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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. 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 my lovely cohost, Dr. Terri Lance, and we're going to be discussing some of the common trends we're seeing around schedules changing in our coaching clients and Community members, and how that affects their fasting and eating routines, because it's coming up a lot, especially with more people returning to work and resuming business travel.

[00:01:50] Before we get started, Terri, how are you doing today?

Terri [00:01:54] I'm good, Megan. Looking forward to talking about this because, as you said, it's a topic that I'm hearing more and more with my clients and in our community. So I hope we can help people to strategize and think about these things a little differently.

Megan [00:02:09] I've had a hard time wrapping my head around this in the last few weeks because it's just been quite overwhelming amongst the coaching clients and Community members. It seems like all of a sudden, for some reason, in the last month, everybody is hitting the road again in a big way. And it's been interesting for me because I primarily did coaching and we had the clinic all pre-COVID, and we actually stopped the clinic and switched online in December 2019, very ironically, ahead of the world shutting down. So I'm just so used to working with people who are always in office and have busy business travel schedules. And then COVID was a really huge shift for our individuals. But during that time I was doing a lot of Community work for our program, developing masterclasses, and now I've gone back into coaching and my clients are now reemerging into the world. And there's a lot of different mentality and mindset around this reemergence that I haven't had to deal with with coaching before. What are some of the things that your clients and the people in your groups are sharing that are sort of mental barriers, you know, from them figuring out how to wrap fasting into their new routines?

Terri [00:03:30] Mm hmm. I think one of the biggest things that I've been hearing from people who are in office more, or in person working more often, is that it now means navigating their not eating or their food choices around colleagues, around the snacks that are in the office constantly, food that's brought to all the meetings, all the working lunches with food. So things that when many people were working from home, they really only needed to navigate their kitchen, their meal timing, and their family's behaviors around eating. But now suddenly it's in front of them all the time in the office. And like you said,

maybe both you and I were used to that before, but then we got so used to coaching people and working with people when that wasn't an issue and now it's back.

Megan [00:04:28] It's been interesting to see sort of all of these shifts and folds with the pandemic and now the re-emergence of life at the end of it. And I think that one thing that was very easy for people to do during COVID when they were working from home was to get into a very monotonous routine. We talk about this all of the time. You know, people ask us about fasting protocols, and we have these cookie-cutter strategies all over. They're in Jason's books, our books, they're on our website, in our Community, and they're sort of these standardized protocols. And prior to COVID, people didn't necessarily have a regular Monday-to-Friday, 9-to-5 routine in a lot of cases. So it was always just kind of looking at the week ahead and pivoting the schedules around. A lot of the patients that I worked with in Toronto, even retirees, didn't fit into a box when it came to their fasting and their routines weren't always the same. So nobody was in a box of always doing three 42s or two 48s. Life just didn't allow for that. But then COVID happened and life very much allowed for that and people got into these intense structures of routines. So what I'm seeing with my coaching clients is sort of trying to move away from that, and to pivot, and to understand that we can combine different strategies. And that maybe instead of having one base-fasting approach, you know, we have two or three different fasting protocols that we can pivot to, pull out of our pockets, depending on the events in the weeks to come.

[00:06:15] Something that I've done a lot with clients that I've been working with is giving them two or three different strategies to implement based on sort of X, Y, or Z events. So we've had a lot of people-- over COVID, I'd say the 48-hour protocol done twice a week, once at the beginning of the week and then again at the end of the week, became probably our most popular fasting protocol. People loved it because they got this deeper fat-burning happening. It was less total numbers of hours of fasting, but more fat burning, more ketosis, more autophagy, all these things everyone strives for during their fasts. And then they only missed dinner with their families or people in their households twice a week. It seemed like a win-win, so so many people in our Community fell into this pattern, but now life is happening. So trying to take that and evolve the strategy.

