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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. Hi, everyone. It's Megan Ramos here with another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. Today, I'm joined by our newest team member, Bethany. Bethany joined us this fall as a fasting coach, but she's been a long time participant in The Fasting Method, using fasting and nutrition to help her regain control of her health. Bethany, welcome to the podcast. Welcome to The Fasting Method. How are you doing today?

Bethany [00:01:48] Hi, Megan. I'm good, thank you so much. I'm really excited to be here. I feel really lucky to have been on both sides of The Fasting Method now.

Megan [00:01:58] Well, I gotta say we were all really excited to learn that you were interested in a career change into the health field. We've collaborated with you at The Fasting Method over the years in different types of scenarios. Why don't you share with our listeners here a bit of your journey with fasting and what led you to this coaching role?

Bethany [00:02:20] Absolutely. So in 2015, I started listening to The Obesity Code podcast, and that was because I had started to experience stickier weight than I ever had before. So I was in my late 20s, at that point, and when I had been younger, I would just restrict my food intake and exercise more and I could easily take off anywhere up to 10 or 15 pounds. I'm a tall person, so that's not too much weight for me, but I started to experience weight-loss resistance. I don't even remember how I came upon The Obesity Code podcast, but I started listening and I thought it was absolutely incredible. I loved the stories about people reversing their type two diabetes. Fast forward to about 2017. I was working as a software engineer in Brooklyn at this time, and I remember I was sitting at work one night. It was about 6 p.m., it was winter, it was dark, and I was in a meeting and I felt this wave come over my body and I had the thought, "I don't know how I'm going to get home. I feel so unwell that I do not know how I'm going to get myself home." And usually I would walk to and from work and it was about 40 minutes. So I ended up taking a car ride home and from that point on, my health really spiraled out of control.

[00:03:57] So from about 2015 to 2019, I put on about 50 pounds, five zero. I came to find out that I had chronic reactivated Epstein-Barr, which-- some of our listeners probably know this but, in its active form, the Epstein-Barr virus is what we know as mononucleosis, which a lot of people associate with being a teenager and the kissing disease. That was not who I was. I was much older and it became chronic and reactivated, meaning it felt like

I always had mono. And the main symptom of mono is extreme fatigue. So over the course of about six months, I went to a bunch of doctor's appointments. I was not immediately diagnosed with that so it was really a journey to find out what was going on with me. I had many doctors just sort of pat me on the head and say, "Go home and rest and drink water." And I knew deep down that something deeper was happening. At one point, I was explaining this to a practitioner and you could kind of see the light bulb go off in their head. And they said, "Have you ever had an antinuclear antigen test run?" I said, "No, I have no idea what that is." It's essentially the first-line blood test that one gets to see if they might have a marker of an autoimmune condition. And that ended up being positive for me.

[00:05:28] And so I continued on the journey of doctors appointments. And when it's suspected that you might have an autoimmune condition, generally you're seeing many different kinds of specialists because many systems in the body are affected. And that was the case with me. I had chronic pain, I had eczema all over my body, I had fatigue, I had digestive issues, and the weight still was not coming off. And then a few months went by and I was classified as pre-diabetic. I was put on a number of medications, the side effects of which were unlivable for me. And so I came to The Fasting Method as a Hail Mary, so to speak. I thought, "This feels like the one thing I have not tried." And so for my birthday one year I bought a coaching package and I joined the Community. And over the course of that year, from that birthday when I bought myself the package until the next birthday, I lost about 60 pounds and I had reversed all of the chronic issues that I mentioned. I no longer had fatigue, I could train very heavily again, work out, I could enjoy life. I was no longer just surviving. So my experience of The fasting Method is why I then switched careers from a software engineer to becoming a health coach. And now I'm studying to get a masters in science and functional nutrition, and that's why I'm at The Fasting Method now as a coach, because I believe it works and I know that it's a good tool, and that The Fasting Method in particular has a really strong combination of the coaching and the Community.

