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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. All right. And now we'll get started with today's episode.

Terri [00:01:19] Welcome to The Fasting Method podcast, everyone. This is Terri Lance, and I'm coming to you with a solo Q&A episode. Unfortunately, we were not able to coordinate our schedules, so it's just me today. I have a few questions that people have sent in that I wanted to address. And I think you'll notice that as I talk about these questions, there's going to be some overlap and there also will be some overlap with things that we've discussed in other episodes, but I know that these are kind of the underbelly of making this journey a success. So let's go ahead and get started.

[00:02:00] The first question says, "I have built a successful fasting muscle (as you all refer to it), but I find that I'm still not making progress because I throw out all my healthy eating knowledge when it comes to my eating days. Help!"

[00:02:16] All right. Well, this is a great question, or a great topic to bring up, because it's not uncommon that we hear this quite a bit, that people learn to use the fasting. They work really hard to learn all of the ways that they can develop their fasting muscle, all of the tricks of the trade that they can do while they're fasting. They use training wheels, they distract themselves, they do all kinds of things so that they can make it through their fast and feel good even while they're fasting. And so they develop a really strong fasting muscle and they're very proud of that and they're very good at it. But what this person said is a very common challenge for people, is that then when it comes time for them to do their eating days, they kind of throw out all of the guidelines and they, you know, eat whatever they want, they don't stick to time-restricted eating or TRE. And what they find then is although they're doing quite a bit of fasting and they're doing well with the fasting, what they're doing on their eating days just really kind of mitigates the benefits that they want to be seeing from their fasting.

[00:03:28] So if you're like this listener and you experience this, I do have some recommendations. The first thing I recommend is if you're really struggling to do well on eating days, I would actually encourage you to dial back your fasting a little bit. Let's say, for example, you are doing three 42-hour fasts a week, that that's the protocol, the therapeutic protocol that you're working on. If you're having a hard time eating appropriately, meaning that you're not over-consuming when you break the fast, that you're not snacking throughout the day on an eating day, and that your food choices fit the food that works right for your body. If you're struggling with that, then what I encourage you

to do is roll back the fasting a little bit. Maybe in this case, roll back to 36 instead of 42, or even roll back to three 24s. Give yourself time to practice the eating behaviors. And I know that sounds weird. Most of us don't need to practice eating, but many, many, many of us need to practice how to eat appropriately.

[00:04:39] And I want to kind of highlight for everyone that it's not unnatural, that when it comes time to break a fast or when you have an eating day, that your brain is going to send some messages that can be kind of confusing. It can tell you that it's okay. It can, you know, kind of obsess about food at times. And so you need to keep working on not only developing that fasting muscle and making it really strong, but also that commitment to feeding your body appropriately when it is time to eat. When you have a planned meal time, you schedule a healthy meal that includes only food that really fits your food plan. And by that I mean foods that you know fit for your body. So let's say, for example, you're someone who's eating a low-carbohydrate dietary approach. Then you want to make sure that when you break your fast, you're eating a planned meal that is a nutritionally dense, low-carbohydrate food. If you are someone who is eating with a vegan approach and working on managing your carbohydrates in that format, it's okay. Go ahead and plan a healthy vegan meal that has some lower carbohydrate choices in it and complete your meal that way. But what many of us are tempted to do is give in to that kind of lower brain that some of you have heard me talk about before. And that lower brain is telling you, basically, "Look, you didn't feed me for 42 hours. I get to have whatever I want." And it will justify it, it will explain it away, it'll tell you that it's okay, it'll be good tomorrow - all of these things. So again, if you're struggling with eating appropriately on eating days, the first thing I would do is encourage you to roll back the fasting a little bit and really practice time-restricted eating. Make sure that you are really good to go with that and also working on eating the appropriate foods for you in those meals. And then you can dial the fasting back up.

[00:06:57] The other thing I often encourage people to think about is to really work on balancing that you have two superpowers in this lifestyle. One is fasting, meaning going for breaks - times without eating - and the other superpower is eating appropriately healthy meals. If you can stick to those two things, you've got this whole journey mastered. So it's not eating during fasting times and then eating appropriately at meal times, so fasting and rebuilding with food. Really healthy rather than I usually describe it as feeling like you're going to the circus or to Disney World or something because you get to eat now. That has a lot of emotionality behind it and usually will steer us to overconsume or to consume really problematic foods. So again, to work on that mindset of, "I do two really healthy things for my body related to this. I do days or times when I'm fasting and I plan healthy meals for planned meal times."