[00:07:12] So actually in a coaching call this morning, we were talking about some of the long weekends and events to come. You know, people tend to move in the spring and the summertime, over a long weekend, or we just have long-weekend holidays. So how can we pivot? Well, you know, if we have sort of a more regular-routine week, we can sure try to fit into that two 48-hour-a-week box. But then if we've got a more eventful week, we can pivot as well and we can do a 48 and maybe two 24s, and you can even do those two 24-hour fasts back to back, so you maintain an almost similar pattern to doing that 48. So, you know, if you were to do a 48 at the beginning of the week and at the end of the week, but then switch things around. So you might do a 48 at the beginning of the week and then do two 24s towards the end of the work week and how that might play into, you know, preparing for a move or preparing for a long weekend. And then even sort of talking about long weekends like Memorial Day or July 4th coming up and the earlier part of the week being a real holiday or celebration. So Memorial Day this year is on May 29th. It's a Monday. Well, we don't need to do a 48 at the start of the week. We can do two 24s and then we can do a 48 towards the end of the week.

[00:08:33] So learning that we can-- I think people like to have some form of structure. They don't want to be fasting willy-nilly all over the place, but really giving ourselves some options or some flexibility and then taking a look at a calendar and seeing where we can fit it in. I had one client this morning who was absolutely convinced they couldn't fast for a

period of three weeks based on some events that were falling around weekends. And they were real events, some of them even stressful, to a certain extent, that would definitely drive appetite up, but they were concerned because they had a limited amount of time to try to reach certain metabolic health goals before some additional summer vacations came up to play. But we can still fit the therapeutic fasting in. You just can't stay in a static box of three 42s or two 48s.

Terri [00:09:26] I think you just hit the nail on the head there, Megan. There are two things that really seem to interfere for people and, in some ways, they're even words or phrases or concepts that we've taught people, but now people fall into over-applying them. One of them is consistency. We talk about consistency and the importance of it. And I often say, "Consistency is your best friend," but that doesn't mean every week looks exactly the same. That's not actually what I mean when I say, "consistency," but I think people are really working on, "Well, I've got to be consistent," and now they feel locked in - "and because I can't do that, I can't do anything." They don't see the shades of gray and, "How can I adapt this?"

[00:10:11] And with that, another way to see that is I think many of us look for the right way to do something. And many people, I think, came to The Fasting Method for that reason. "I'm going to find out the right way for me to do this." And there's not just one cookie-cutter protocol that fits everyone or that fits anyone all the time. And so that idea of consistency, meaning, "I'm going to keep consistently fasting. I'm going to consistently use fasts throughout, you know, my time of this consistently, not cookie-cutter identical." And that it's not going to be just one plan the whole time.

[00:10:55] And I usually try to encourage people to think about-- and I really believe this from my own experience and from clients and Community members. For most of us, once you can get beyond a 24-hour fast, any fast is an option. It's once you can get to a 36 or a 42 that any of those that you've just mentioned really do become possible. But I often see people go to the handouts, go to the protocols, and say, "Okay, which one of these do I have to do?" Versus once you can do any of those fasts, you can piece them together any way you want.

[00:11:34] I had a client who used to refer to this as fasting Tetris. [laughter] She would come up with her monthly plan. She liked to look at it one month at a time, but no two weeks looked identical. She looked at, "How can I fit this piece in and where can I fit this piece?" like you would adjust Tetris pieces. I think it's important for people to get that the consistency is about commitment to fasting, not identical fasting all of the time. That's not really possible for most of us.

Megan [00:12:04] I think this whole concept was much more intuitive for a lot of people before the pandemic and lockdown and a big change in our just overall routine and life. You know, I watched this on a personal note with my husband. So he worked at home for a while and then there was COVID. We moved to California and he's resumed working in office. It's Silicon Valley so every business is kind of like an amusement park with how they treat their employees. There's lots of temptations and lots of perks at these particular companies, and a lot of those are all surrounding food and celebrations around food. So he gained some weight and we were struggling-- we were trying to figure out how to best navigate him getting things back on track. And I had to say to him, "You know, it's time. It's time for us to work on this." And he was someone that said, "Well, you know, all we've seen the last couple of years is how popular these two 48s are." So we were recently in Santa Barbara for a long weekend and we enjoyed-- you know, I'm pregnant, so we were