Megan [00:07:17] You have been through a lot. I think that's one of the things that's really kind of united our whole team at The Fasting Method, is that so many of us-- it's just amazing that we're here today and we're able to tell our stories and have found that lifestyle can really help improve our lives. It's just really rewarding work that we do getting to help others and, in some ways, too, it's also unfortunate that this just isn't the standard of care out there. I was just-- prior to recording this podcast, I took my dogs out and I was just chatting with a neighbor and she said, "There's so many little things that we can do and it can help benefit our health, but when you go to your doctor, they just typically give you a medication to treat a symptom that causes another symptom that needs another medication." There is a time and a place for Western medicine to have a more pharmaceutical approach, but there's a time and a place to actually spend time educating and focusing on lifestyle. So you know, we're sad that you've had your journey but are so grateful that you've made this transition and that you're able to help share-- through your experiences and the new education that you've obtained to help others.

[00:08:39] So do you want to share with the listeners what it is that you're actually-- what you're doing with fasting coaching at The Fasting Method in case they're interested in learning more?

Bethany [00:08:49] Yes, absolutely. So I've been hosting two of the group meetings, which I love. So currently, I'm facilitating a diabetes group and a weight-loss group every week. And the groups range in size anywhere from 30 to 60 people, typically. And it really is a chance for us all to celebrate. We always start the group with people sharing their

non-scale victories for the week. That's one of my favorite parts of the meeting because it can be anything from, "I lost three inches in my waist," to, "I went out to dinner and didn't feel any kind of anxiety about what I was going to order," or, "I felt fueled enough to walk more this week than I have in a year."

[00:09:38] So I'm facilitating those group sessions and I'm also doing small group coaching. There are up to four members in the group-coaching sessions at a time and they're an hour long, and that is a really great opportunity to get some individualized attention for our Community members who sign up for group coaching. And we go really deep in those sessions into our goals for the week for each person, what the blockers, you know, to those goals, what blockers might come up. So if someone has a social schedule that needs to be navigated, we will actually walk through that and sort of pre-game it with each member, and we come up with an accountability plan. And then we'll also do a retrospective. You know, how did last week go? What went well, what didn't, and why? And we will debug. Okay, where exactly did this go wrong? Why were you not able to hit your second fast? Etc.. So it's a mix of accountability, information sharing, and really diving deep into individuals' behavior.

Megan [00:10:45] We're really excited. You're going to help so many people in our Community and our coaching program. So thank you so much for all the great work that you're doing.

[00:10:54] It is also-- you know, not only is it special because you've joined our team this fall, it's also a special day. It's Halloween. We've never actually had a podcast land exactly on Halloween. We always try to tackle it every year from a different perspective to help everybody out there because it's certainly a very sugary, heavily-commercialized holiday centered around a lot of unhealthy lifestyle things that we spend a lot of time trying to help you out with. So for our very first Halloween episode, Nadia and I talked about strategies that I use to help me manage the holiday and that Nadia uses to help with her daughters, trying to reinvent what Halloween is about in their household, just to shift the focus off of sugar. So that's a really great episode to go back and listen to, especially if you've got young kids and you're trying to reframe what Halloween means to them. And then last year, Terri and I recorded an episode, and this is where we really picked Terri's brain on some mindset strategies, just preparing for the holiday, going into the holiday.

[00:12:11] So Bethany and I - we're going to tackle things a little bit differently this Halloween and talk about some of our own rituals which we've found that have worked, and it'll be great to get a fresh perspective on this holiday from Bethany. So, Bethany, why don't I actually throw it over to you first to explain how Halloween has transitioned for you. I know we're adults, but we still like to have fun on the holiday and we still have youthful people in our lives who do like to go trick-or-treating. So what have you done to help protect yourself and to maintain good health during this time?

