. I feel like you and I could-- I know I could talk to you for hours. Listeners will be like, "Okay, this is the fourth episode with Terri and Heather." [laughter] But thank you so much for not only sharing your story, but the willingness to really have thought about the messaging that you hope people can take from this time of you and I talking together. And I think you're going to be getting some feedback in the Community from people listening and the impact that you have on people. So I'm hoping that having this episode out there prevents you from having to get out the sandwich board [laughter] and standing on street corners, you know, shouting out this message. But your voice, your message, is so important and I just really want to thank you so much for being here and sharing with us today.

Heather [00:47:44] Thank you so much, Terri. And, of course, thank you for everything you've done for me. The Fasting Method, all the coaches, but I'm allowed to say Coach Terri's my favorite [laughter] because you've been there for me this whole time, and I don't-- I know that I wouldn't be where I am without you and The Fasting Method. You guys healed me. Thank you.

Terri [00:48:05] It's the gift that keeps giving because I certainly get a lot back from being able to be in this journey with you, Heather, so...

[00:48:13] All right, everybody. I hope that you have some great messages that you are taking away from this today. Megan and Nadia and I will be back in the next episode and look forward to seeing you then. Take good care, everybody. Bye bye.