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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.

[00:00:42] The use of any other products or services purchased by you as a result of this podcast does not create a healthcare provider-patient relationship between you and any of the experts affiliated with this podcast. Any information and statements regarding dietary supplements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration and are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

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

Terri [00:01:19] Welcome back, everyone, to another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. This is Dr. Terri Lance and this is one of our Bitesize episodes. Many of you may be familiar with a phrase that I often use. I often hear it quoted in our Community. People have picked up on it and have used it to kind of reframe or normalize something for themselves. The phrase is that "You can do hard things." I've talked about this so many times in our Community, in the podcast, but I thought, you know, maybe a little extra inoculation right now during this time of year would be helpful for people.

[00:02:03] So I wanted to talk about this concept of being able to do hard things. And I know that a part of our brain, the lower part of our brain, does not want to do hard things. It's looking for avoidance of difficult things, avoidance of discomfort, and seeking of ease and comfort. That is an instinctive part of us that's really focused on survival but, in our modern day, there aren't a lot of things that are harmful to us as far as getting an email that is maybe a little too harsh or having a boss expect something of us that's more than what we can get done today. But that part of our brain reacts to that as, you know, a catastrophe and must be mitigated right away by eating some really problematic food or gorging on something. And so I really want us to kind of think about, not only can we handle difficult things in our life, we all face times of great stress, times of tragedy, painful losses. And I know how hard these things are, but I also know we can get through them. And we do. We all do, even though they're really hard. And even though in the moment it feels like we can't get through it, we always do.

[00:03:27] So then it comes to something like fasting or skipping out on a favorite pastime of ours that involved a certain food or something, and people start to talk about it as if that's too complicated, that's too difficult. I remember when I first changed how I was eating. I was doing the Whole30 and many people that I came in contact during this time were really surprised. And they said, you know, "What are you doing? Your face is just glowing and you just look so energized and everything. What are you doing?" and I said that I was doing this particular elimination diet, and they said, "Oh, great, tell me about it. What is it?" And as soon as I started listing, "Well, you know, I don't eat grains, I don't eat dairy, I don't eat sugar, I don't have alcohol." They're like, "Never mind. Never mind. That's enough. I'm not doing that. That's too hard." And it always surprised me when I heard this reaction because, of course, I thought that too. I thought this was too hard. I definitely

thought this was something I would not be able to do because I had never been able to, in any kind of a prolonged way, stick with a healthy eating plan. So I heard them say that this was too difficult, but just a moment before they seemed so interested and so wanting of those benefits. But as soon as I told them some of the steps that they would have to take, shoo, it was right off the list. No way were they going to do that!

[00:05:01] So we've talked often in this podcast and in the Community about finding your WHY. What motivates you? Why are you willing to do these things that might be complicated? And recognizing that, in order to do them, you have to be willing to do things that are not your first nature, that are a little bit of a stretch for you, that might even be challenging or difficult for you to do. But this is where we thrive as people. We have this ability to do difficult things and I really encourage you to start talking about these food choices and this fasting as a difficult thing that you can do. And I think what many of you find is that as you start doing it, it becomes less difficult.

[00:05:54] I've been doing fasting long enough now, and I go through months of time where I don't do much fasting. I focus more on time-restricted eating or TRE, and then segments of time where I do some fasting. And I'm currently in one of those periods of time where I'm doing more fasting and I'm surprised, the first two weeks, it was a little bit challenging. It was hard to get back into that momentum and that rhythm. And I had to challenge my mindset. I had to challenge my behaviors and really work on remembering how this is possible for me. But what I found (I'm now just finished up week four) is it got a lot easier. So my willingness to do hard things for a couple of weeks helped me move to the stage where it's not as difficult anymore.

[00:06:47] Fasting becomes easier over time, as long as you're not facing, maybe-- you know, you're fighting off getting sick, or you're not sleeping at all, or you're having a really high stress time. Those things definitely complicate fasting. But, in general, fasting becomes easier. It's a little bit like working out at the gym - lifting that 55-pound dumbbell gets easier over time. It doesn't get harder and it doesn't stay the same. Your muscles get used to it, your confidence increases, and it becomes easier. So does fasting.

[00:07:24] The other angle of this that I want to focus on is I'm certainly not encouraging you to be miserable. I'm not encouraging you to do things that are so difficult that you just feel incapacitated throughout the day. But a little bit of discomfort, a little bit of hunger or appetite is not going to harm us. But it is challenging. And so, again, talking with yourself, changing that mindset - "I can do hard things. This isn't easy for me right now, and I can still do it." Giving yourself credit afterward - "I did that thing that wasn't easy for me." That helps remind your brain, next time when you're going to do something that's challenging, that it is totally possible.

[00:08:11] So we want to be talking to ourselves about our ability to do hard things, not just focus on how hard this is to do. Our brain listens to that. And if all I'm focusing on is, "Oh, this fast is so hard," "Why do I have to do this?" "Oh, my gosh, why do I have to do three of these this week?" My brain is listening to that whole conversation and it will stop putting in the effort. It will sabotage me. It will, you know, not engage in the way that I want it to. But if instead, I remind myself, "There are things about this that are challenging and I can handle that. I can do this difficult thing." And then, again, celebrate on the other side. "I did this hard thing and look what's happening." "My blood sugar numbers are increasing." "My skin is clearing up." "My ring is starting to fit better." "My pants are starting to fit better." "The scale is moving again." These are the things that we want to be focusing on, that doing this hard thing is bringing me the benefits that I'm seeking.

[00:09:19] I get it. We would all love to just get all the benefits without the hard work, but most of us have figured out at this stage in life that very few things that are really meaningful to us come easy the whole time. I'm not a parent, but many of you listeners are parents and you've raised kids, or are raising kids, you might even be raising grandkids. You know that, despite the fact that this is a really rewarding experience, it is challenging. It is hard. There might be some days where it is the hardest thing you can imagine doing and you don't know how you're going to get through the rest of this week, but you do. You figure things out. And it helps that you look back and think of all of the rewarding times you have with those kids. It makes it much more doable when the going gets tough.

[00:10:16] So this lesson, again, is really about focusing on your mindset, talking to yourself, not setting yourself up for barriers - "This is too hard," "I can't do this," "It's not fair that I have to do this." Instead, to set yourself up with, "I can do hard things. I am doing them and, look, when I do them, I see the results I'm looking for. My body is changing. My biomarkers are changing. Give me more hard things. I'll keep doing them."

[00:10:45] So that's the end of my message for today, just as a reminder, you can do hard things. Next week, there will be another Bitesize episode with some bits of information for you. Take good care, everybody.