Bethany [00:12:52] Yeah. So the biggest thing for me in the recent past is that Halloween used to be synonymous with pumpkin beer among my friends. It was the day that we would, you know, indulge in some pumpkin beer. And so one thing that you said, Megan, about Nadia and her daughters, and Terri and using the reframe, reframing your mindset. I like to indulge in my senses more than just taste. So for Halloween, there's a short list of Halloween movies that I love, that I always watch, similar to how people watch Christmas movies. And I will get under a weighted blanket and burn some cinnamon essential oil and just make it cozy. So that's one thing I do. I think food is so cheap and readily available and so quick that I think it becomes sort of our default sensory go-to, but there are a lot of

other senses that we can indulge that are holiday or season-specific that don't necessarily require a food and certainly don't require junk food.

[00:14:11] The other thing that I do is I love a beautifully-colored meal, and so something that I will do is I will indulge in something like a root vegetable, which I might not have-- and certainly during my more acute healing phase, I avoided root vegetables because they were higher in carbohydrate. But I will have something, I will make something like a really indulgent pumpkin curry that has a beautiful color, and has coconut cream in it and chicken thighs, so you have some fat. And I'll make it, you know, with a side of Swiss chard that has the green and the red veins. And so something can feel indulgent and celebratory without being off track, I'll say.

Megan [00:15:03] I struggle with rituals, too. For some reason, it was really kind of easy to shake the candy and the chips and stuff because if I didn't have it in my house, I wasn't going to eat it. The first podcast we recorded about Halloween, I shared, you know, we would get fidget spinners, and bubbles, and nontoxic Play-Doh, and tattoos, and stuff to give out to the neighborhood kids. And we still do that. That kind of made it really easy for me - out of sight, out of mind. But something that got me super hung up was sort of this like grandiose pizza ritual that my mom introduced when we were little. You know, we had regular pizza nights, but she would go all out on Halloween. It was this big, huge ordeal was this pizza dinner. She would order it a week in advance. Everybody got sort of their own personalized desire for dinner that night and we would rush home from school and eat and have our friends around. And it was a really important kind of event. And I didn't realize that, you know, well into adulthood because, even moving out on my own and having my own Halloween celebration outside of that, I carry that on with that pizza.

[00:16:27] I'm a big one not to use substitutes like low-carb or keto substitutes very often throughout the year. I think it's really important that we do learn how to eat more primally, more naturally, try new things that are going to be sustainable. A lot of keto and low-carb substitution meals for other types of food that we liked in the past, like pizza, take a lot of time and we just don't have a lot of time to execute these on a regular basis. So I spend a lot of coaching and engaging with our Community about trying new things. And with that being said, there definitely is a time and a place to indulge in a substitute, and Halloween is one of those times of year where we just get a kick out of it. And my husband and I have created like a mini competition out of this every year, like who can optimize the best low-carb or keto pizza, or meatza type of recipe. And it's been really fun. Like he does his research, I'll do mine, we learn from the previous years and we get this taste testing competition going and it's just super fun. And now it's a new ritual in our household and it's a healthier ritual. It's not something we do all of the time, but it's just really special for us on Halloween and I look forward to that. We've made this whole other new tradition and new experience. And I think eventually we'll have it down, there won't be any need for competition. We'll have perfected the ultimate pizza substitute for Halloween for our family. You know, that's what I look forward to and I think about in advance.

[00:18:17] And, you know, you end up feeling really great and satiated and not hungry and it further reduces temptation. So if you're out the next day and all of the junk food is on sale because Halloween's over, you're still nice and satiated, you know, from this really healthy meal that you got to enjoy the night before and you're not tempted to buy any of that garbage. And you also feel really successful, like having gone through Halloween evening feeling so good from eating good food that you don't want to ruin that. And it makes it really easy to walk by, you know, those discount ends-of-the-aisles full of the

sugar that we want to avoid. I know so many people struggle with that after the holiday as well.