eating three meals a day. I have to eat to control my nausea. I'm doing everything the opposite of what I tell you all to do right now [laughter] with my own diet but I'm stuck to real food, so I'm very proud of that. So we had a lot of eating and then he immediately returned to work on Monday and realized that he has these candidate dinners because his team is expanding, and he has them two nights back to back and he can't do his 48 at the start of the week after our trip. Panic kind of ensued and I said, "Well, you can do two 24s. You can fast and just eat at your candidate dinners." They're going to great restaurants with plentiful options for him. He can lean more carnivore at these meals, they'll be fine. "And you can always then allow that to help reset your system so you can do your 48 at the end of the week." And then, you know, he took kind of a bit of a sigh and he laughed and he said, "You know, years ago this would have been so intuitive to just know to flex these things around." But we've just gotten so stuck in these boxes, in these pigeonholes that he very much got into the idea that two 48s was just the best. It was the best for fat burning, it was the best because then he'd be able to help me out with dinner and he didn't want to leave his pregnant, sick, nauseous wife to fend for herself too often throughout the week. So that's just what he had to do.

[00:14:36] But that's not what you have to do and I find so much of what I'm doing now as a coach is really helping people look at week by week and figure out how they can be consistent with fasting. I know Terri shared this story on this podcast but, years ago, I had this one patient who had a couple of weddings throughout the month of August, so he showed up for his appointment in the beginning of September and said he couldn't fast for the month of August because he had these weddings. And I asked him, "Oh, did you travel for these weddings?" "No, they were all local." "Okay, I get that. Were they your children?" And, "No. No, they were a niece and nephew here and there. Everybody was local." "So why couldn't you fast on Tuesdays? What was wrong with Tuesdays? You could always do a 24-hour fast on a Tuesday." All these weddings were on Saturdays, I did verify that with him.

[00:15:30] We can just become so overwhelmed, you know, thinking about all of the events that we have. So I think really having a paper calendar is a huge lifesaver. I know everyone loves their iCals and their GoogleCal or Outlook or whatnot, but having just a regular, paper calendar and writing down the meals that you do need to eat or the events that you do have, you'll see there's a lot of blank space. And, you know, I worry about so many people going into the summertime because we treat it like a vacation. But outside of the summer, our vacations usually don't extend more than a couple of weeks. You know, even thinking about holidays. Thanksgiving in the United States is definitely a week-long holiday, I've learned since moving here. And, you know, we've got the time between Christmas and New Years that can tend to be pretty messy for a lot of us. But most of our holidays are confined to a couple of weeks, so we just go with it and some meals go great and some meals don't go great, but we say, "Heck, it's just two weeks. We can get back on track."

[00:16:35] But the summertime is intense because it's four months. You know, if it's just sort of throw your hands up in the air and live and let live for four months out of the entire year, people really can backslide over the summertime. I know in our Community very recently we did a group challenge on early time-restricted eating. And a big part of why I wanted to do that challenge was to get people thinking about the consequences of eating late into the night now that the days are getting longer. And so many of the weekly lessons through that challenge were just hopefully strategies and tips that would help people get through sort of the late-night eating and the holiday parties around the campfire in their neighbor's backyard just with more ease so they can maintain the integrity of their fasts.

And we all know the summertime is just extreme busyness. So on top of people going back to work and resuming work travel, going on vacations, kids home from school, relatives coming to visit, it's a lot. So we can't expect to fit into a box. It's just not going to work and people need to get rid of that box, security-blanket mentality, put their events down on paper and then see all of that white space on the paper and try to plan in when they *can* do their fasts and show up and be consistent.

Terri [00:18:00] Yeah, I think it's really important to look at it that it's not all or nothing. "Either I'm going to be doing three fasts a week or I just can't fast." Chart in where your plans are, where you do kind of need to be eating, where it fits best, and then, "Where can I fit my fast in there?"

[00:18:18] I think we did an episode maybe back before the December holidays and we talked about it's not a write-off. And, unfortunately, I think a lot of people get in that mentality as we head into summer that it gets more complicated and that they come to the conclusion that just kind of writing it off, like, "I'll be back in September and tackle this again." And really learning how to pivot, learning how to strategize, to keep my fasting going consistently without it being the exact same plan every week is the way to make this not a write-off for the summer.