[00:08:10] All right. The next question says, "Why is it so hard to do what I know I should do? I have read and listened to just about everything Megan Ramos and Jason Fung have done. What the heck is wrong with me?"

[00:08:24] Now, you can probably hear my voice that there's a little bit of humor in that last sentence, but I know that it's actually kind of a painful humor for most of us. We can't understand why would we keep doing something that we know doesn't work or that we know actually interferes with reaching our goals. I would say probably close to 95% of the people that I have worked with in the Community already know what food works best for them, and they already know how powerful fasting is. However, they're having a really hard time doing it with consistency. They can do it in fits and spurts, whatever that saying

is, they can do it here and there. They can do it for a short period of time, but the consistency is really challenging.

[00:09:15] So one of the things I want to remind everyone here is that there's a huge gap between knowledge and implementation. Knowledge is great and many people who listen to this podcast are here to get knowledge. Many people have read the books that Megan has written, that Dr. Fung has written, and that Nadia Pateguana has written. So you have lots of knowledge, but where the challenge comes in is putting knowledge into practice. They're really two separate stages of the journey. So now it's about finding ways to really implement your knowledge, again, with consistency.

[00:09:55] And many of you know that I use this saying a lot. I probably could use it in every response to these questions today, but I talk a lot about making this way of approaching your dietary needs and your time away from food, really to make it part of your identity. Become a faster, become someone who does time-restricted eating, become someone who only eats two meals a day or some days, one meal a day. Become someone who doesn't snack, become someone who eats healthy meals when they eat. So if you can work on the identity piece, it's not just, "I've got this knowledge out here," but, "I'm actually making it a part of how I navigate my world."

[00:10:48] I think it's similar to other things in life. You could learn a lot about pottery. You could watch The Great Pottery Throw Down, or whatever the show is called, but if you're not getting your hands in the clay and making different pieces and going through the different stages of the process and then seeing how they come out after they've been fired and then doing it again and doing it again and doing it again, you're not really making that knowledge a part of your experience. If you read books about investing money and you understand all of the theories about when to buy and what to buy, and when to sell and what to sell, that's just the knowledge part. You then have to get in there. You have to start investing, you have to start making some decisions, and you have to see what happens when you make those decisions.

[00:11:44] So the challenge with this is that you have to make it actually a lifestyle rather than just something that you do sometimes. Oftentimes, people will say, "Man, when I am fasting, I do so well. When I really commit to my protocol, I do so well." But then they say, "I only do that for a couple of weeks and then I stop." So similar to the last question, one thing I would recommend in this case is to start a little more gradually. If you're having a hard time sustaining what you're doing with consistency, back up a little bit and get a lower level of intensity going consistently first. So if you're having a hard time with 24-hour fasts, roll back to the 18/6 and get that so it's so consistent that you do it without even having to think about it - it's a habit, it's a lifestyle. Then you can work on increasing to the 24 hours. Then you can increase-- you could start doing 16/30, then you could work up to 36, and 42. But the big piece is that if you're jumping ahead too quickly or taking on too much at a time, it's really hard to integrate that into your everyday life. But if you build it more gradually, it becomes a part of your life, and then you increase a little more and that becomes a natural part of your life.

[00:13:11] Same thing with the food - knowing what to eat. I say this often, but I really-- I say it so many times because I believe it so strongly, that if you say something like, "I believe eating whole foods is really good for you and, when I do that, I feel really good." That means you're only doing it sometimes and you've got a whole bunch of other times when you're not doing it. So your body is only getting the benefits sometimes. Instead, if you can say, "I am someone who really focuses on a whole-food approach. I eat foods that

work well for my body." Someone might say, "Oh, but what about this thing? Don't you really love this?" And just say, "You know, I didn't really love that, but I know now that it doesn't work well for my body, so I only use it on certain occasions," or, "I only eat that occasionally." But to really make it your identity that you're someone who eats whole food, that you eat a complete meal, you don't eat snacks - making it part of your-- it's like at your core. And then it's not just something you do sometimes.