[00:19:02] So that's one thing that we do from a food perspective. We've talked and I've talked, you know, over the years ad nauseam about just not having it around. The kids don't need anymore junk in their homes. You know, we live in Silicon Valley and there is a bit of a different mindset around here, I'll say that. There are a lot of healthier alternatives, but there's still a lot of sugar it ends up being at the end of the day. And just thinking we have a son who's going to come any minute after today, pretty much, or he could have come later today. [laughs] We'll find out. And just thinking about, you know, what we're going to make that holiday for him. And I know a lot of people have reached out already asking about this because they've got young kids that are just starting to figure out that this is a holiday and that it's kind of centered around food and, you know, what are we going to do with our son? And, you know, I think we can get some great movie rituals going, and get some great costumes, you know, sort of make-believe and imagination stuff going. And then we can have sort of our pizza/meatza type of ritual and maybe invite him into the competition. I think it's so important to get young kids in the kitchen as early as possible and as safely as possible, cooking and getting involved with food, because the more skills they have and the more comfortable they are in the kitchen and with real food, the more likely they're going to carry that on as they get older.

[00:20:35] So those are just some of the thoughts I have going into parenthood and just what we look forward to and what we enjoy every Halloween. Now, Bethany, a lot of people try to fast this holiday meal. You'll hear it in the Community very much and from your coaching clients, just saying, "I want to fast. I just want to fast. If I fast, then I'll get through it." What are your thoughts on fasting on a day like today?

Bethany [00:21:05] Well, this is really a know-yourself moment. In general, I think that it's harder to fast over a holiday and it is not the best way to set yourself up for success. So what I talk to members of our Community a lot about is establishing a floor for themselves. When life is going great and there are no stressors-- and I include a holiday as a stressor because your routine is off. Any time your routine is threatened, I think that's a stressor, and holidays can be chaotic with guests, etc.. Any time there's an interruption and chaos is introduced into your life, that is not a time to shoot for the moon. That is not a time to try to extend your fast or to white-knuckle your fasting protocol. So instead what you can do is scale back and really focus on the following.

[00:22:11] The first is what you're eating. Not only is focusing on what you're eating a good strategy for the day of, but it is really important to practice your way of eating as you learn how to fast because that is what's going to help you maintain your results in the long run because it's very likely that you will not need to always do extended fasting or alternate-day fasting. Those types of fasts might become easy for you, and when you switch to maintenance, you're going to need to rely on good food habits. So the first is eating good foods. That's something you can focus on instead of trying to make it through the holiday fasted.

[00:22:58] The second is not snacking. I believe this should be part of most people's, quote-unquote, 'floor', so something they can fall back to where they don't go more off track or below that. So not snacking. And then the third is what we call TRE (time-restricted eating) - keeping your meals to no greater than 90 minutes and, ideally, more like 30 minutes. And so just setting some parameters for yourself, but not making

your goal so far from what's going on socially around you that you're not setting yourself up for success.

[00:23:40] Also, a really great strategy to use during this time would be to do something like fat feasting, where you don't control exactly when you're eating or how much but you're just focusing on what you're eating. Pick a handful of fatty foods. You can make some really indulgent deviled eggs with some avocado-oil mayo. You can make a tray full of bacon. And if people are at your house, you know, having a movie night or something like that, you can snack on those things instead of reaching for something else.

Megan [00:24:14] That's something I used to do at the clinic. So, you know, we have our work lives to contend with and our home lives to contend with when it comes to Halloween temptations. And the home situation, I figured out my strategy - not in the house and to have a different plan for my own ritual that evening. The work was different. So our clinic, when we were working in person, Jason and I, the whole team, the staff, everyone would bring in excess treats or their post-Halloween treats they just wanted to get out of their house. And I, during this time, learned very quickly that if I had something I really enjoyed, that satiated me, it would make it really easy to stay away from the sugar. So I would just cook like a ton of bacon. And we we joked, you know, in our Community and we joked with our patients then about this concept of purse bacon, like always packing bacon. [laughs] So this way, if you're struggling with stress or temptation, you've got some purse bacon. But I just had this big container, like Pyrex glass dish, of bacon that I kept in our fridge in the clinic. And any time I felt really tempted with the sugar, I would just go for the bacon indulgence because, like, how cool is it to eat bacon at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, right? Like they're not things that you do normally, but if it's that or diving deep into sugar, it's much more cool to go for the bacon.