Megan [00:18:57] There's different strategies. So we talked about having a few different plans for fasting, looking at the calendar and writing it down and seeing what we can fit in where. Another strategy is creating some hard rules for yourself when it comes to fasting. So the minimum we ask for therapeutic fasting is three 24-hour fasts a week. At the beginning of one's journey, that's absolutely daunting, I understand that. A lot of people who are listening, though, people in our Community are more seasoned fasters. So after doing the 24s for several weeks, people typically find them to be second nature, so the three 24-hour fasts are usually doable. So even if you've got the most hectic week - grandma's coming to visit, we're going to the theme parks - well, you can figure out to do three 24-hour fasts. Whether we do them from lunch to lunch or dinner to dinner, depending on the events, we can get those in.

[00:19:59] So that can be sort of a minimum rule and then you have sort of your goal fast. Maybe that's three 24s. And then maybe you give yourself some flexibility. "So long as I do three fasts a week that are either 24 to 42. Some weeks they might be three 24s and some weeks they might be three 42s. And then the bulk of the time it'll probably be a combination." But that way, just having sort of these rules for yourself-- you know, of course you have to be feeling well. If you're not feeling well, you shouldn't fast. If you're on antibiotics, you can't fast. So life throws us these curveballs. But when you're feeling good, you know, having these rules so you've got a minimum. "This week I have to look on the calendar and I have to try to find three 24-hour fasts." Because it can quickly fall to the wayside, especially with summer, on top of all of these new changes we're experiencing re-emerging from COVID.

Terri [00:20:56] I like that point, Megan, that it's about giving yourself some flexibility without enabling yourself to just kind of, again, write it off. So, "It's not an option that I'm not going to do any fasting, but my minimum fasts this week will be three 24s. But if I look at the week, I also think one of those will end up being a 42, but minimum is the 24s." I think many of us want structure, but when we start to apply too much structure, we get kind of wiggly about it and then we just want to kind of throw out the plan. And so I like the way you just described that. It's giving yourself some parameters. "This is the minimum, this is kind of the target, and as long as I do somewhere in that range, I feel good about

my effort this week. So I don't have to get discouraged but I also don't have to just kind of white knuckle it through every week either."

Megan [00:21:54] I had three rules for myself during my journey. Minimum, so long as I was feeling good, was three 24s. I did not snack and I did not eat after 8 p.m. unless there was a very odd exception. Maybe it was a wedding, things ran late. You know, I wasn't going to not participate in that. But if I was just myself at home for dinner or eating, then there was no reason for me to be eating past 8 p.m.. And I just kept it simple. I stuck to those basic principles and in six months I reversed a lot of disease.

[00:22:28] And all of the time I am asked this question, probably the most of all the questions that I'm asked, and it's, "In my experience, what makes someone successful at this way of living this lifestyle?" And it's a combination of being consistent with the therapeutic approach, showing up for your fasting treatments, but also being flexible, not forcing yourself into a particular box. And of all of the thousands of people I worked with now, the ones who really conquered this with fasting, embrace that. They didn't beat themselves up if they couldn't do a week of three 36s. Not at all. They did their 24s or, you know, even if they had to take antibiotics (say for dental work or something) and they could only do TRE, they were proud. They stuck to their TRE. They didn't snack. They didn't eat late at night. So they stayed consistent with some fundamental principles, even though they couldn't fast.

[00:23:28] So sticking to sort of the basics that we've talked so much about on this podcast and doing the basics consistently, you know, that's what really leads to success. And where I see people flounder the most is really trying to pigeonhole themselves. They always must do two 48s, always, or it's just a write-off of an entire week. So I guess it's about finding sort of that pre-pandemic flexibility that we used to have when it came to our fasting approaches.

[00:23:58] I also think something that's changed a little bit pre-pandemic, pandemic, to post-pandemic is that, for many people, creating a fasting structure gave life structure during that time because everything just seemed unending and uncertain. And so actually having, "I fast on these three days," provided a life structure. And now we've got all these other things that create structure and opportunities and things for us that we-- many of us didn't experience as much during the COVID times. And so it's going back to using the life structure we have and finding where to put our fasting structure within that, rather than relying on our fasting as the way to have any semblance of structure in our lives.

