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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] Hi, everyone. Welcome back to another Bitesize episode of The Fasting Method podcast. This is Dr. Terri Lance coming to you with some information that I hope is helpful. This is a question sent in by someone who I think-- it really becomes a great mindset and behavioral kind of habit question. So here goes. "I really struggle with unstructured times when I'm not working, a.k.a. the weekends. Monday through Friday is good. Saturday and Sunday are not. I'm a teacher, so summer is coming up and it's always such a disaster for me. How do I overcome this? What tips do you have to help me be successful even during unstructured time?"

[00:02:08] Now, unfortunately, in the US, this person has likely gone back to school or is soon going back to school. But it's not uncommon for all of us to have reasons why we struggle more. We have certain times during a month or a week or a season that we have more unstructured time. So the first thing I want to encourage you to think about is creating your own structure. And one way of creating structure may be around meals. So, for example, this person said that they struggle on the weekends. If I set my meal plan to be noon and 6 p.m. on Saturday and noon and 6 p.m. on Sunday, that creates my structure. Now, I can be going places and doing things, but I'm already scheduled to eat at noon and eat at six. And, of course, they can be a little off from that, no problem but, in general, I want to make sure that I'm sticking with that schedule. If it's that I want to fast over the weekend, I can do that as well and create my plans for the day that don't revolve around food.

[00:03:24] Now, let's take, for example, this person talked about their summer. So they work, obviously, during the school year and then there's a lot of unstructured time during the summer. Again, I would encourage-- and this person had also written in a little bit about their current fasting schedule that they are doing 42-hour fasts. So I would encourage, if this is the case, to plan, again, on let's say, for example, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday, I eat my two meals at this structured time. Then, on my fasting days I plan things during that time when I would normally be eating. Now it might be I'm working on a project, it might be I go to the pool, it might be that I go to a tennis lesson, or I go to visit friends, or go for a walk. But oftentimes, for many of us, being busy during the times that we would normally eat helps us to feel like we're not missing out on something. Some of us struggle when it's the time that we would normally eat and there's no food, we're not

eating today, and we just kind of sit there with this void of activity. So planning something can be really helpful.

[00:04:39] The other part that I want to address with this is-- as you all know, if you've listened to me at all, you know that, to me, it's all about mindset and changing the paradigms, changing the ways we think about things. Many of us think of weekends as a time off, a break. And what I encourage you to think about is it is a break from the normal routine, but it's not a break from your health. It's not a break from managing your weight in a healthy way. It's not a break from self-care. Same as summer, for a teacher, and other seasons if you're in another line of work or if you're retired. Just because you don't have the built in structure of a daily job or requirements doesn't mean that it's not important to follow a specific plan. Your health doesn't take three months off. Your weight management doesn't take three months off. So even though you're not at work during specific times or, like I said, if you're retired, you're not at work generally at all, your focus on self-care is important every single day, whether it's a holiday, a vacation day, a weekend, a summer, middle of winter, it doesn't matter.

[00:06:06] And so for many, many of us, we have to start working on no longer thinking about days of the week, or weeks of the month, or months of the year as being times off that we don't have to focus on taking care of ourselves. Just like during those times, you still do laundry, you still have to do things around the house, you still have to take care of you. And the more you can get away from thinking about those times as times where you have complete freedom to eat however you want, the better you're going to do. You can eat however you want during those times, you just have to be willing to accept the impact of that or the consequences of that. But if you are really working on health goals or weight goals, you can't take time off from that. Taking good care of you is always important.

[00:07:06] I know for a lot of us that is going to require some big paradigm shifts to start thinking of weekends in a different way. Maybe thinking about the freedom of a weekend has to do with 'what tasks I need to do' versus 'I can eat whatever I want'. Some of us have a Las Vegas mentality when it comes to weekends. You know, if it happened on the weekend it doesn't count or if it happened on vacation it doesn't count. And for this person, maybe it used to be that if it happens during the summer, it doesn't count. But your body, your pancreas, your liver, your organs, they don't take that time off. So it still matters. So working on shifting that mindset - "My vacation time is freedom that I'm not at work or not responding to certain tasks that I normally do, but I'm still focusing on my self-care. That never stops."

[00:08:09] So what do I encourage you to do after listening to this? Start thinking about what's of importance to you? Your health, your weight management, feeling well, your mobility, your longevity - all of those things that most people come to us looking to improve. Think about what's important to you about that, and then think about, "How can I use my unstructured time to still focus in a healthy way on my health, my mobility, my longevity, my weight management," and then simplify that into, "If it's a day that I'm going to be eating, I have a structure. I eat at the lunch hour and I eat at the dinner hour." Or if you're like me, you eat at the breakfast hour and the late lunch hour. So there is a structure, but then the rest of your day to work around that. You can see friends, you can do tasks, you can go shopping, you can do whatever really fits for you, but you have a structure. Think about your summer. If you have summers off, think about your summer - "Every week I have a certain structure. This is my fasting structure. On the days that I'm eating, I have an eating structure but, other than that, I can move things wherever I want them." Or if you're retired, I often hear people who are retired think, "I have no structure."

This is a great way to implement some structure into your life without it being punitive or restrictive.

[00:09:45] So take a moment to really reflect on what's important to you and start rethinking your times off - your weekends, your holidays, and your summer break, or whatever it is that you have.

[00:09:59] I will be back soon for another Bitesize episode, so I look forward to talking with you then. Take good care everybody.