[00:25:51] And you don't have to eat bacon. Bethany just gave a great suggestion of some fun deviled eggs. There's different options depending on what you like. Something really simple and easy that maybe you can even pick up today, everybody, if you're out, is some biltong. Biltong is just very thinly-shaved, grass-fed beef that's been dehydrated and seasoned. Unlike jerky, it doesn't have a whole lot of additives in it. There's usually no juice, no sugar that you have to be wary about. So this is something that's gained a lot of popularity in the paleo/keto space in North America, and you can virtually get it at any type of grocery store here in the U.S.. So picking up some fun packages of those just to keep on hand. Even in pregnancy, during my first trimester when I was so nauseous, I kept packets of it in my purse because whenever I didn't feel nauseous, I would try to eat some protein to maintain feeling good and just get protein in for the baby. So I was always packing biltong, which is really easy. You don't have to worry about refrigerating it. You don't have to cook. It's just something that's great to have. And the different flavors and seasonings are a lot of fun, and it's all organic so you can really enjoy it. So there's these other options for you to look into today.

[00:27:11] I do want to send out a warning for those of you who started a fast last night or this morning thinking it will help suppress your appetite as you go into this evening and might be giving out some treats, or trick-or-treating with your kids or grandkids. When we are very new to starting a fast, so within that first 24 hours, our hunger hormones are not that greatly suppressed. It's really not until we pass 36 hours into the fast where our ghrelin, our primary hunger hormone, drops significantly. And it drops more significantly for women than it does for men. Men experience more constant hunger, albeit trending much lower than women throughout their fasts, but women's hunger can actually really nosedive past that 36 to 48 hours into a fast and be virtually nonexistent. It's why so many women

prefer to get into a fast and stay there for a few days rather than doing alternate-daily fasts or intermittent fasting strategies. So if you are out there and you are just starting your fast or you haven't reached that 36 or 48-hour mark, there's a good chance your appetite is not hormonally suppressed. A lot of people think, again, this is going to be their saving grace if they can just do that 36 today or 42 today, but the hormones aren't there. So to Bethany's suggestions on good TRE practices, indulging in the fat fasting - those are things that you should try to focus on today to control your appetite rather than fasting to control your appetite. So just my experience and what's typically worked best for everyone we've worked with in clinic and online.

[00:29:07] All right. So, Bethany, what is your game plan for tonight? You've got some movies and you've got an 'indulgent but in line with your lifestyle' food plan. Anything else you've got special going on to celebrate?

Bethany [00:29:23] Yes. My friends and I are doing a game night, so we are all going to dress up but we're going to play games in our costumes. And I really like that because it's an activity that feels, you know, a little more adult than a craft night. Although I will never speak poorly about a craft night. [laughter] I think that would be awesome. But yeah, we're doing that. And that's a really great activity where you don't have to eat, or you can definitely control what exactly you're eating, because it's more of a grab-bag situation instead of a meal with folks. So that's what we're doing tonight.

Megan [00:30:03] That will be nice. Our days are limited here, but our plan is to-- we have a lot of very young kids on our street, very young, so they usually pack up around 7 p.m. and we just want to go and check all of the neat decorations in our neighborhood. So a few streets over is where more of the middle schoolers are so there's a lot more happening than our exact neighborhood. So we're going to have our meatza celebration and wrap up the little kids at 11, and then just go walk and take in the decorations. There's a chocolate tea that I really enjoy. It's a pu-erh tea from Numi and it's just chocolate. It's herbal, it's 100% cacao, there's no carbs in it, there's no artificial sweeteners or flavors of any kind, you know, just some cinnamon, nutmeg, and a few other things. So I always like making that tea in the fall, in the evening when we go on walks, and just enjoy. I've really minimized my caffeine intake during pregnancy. There's a little bit of caffeine in it, and it's a little late at night, but I've been saving up for it so it will be a part of my indulgence for the day and new rituals.

[00:31:24] So new rituals. Hopefully, we've given you all some ideas and that you have a very safe and satisfying and sugar-free Halloween this evening. Well, everybody, thank you for joining us today and we'll see you again next week with another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. Bye for now.