Megan [00:24:53] Yeah, that's a really interesting point. I never really thought about how fasting provided so many of our Community members with a life structure during this time. We all know that this become an annoying phrase, but it really has been an unprecedented time in human history and it's sort of adapting and pivoting back. You know, I've seen firsthand how much of a struggle it's been for someone like my husband. I worked blended inside of the house and outside of the house and had all kinds of work travel, and just had the most erratic schedule prior to COVID as well. And then being home actually hasn't been any much less erratic for me, given our move and whatnot, but it is a huge shift for so many individuals. I think it's going to take people time and they need to give themselves some credit for the big changes that are coming their way. There's a lot to adapt to. I can even say that the traffic here is twice as bad as it was a year ago when we first moved to this particular area.

[00:25:59] So there's a lot of just having to adapt to so many different changes. And, you know, if we just think about some of the basics and create some fundamental rules - "I'm not going to snack. I'm going to eat at meals." "It's okay if I have a cup of coffee at a particular meeting." People were used to it before, they'll get used to it again. You know, getting in those 24-hour fasts, making travel days fasting days again, some of these basic things can really help us stay consistent and get us back into a more flexible approach with our fasting.

Terri [00:26:35] Yeah, to sum it up, I remember you-- I think you used to say this, Megan, is about creating a way of fasting that fits your life. Many of us got off track with that during COVID and so now it's reconnecting with that mentality. "If I'm someone who travels for work, where in the month can I do longer fasts? Where do I need to implement shorter fasts?" "How can I make my desire to fast, and my health needs to fast, fit with my life?" versus, "Well, shoot. I'm just going to lay this over top of everything and now my life has to change."

Megan [00:27:15] I think that's one of the greatest values people do get from coaching (you know, working with a fasting coach) is having someone to help personalize and customize it for them. So at the end of three months or six months, their weight's down, their metabolic markers have improved, they're off of their medications. Life can be pretty overwhelming and these are definitely very overwhelming times. It doesn't seem to be getting easier, just more complicated. There's a way to do this, and you don't have to fit into a box of everybody else. There's totally ways to get in the fasting that you need to around all of the different trips that you've had.

[00:27:57] I've had one client since January. She's been to something like seven, eight different countries, already, since January and she's down some weight and her metabolic markers have improved and that's fantastic. But it's pretty overwhelming because that wasn't her life for a very long time, you know, leading up to the changes this year and trying to figure out how to navigate it in.

[00:28:21] So, you know, connecting with a fasting community where you can bounce these ideas off of one another, working with a coach, can help you personalize it. So something that works for you. We don't want fasting to become stressful for you. There's infinite ways that you can do it. There is no need to fit yourself into a cookie-cutter box. And you know, we spent a lot of time prior to COVID talking about fitting fasting into your lifestyle. And there's a balance to be had, you know, because you've got to take a therapeutic mindset when it comes to it, but it just became very easy to be extremely therapeutic with it throughout the last couple of years with lockdown and working from home. So we will work on that with everybody and, you know, try to provide as many tools for our Community and coaching clients as possible to help them figure out how to customize the therapeutic approach for them.

Terri [00:29:15] And I think the mindset of that is key. Obviously, I'm biased. I think that it's important in everything that we do, but really recognizing, "I value my fasting, I value my health journey, and I value my commitments and my social life and my travel and my work. So how do I put all of these values into a format that fit?" rather than feeling friction that, "I really care about my job and travel and social life, so I guess I just can't worry about my health." No, we really can navigate all of that.

Megan [00:29:50] There's infinite ways to fast and infinite ways to fit it into a person's lifestyle, so it doesn't need to be either/or. It just perhaps requires a little bit of guidance for

you to see the options and the possibilities. And again, it can be different from week to week. No week has to look like the other when it comes to your fasting journey. And in a lot of ways that can help. It became so funny to me during 2020, there was this huge emphasis then on changing it up as a way to prevent a weight loss stall. How do you change it up? Because there weren't these life events happening that sometimes triggered more eating or triggered more fasting. It just sort of stopped. So the art of trying to figure out how to change that became a discussion and topic. Now we're just trying to sort of figure out how to live life when it's mostly going to be a lot of change and variation in our fasting schedule. So lots of big changes out there for our fasters in our Community but all ones we can conquer and definitely help people get back control of their health.

Terri [00:31:00] Absolutely.

Megan [00:31:01] Well, everyone, thank you so much for joining us for another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. We'll be back next week. And until then, happy fasting, everyone.

Terri [00:31:12] Take good care.