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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.

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

Megan [00:01:19] Hi everyone. It's Megan Ramos here with another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. Today I'm joined by Dr. Terri Lance, and we are going to be discussing the topic of motivation. Hi Terri, how are you doing today?

Terri [00:01:32] I'm good, Megan, How are you?

Megan [00:01:35] I'm good. This is an interesting topic that I'd love your take on. A lot of people start off with that January motivation - New Year, new beginning, new book - and then things start to slip and slide as we move further away from that January 1st date.

Terri [00:01:54] One of the things that I always think about when the topic of motivation comes up, Megan, is that people tend to think motivation is going to descend upon them. It's going to drop out of the sky and land in their lap and they're going to run with it. And so we use things like the New Year or, you know, a cruise that we're going on to be that thing that pushes us forward. And, usually, that doesn't really work out that way. Motivation does not fall out of the sky. It does not land on you. And so if we put ourselves into that place of saying, "Well, I'll start in the New Year," "I'll start next week," our brain naturally just keeps pushing that off. Instead of waiting for motivation to come to us, we have to work on building motivation. Motivation is one of those things that builds on itself. You grab a little tiny piece of it and you build it to a bigger piece and then a bigger piece, and then suddenly it's really running the show. But we can't wait for motivation to come to us, so don't wait until it gets here to start doing the thing that we want to be doing.

Megan [00:03:06] I used to struggle with this back in our nephrology days. Patients would have kidney disease. Kidney disease comes in five stages, with the first stage being the most mild and the fifth stage being the most serious. And usually around stage four, stage five, that's when education on dialysis options and potential transplants are discussed.

[00:03:30] So we would get a patient in stage one and we would ask them to implement these lifestyle factors to help slow down the progression of their kidney failure. So these lifestyle factors, obviously, this is predating what we were doing with The Fasting Method - fasting and nutrition. But to be quite honest, the advice was not awful. You know, give up processed and refined foods, give up alcohol, incorporate exercise. I mean, in general, it

was good base advice. There were some other things that weren't ideal, but the concept of giving up garbage and introducing more natural foods into the diet was the gist. And people struggled to do this because when you have stage one kidney disease, you have no symptoms, nothing other than some abnormal bloodwork. Even going into stage four kidney disease, you might only really be feeling fatigued and seeing increased urination, in a lot of cases. So these individuals are able to go to work, maintain normal family and social activities, travel all over without restrictions.

[00:04:40] And this is where we put on more pressure. We had a whole chronic kidney disease clinic trying to educate these people on these lifestyle factors to help slow down the progression. And they wouldn't implement them because they felt okay. And then, you know, their kidney disease comes in stage five and we book them in for a dialysis education and transplant info. And they freak out like, "What can I do? How can I stop this? I'll do anything. Tell me. I'll do anything. If I have to stand on my head for 14 hours a day, I'll do it. I can't go on dialysis. I won't be able to work. I won't be able to travel. It's going to impact my whole social life, my whole world." And, well, where were you listening, you know, for the last few years, or several years in some cases? These were conversations brought up. But now that you really are terrified or, "Have the fear of God," (as some would say) instilled in you because you've gotten this diagnosis, now you're willing to make change. And this is something that I so struggled with.

[00:05:48] I had this one patient at the clinic (a very young teacher) who had to have a kidney transplant in her early thirties. And we used to see patients in small groups in the clinic. Now this was very early on and she was taking prednisone (so steroids as an anti-rejection medication) which caused elevated blood glucose. So she was hell-bent on doing what she could to prevent being diagnosed with diabetes. So we were doing time-restricted eating and focusing on her nutrition. So, we were seeing patients in small groups, and she came to me and said, "I need to be seen one-on-one or I can't come here because it's just so frustrating hearing, 'The dog ate my homework.' I'm what happens if you don't listen. Why are they not inspired by my example? I had a transplant at 34 because I didn't listen. I didn't take care of myself. I partied, I drank, I ate processed and refined garbage foods. You know, fortunately, I wasn't diabetic, but why are they not inspired by me? Why do they have to get to where I was before they're inspired to take control of their health?"

Terri [00:06:56] It is one of those big, kind of, mysteries of how our mind works is people often wait until they hit rock bottom to find reason to do something. And I hope that people listening will really take this into consideration - that they don't want to wait until things get worse to start making the change.