[00:14:23] I'm guessing if you talk to any professional musician, singer, or athlete, what they do, they do consistently. It's so much a part of their life. And so if you really want this to work, you have to work on making it really be part of your life, not just something you're going to do for a period of time and then go back to doing something else.

[00:14:50] The other thing I want to say about this is, for everyone, I hope, that's listening, to really give themselves a little bit of some compassion around this challenge because most of us (I would say all of us, at some level) have grown up, or have developed and kind of experienced our food relationship and so much about what we know about how to eat, in environmental factors that are really complicated. There were so many messages about what to eat that were bad for us. There are so many ways that we didn't get proper information about nutrition. We have so much marketing to us to eat problematic foods and it's so socially kind of pushed and welcomed and affirmed that making these changes and implementing all of this knowledge is challenging. I know sometimes you might listen to us or you might listen to some of the other coaches or other people and think, "Wow, they make it sound like it's just so simple. Why isn't it for me?" And I really-- I have to tell you, it's not really simple for anyone. It's a huge change. For most of us, it's a complete change in how we have looked at food and looked at frequency of eating and what foods to eat. So give yourself some space to recognize that you are changing something that you weren't taught originally to do properly, and it takes a lot to do that and to make it different.

[00:16:22] All right. The next question says, "I recently participated in the Healthy Habits and Mindset Keys Masterclass." That was the one that I just recently did. That's very exciting. So the rest of the question, sorry. It says, "I have been working to change my habits and address some of my underlying mindset pieces, but sometimes struggle to see how it is all connected to being more successful."

[00:16:47] I think this is kind of a challenging question for most of us, and so I just want to say a few things about this. When I talk about changing our mindset, it can mean a lot of things. One, I always talk about the growth mindset versus a fixed mindset. When we have a fixed mindset, we really kind of approach things as if we either have the ability to do something or we don't. We don't leave a lot of room open for, "Oh, that's something I can develop," "That's something I can learn," or, "I'm getting better at that." That's not usually how someone with a more fixed mindset talks about themselves. It's either, "I can do it," or, "I can't do it." "I have that ability," or, "I don't." So on one level, I talk about the mindset as kind of having a more growth mindset that says, "I'm working on that," "I'm developing my fasting skill," "I haven't conquered 48-hour fast yet," and yet is the key word there because that means, "I'm developing it," rather than saying, "That's not a skill I can develop." So working on that mindset piece is a big one for so many people.

[00:17:57] The other piece that I think is most important about the mindset and connecting that then with our behaviors-- so we also in the Masterclass talked about habit changes and we talked about creating new habits and new practices, but it's really hard to create a new practice if you are holding on to an underlying belief that that's not who you are, that you can't do it, that that isn't something available to you. So let's say, for example, I want to

lose 150 pounds, but what my underlying message is that I say to myself, and this little message that just keeps running through the background of my mind, is that I've always been heavy. "I've been heavy since I was a kid. The doctor tells me I'm morbidly obese. I'm always going to be obese." And then we start coming to this place where we're doing fasting and eating differently, and it's incongruent because we're working with the belief that that's impossible for us. We'll never be able to lose weight. Even if we lose a little bit, we'll never be able to sustain that. And then, in our behaviors, we're taking on these challenging behaviors of changing everything. And those two things are really incongruent.

[00:19:22] I'm going to share something with all of you that will probably reveal just how much of a geek I can be about this stuff. I just refer to it as an occupational hazard for my background as a psychologist and now a coach, here, focusing on mindset and behavior. But in the middle of the night, the other night, I woke up because I had something playing on my speaker and it was a talk by someone who was talking about kind of law of attraction and ways of thinking. And he said something that captured it. And it's a concept that I've heard so many times before but I just thought, "Oh my gosh, I have to share this with people at TFM." It says, "The function of your brain is to make coherence between your thoughts and your reality." So we know that coherence means that these two things fit together, they're like on the same plane. So your thoughts and your reality. So if I'm saying, "I'm obese, I've always been obese, and I'm always going to be obese. I can't lose weight," but then I'm practicing behaviors that are geared toward allowing me to lose weight, those two things, there's no coherence there. They don't fit. I can't get my body to that place if I don't believe that place isn't available to me.