[00:07:19] One of the stories I always tell about motivation-- and people who have attended my groups in the TFM Community are very familiar with this, but for those who have not attended a meeting, this might be a little new for them. Years ago I listened to some tapes on motivation (This was back when they were still on tape. So it was back in the day of cassettes) and the guy was talking about excuses. He used some other word for it, but, basically, the barriers, things that get in the way of us doing things, and things that do motivate us and drive us to move forward with things. And he said, "You know, part of the challenge is that we choose goals that don't really have enough value to us, and so we don't put a lot of effort into them." He used the example of health, and he said, "So if I told you that walking every day could improve your health, some of you would do that. But if it's raining out, you wouldn't. And if your kids needed a ride to soccer practice, you'd skip your walk. You would have a lot of reasons why you don't follow through on this thing that I just

told you is going to improve your health." So he said, "What if I told you that if you walked for 30 minutes every day for 30 days, I would give you a million dollars?" He said, "Suddenly that, 'Oh, I can't walk in the morning before work, it's still dark out.' 'Oh, I can't walk during lunch.' 'I can't walk after work because then my kids have activities.' 'I can't walk after dinner,' blah, blah, blah." He said, "None of those would be excuses that you would have because the value of getting a million dollars would make you do anything. And if I went back and said, 'Wait a minute, wait a minute, I thought you couldn't walk during lunch.' 'Well, I figured out just to tell my boss I had to be out of the office and I started walking during lunch,' or, 'I started recording my favorite show instead of sitting on the couch watching it after dinner.' You would find a workaround for every barrier because the reason you're doing it holds enough value. So when I told you it was going to help your health, yeah, it was a little important to you. But if I told you it was going to bring you a million dollars, it became very important."

[00:09:47] So I always try to use this with people and help them, you know, this whole question of 'finding your why'. It's got to be important to you. If it's not then that rainy morning, you're not going to follow through. That day when you're scheduled to fast and someone walks by you and you can smell their food wafting through the air, you're going to break your fast. But if you can make your reason valuable enough to you, you're going to be more willing to do the challenging things, take that next step, avoid the temptation. But if you're why, if your reason doesn't hold enough value, it's really hard to get our brain to act the way we want it to act.

Megan [00:10:33] People ask me all of the time (clients that we work with or those in the Community), "How did you reverse so much disease in six months?" My why was never about weight loss. I was 27 and vanity was something that had been important to me from the time I was a teenager. So I did desire to wear a size 2 or a size 4, but I spent my entire life from the age of 15 to 27, at that point, watching people die from diabetic-related complications. When I was given that diagnosis, there was no future if I didn't get rid of that. There is no possibility of me wearing that size 4 or size 2 pair of pants down the road. I had to get rid of that diabetes. My life was on the line. My ability to have a family was on the line. The burden of my illness on my living family was very strong and I needed to conquer that.

[00:11:33] And I've seen this time and time again in all of the people that we have worked with; if their focus is on their blood sugar levels, metabolic markers, if there's a real strong fire as to why they need to get their health under control, the weight loss is just a side effect of that and they reach their goals. But when people come in with weight loss being their primary goal, then that's where things get a little bit muddy because wearing a size 4, size 6, a size 8, it's not necessarily that fire that's going to keep things going through the highs and the lows and cause you to fast on that day when you're stressed out or fast on that day when maybe you didn't sleep so well.

[00:12:19] When someone comes in, either in the Community group or in a coaching session, and their goal is weight loss, well, why do you want to lose that weight? Do you want to lose that weight so in your retirement years you can travel with your husband without aches and pains, because you don't want to be a burden on your children, because you want to be able to be present with your grandkids because you were working so much with your own kids and now you see them working so hard to provide for their families? So you want to be that fun grandma or grandpa that can hold things down for your kids. So there is always a reason why behind that weight loss. It's not just to always fit

into that smaller pair of pants. And I think that's so important for people to explore in order to get them to make those changes and start to make this a way of life.

Terri [00:13:11] The other piece that I'm becoming more and more aware of recently, in our Community and with clients, is that oftentimes when specific weight-loss goals are what people are really focused on, is that as you approach that number, the motivation goes down. And once you reach that number, the motivation is gone. I know in our Community there's this word out there lingering that makes people nervous and it's 'maintenance'. "What am I going to do once I get there?" And if you think about focusing more on health, you're never going to get there. You're always going to be focused on your health. You're always going to need to do the things that help your body to work optimally. But if you're primarily looking at that 40-pound weight loss or that 80-pound, or that 150-pound weight loss, once you've reached it, your reason for doing the things that you're doing starts to slip away. And this is why I think so many people start to struggle with maintenance because that's where the hard work actually begins for a lot of people.

[00:14:23] So I think this idea of using weight loss, changing our number on the scale as our primary motivation, is a very faulty motivation for most people. It wears thin and, like I said, once you reach that goal, if you do reach it, it's hard to maintain because now your motivation is gone, your reason has evaporated.

Megan [00:14:49] I find that so true in clinic or in working with people. They'll come off their medications and they're no longer bound to insulin - it's no longer an issue for traveling, it's no longer an expense that they have - and then the motivation will start to subside some. Or individuals, they start looking very different and friends, family, even their physicians are so impressed by their progress that sometimes the motivation starts to slip. And when I'm working with individuals, I talk about redefining that why at the different stages of their journey and trying to intervene earlier. So when I know someone is only taking a small amount of insulin on their eating days and they're no longer even taking it on their fasting days, well, it's just going to be a matter of days or a couple of weeks before they're off of that altogether. Okay, that is a big motivator to get off of that insulin and to not need it anymore. So not needing it anymore sometimes continues the motivation, but what else is? Maybe that's not enough motivation. And I've seen it time and time again. Someone comes off of insulin, they feel like they've got these superpowers. They've done what Western medicine says is impossible to do for a type two diabetic. Things start to get a little bit more muddied in terms of adding in more snacks or being more liberal with processed and refined sugars and carbs. So we'll try to say, "Okay, you know, what is the assigned value to you? And what else is going to keep you going?" "If you've got a lot of cellular damage, is cardiovascular disease a concern?" "Are metabolic-related cancers a concern? Do they run in your family?" Not to get dark with these individuals, but you've got to reevaluate.

[00:16:43] And you can have several whys from the day that you start your journey. I always have a why. That's been so important for my continued progress because I'm human as well. You reach all of these mega, health milestones that nobody said you could, and it just makes it easier to slide into some old habits again. My bad one is snacking. Even though it's good food, it's certainly problematic. So I've always got to be thinking about, "What is my why?" You know, "What is my goal for the month, for the quarter, for the first half of the year, and does it need to shift?" And it's something I think about every month as I start to do my planning by aligning my goals and objectives. So it's really critical that you just don't have just one, and that you're constantly reevaluating, especially as you start to reach specific goals - blood sugars, biomarkers, medication, or weight loss.

Terri [00:17:42] I think that's such an important point to share. And I was thinking as you were describing that, sometimes it's the little (I'm categorizing them as little, but they're really important.), the little things that aren't that big and result-- like, "I'm going to get off insulin," or, "I'm going to reverse diabetes," versus, "I'm going to sleep better," "I'm going to not have aches and pains." And I've been listening to people over the past few weeks (We've been getting through some holidays over the past couple of months.) and people are talking about as they were eating some more problematic foods or snacking more often, they started to not feel as well and they were shocked by how much they could tell. And then as they've come into the New Year and starting to refocus on their why and their goals, they're starting to feel better, they're starting to sleep better, their aches and pains are decreasing.

[00:18:41] So looking at those overall bigger goals, those big whys, but also the little measures of it that happen every day, like, "I can fall asleep well," or, "I can stay asleep," or, "It doesn't hurt when I wake up and stand up for the first time in the morning." Focusing on those things, I think, also can help keep motivation going.

[00:19:07] And, you know, we go back to anybody writing about habits and building habits. They always talk about celebrating along the way, celebrating the small steps. We hear this in 'Atomic Habits' by James Clear and 'Tiny Habits' by B.J. Fogg. And so recognizing when you get up in the morning and you put your feet down and they don't shout back at you that that's pain, celebrate that. Connect that to what did you do, what have you been doing that has helped you to not have pain in the morning? That's a way to keep motivation going. But if you ignore that and just say, "Well, of course, I shouldn't hurt in the morning," it's easy to start sliding back into old habits. So taking the time to celebrate the successes - the way that you feel, the way that you've slept, the fact that you don't have to get up in the morning and start injecting insulin - to celebrate that, to reinforce it. Otherwise, like I said, those old habits just kind of creep back in on us and the motivation is just really minimized.

Megan [00:20:17] You just noted two books, 'Atomic Habits' and 'Tiny Habits'. And really, when it comes down to the core of those books, they talk about being 1% better (James Clear or B.J. Fogg). You know, flossing one tooth is a huge success. And, Terri, what we see so often in our clients and Community are people wanting to go 'all or nothing', 'go big or go home', and it's impossible to do that. So if they can't-- if they've got a list of twenty lifestyle things they want to implement - "So this week, I'm not going to snack. On my eating days I'm going to do two meals a day. I'm going to do three 42-hour fasts. I'm just going to drink water and salt." Like, we see these long lists of goals and people want to implement them all. And if they can't check off all twenty boxes, then they feel that they've absolutely failed and blown it out of the water.

[00:21:13] What do you say to people in your mindset and habit groups and coaching calls when this issue comes up?

Terri [00:21:20] That's a great question. I think the important thing in those moments is to focus on the smaller changes, the incremental changes, and rather than making the result the goal, make the process the goal. So, for example, if eating appropriately for my body is my goal, I can celebrate that many, many, many times throughout the week. But if my goal is only to lose 5 pounds this week, I only get to celebrate that once and I have lots of opportunities to see it not working. And again, that really tears down the idea of motivation versus if I can say, "Wow, I just ate a really healthy meal that worked well for my body."

That felt great. I'm going to do that again." And we celebrate it again the next time it's meal time for us. We're going to build that momentum. Again, motivation is about momentum, to keep us going.

[00:22:21] And if you go back to those books, B.J. Fogg talked about celebrating doing two wall push-ups when he would leave the bathroom. And then it became three wall push-ups, and four, until he could do full push-ups.

[00:22:36] Most of us, though, get so focused on the results, the outcome, "Where is this behavior going to lead me?" And we're only watching for that. And so I really try to slow people down and look for how did it feel to eat a healthy meal? How did it feel to wake up and not have so much inflammation that you couldn't close your hands? And really highlight that so that they're not only waiting to measure it with the large outcome, and especially the outcome of what their scale says because that becomes so emotionally driven for people. The scale said what I wanted, so I ate this problematic food to celebrate. The scale didn't say what I wanted, so I ate this problematic food to commiserate, you know, or to soothe myself.

[00:23:26] And so I think really getting into that, working on developing the habits and the lifestyle versus I'm only doing this for the outcome. Be the person who doesn't need to use insulin to manage their glucose versus just getting there. Be the person, live the experience so that that is what actually you're rewarding yourself for, you're celebrating.

Megan [00:23:53] Let's talk about some tools that people can use because even when you have a big motivator like type two diabetes, there are things that happen. And you talk a lot about this in our Community and our courses about just those brain chemicals, right? So you're having an awful day. Your brain knows-- we wired it to understand that sugar is going to give a dopamine response. In the short term, that makes us feel better, but in the long term, it doesn't. So we've got these responses - ingrained, physiological, neurological responses - to certain foods. So even when the motivation factor, the why is strong, it can still be difficult at points.

[00:24:37] And there's things that I would ask clients to do, our patients to do to help them. If someone was really motivated by a bad blood test (CRP, triglycerides, A1C, something), carry that around with them. This is something that I did with my A1C. I carried that lab paper with me. So when I was at restaurants with friends or someone's birthday, all these things that come up, I could look at that and I could remember, no, this is my why. I can never see this number again on a blood test result, ever again. Well, hopefully, you know, life happens.

[00:25:10] So that was one thing - a list of why they were fasting, all of those healing benefits, keeping that with them. A note to themselves that they wrote when they were first diagnosed or really first feeling inspired about their why and why they're doing this ("My mother died of metabolic-related breast cancer and she didn't get to see her grandkids be born or grow up.") and what that meant to them. So we would have people do these things just to help them. Or if there's a particular podcast, listen to it. You know, even in my professional life, there's this book called 'Educated' by Tara Westover, and any time I'm just feeling so burnt out or uninspired or just stuck in a funk, I will read this book just to get my mojo back and to get inspired again. Sometimes it's in the middle of the year, sometimes, like this year, it was the beginning of the year. But we have these things that we go to and you can absolutely have them for your health journey with fasting as well.

[00:26:30] What are some other tools or additional thoughts, Terri?

Terri [00:26:33] I like the idea of also-- it's like a vision board that people used to talk about back when that became really popular. I was never someone who believed much in vision boards, but now I really think it's important. We have to start to visualize our lives in an improved state. And many people can't imagine, you know, if you're on 80 units of insulin, you can't imagine not being on insulin. It's hard to believe and it defies everything we've been taught. And so having to start picturing that. Picture yourself, getting ready for your trip and not having to pack insulin. Create an image of that. Now, whether you do a tangible vision board or not, some way to almost like mentally rehearse, start planting the image of that, that you want to become your reality so that your brain starts working toward it. Start seeing that as your identity.

[00:27:31] I also listen to some guided meditations and I choose a specific person that I really like, but I choose which message to listen to based on what I need. So for example, when I'm feeling kind of defeated and like maybe I can't do this, I listen to one of his that is about autonomy and self-advocacy and your ability to achieve things. I make it so that that's the message playing in my head because the message that was in my head is, "I can't do this. This won't work." And I've got to switch out of that. So finding, if you're into meditation, or finding a message, like you said, a book, a motivational book, something that kind of grabs you.

[00:28:16] The other thing is tying it to something emotional. Emotions really do motivate. If you think about, you used the example earlier of, you know, "Maybe I have kids and I want to be a grandparent and I want to experience that." If we just think of like, "Yeah, I'd like to be that grandparent who does this." That might motivate some people, but maybe attach it to the emotion. Actually imagine holding your two-year-old grandkid and being able to swing them around and then run after them. Feel it, get the emotion of it. And I don't always use this, but, for some people, this is beneficial. Imagine the opposite. "What if I don't do this thing that I'm working on right now? What will I miss out? What will that feel like when my two-year-old grandkid tries to climb on my lap and I can't pick them up?" Get that emotion going. Because that inner part of your brain that wants you to eat that problematic food or break that fast, it doesn't care about your future. You've got to get the other part of you activated to care enough.

[00:29:31] So I recently recorded a podcast with my friend, Daisy, and it was about a topic about why is it that we sometimes struggle doing things that we know we should be doing? We've been told to eat healthy. Why don't we eat healthy? We've been told to exercise more. Why don't we? And the woman on this podcast is actually an economist, and she talked about something that they study called 'present bias'. And that's where we put more weight or value on what will provide instant gratification, and we undervalue anything that will give us long-term results. This is, unfortunately, part of how our brain works. That reactive part of our brain doesn't think about ten years from now, two weeks from now, twenty years from now. It thinks about feeling good right now.

[00:30:25] And this-- again, going back to the whole finding our why, what motivates us, I think we have to visualize, "I can have this instant gratification right now." Like, for me, "Eating this dessert will feel enjoyable right now," but what happens as a result of that? My health gets worse, my weight becomes more problematic, my mobility is decreased. I have to really start to see that and recognize there is part of my brain that wants this instant feel-good, but what do I actually value? I value what's coming in the future. I value what's coming for my future self. And I've got to switch that then to not having this enjoyable thing

in this moment. Connecting that with, "What joy, what feel-good things will that bring me in the future?" Looking at valuing the long-term rather than the instant gratification. And I think sometimes for me, just knowing my brain is biased that way.

Megan [00:31:31] One thing I always encourage people to do (and I did this myself) to help with this present bias, is to pause before you put anything in your mouth and have a conversation with it. You know, "Okay, ice cream. I see you and why do I want you? Well, because I had a really bad day, you know, my work presentation blew up. It didn't go well. Well, are you going to help me? Okay, For 15 minutes, you might help me, but how am I going to feel in four hours from now?" So I would have people think about the immediate reaction - four hours, later that day, or the next morning. Well, in four hours from now, you're going to be feeling really guilty, and mad, and angry, and concerned about the ramifications of having that ice cream. And in the morning, you're going to feel bloated. You're going to feel tired and sluggish. You're going to have another stressful day because you didn't get proper sleep. Your blood sugar levels are not going to be optimal. You've added inflammation to the body, you've suppressed satiation signaling. Like, there's all these things. And if you take that time and you pause and you have this conversation with the food and how it's going to make you feel, then you're likely to put it away because you've now have thought about beyond the present, about the future. And then it's just like, "Okay, Mr. Brussels Sprout. You're going to taste really good. And I might not feel this explosion right now, but in 4 hours I'm going to feel really good and I'm going to be so proud of myself for having Mr. Brussels Sprout. And tomorrow morning I'm going to have slept great, feel good. My stress is going to be down. All these wonderful things that are leading me towards my goals."

[00:33:18] So I encourage people to have this conversation, when you're navigating this part of your journey at least. Take the time. And it's one of the mindful eating strategies that I like to talk about - take the time, have a conversation with your food. And you know what, this might be the year that you decide to dig in and do some of the harder work that I know Terri focuses on so much with our Community and her clients. You know, if I'm leaning into this food because of this particular mindset that I'm in, well, maybe it's time I work on that mindset. Terri and I talk about this a lot, and I actually just saw this on Dr. Ted Naiman's Instagram this morning, like a maintenance plan. You've got to transform. If you want to maintain these metabolic health results, you've really got to transform who you are, how you feel about food, and how you handle certain emotions. You'll be so grateful for it in the long term. But it's really not about maintaining, it's really about transforming.

Terri [00:34:18] Absolutely.

Megan [00:34:20] Well, thank you so much, Terri, for this discussion. I think it's very timely right now and, hopefully, will help people think about the rest of 2023. Thank you all for listening today. We'll be back next week with another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. Bye for now.

Terri [00:34:37] Take good care, everybody.