[00:20:51] So again, the function of your brain is to make coherence between your thoughts and your reality. Your brain is listening and if you are trying to work on fasting, improving your health, losing weight, eating appropriately, but you have this constant message running through your mind that this doesn't really work, it only works for other people, you can't reach your goals, you've never succeeded in the past, it's going to be very, very complicated for you to make significant changes. Now, I don't say that to discourage anyone. I want you to reach your goals, but I want you to start looking at, "What do I need to do about some of the limiting beliefs that I hold, the messages that I run as tapes over and over in my mind?" Because if those are not in congruence with your reality that you're creating, it's just not going to happen.

[00:21:59] So that's my response to that question and I think it's a great question. I hope I did not go too far out into the ether for anyone on that one.

[00:22:11] All right, everybody, I have one final question. This person wrote in and said, "This question is for Terri. I started fasting prior to all of the pandemic stay-at-home orders. I did pretty well and then actually made a lot of progress while I worked from home and stopped socializing around food. But ever since restrictions were lifted, I have not been able to get back to my focused approach that helped me so much in 2020 to the end of 2021. Do you have any suggestions that can help me to get back on track? I've gained about 15 to 20 pounds of the weight I lost and I'm afraid I will keep gaining."

[00:22:53] A while back, we did an episode really trying to address this phenomenon that we're seeing that a lot of people experience quite a bit of success with their health and weight journeys during the pandemic when everyone was kind of staying at home. And yes, I know a lot of people gained weight and a lot of people struggled during the pandemic, but a lot of people who worked with us at TFM in our Community and things, they were very active and they had time to focus on things. They didn't have all of the

distractions at work and they weren't going out to restaurants with other people and doing a lot of socializing with other people. So they actually did pretty well during COVID and benefited from the opportunity to take that focused self-care time. However, once all of the restrictions were lifted, what we have been hearing people talk about is that going back out there, getting together with family, traveling-- I think, in the month of May, I had six or eight clients that all went to Italy. So it's, you know, travel again, it's going back to the office, for many people, it's spending more time with friends, spending more time getting together for holidays again and special occasions. Everyone's newly-developed habits that they really worked on during the pandemic have gotten really stretched very thin.

[00:24:26] So one of the things I encourage for people to think about with this is that oftentimes when we first start something new, we have the ability to focus on it and we have some excitement about it. I remember the first time I did a three-day fast. I could not tell enough people about how awesome it was, this thing that I was doing. I could have shouted it from the rooftop. Fast forward a couple of years, doing a 48-hour fast, meh, there was really nothing exciting about that anymore. It wasn't novel. It wasn't new. There was no kind of new energy around it.

[00:25:07] So I encourage you to recognize that for many of you who have been doing fasting for a while, it may have lost that spark for you. So rather than consider that to mean that something's wrong with you or that you're just not motivated enough now or you're just not disciplined enough, I encourage you to think, "I'm not a beginner anymore. I don't have that beginner energy." And some of that we can kind of recreate. Let's learn again what does a 42-hour fast feel like to me now? What would it be like to do that longer fast that I've been wanting to do? Hold some curiosity. Use beginner mind to recreate that kind of energy that spurs you on to do a little more, rather than that, "Oh, this again," kind of energy that encourages you not to bother. So that's one piece of it - recognizing that it's not novel anymore for most of us and that that may be slowing down our motivation.

[00:26:17] I also encourage you to start to put all of the socializing and the food that's at work in the break room, or wherever, to put all of that back into perspective. I feel like for-- this has happened to me even before the pandemic that I was working from home and I live alone. And so I already had this kind of cocoon in which I could choose the right foods and I could do my fasting without anyone else being involved. And I think a lot of people then, like I said, experienced that during the early parts of the pandemic. So you need to kind of rethink, "How do I do what I know is good for me?" with the fasting, the time-restricted eating, and the appropriate meals. How can I do that in my current situation where I'm spending time with family and I'm traveling and I'm going into the office and I'm hanging out with friends after work and I'm going places on the weekends. "How can I make that fit?" Because the approach a lot of people have is that, "I can do this sometimes." And it's almost like waiting for your astrological sign to line up with the phase of the moon and the climate variables and things. Look, it's never going to be the perfect time to do the things that are good for you. So now is the time, and now, and now, and now, to just get really used to, "I'm not in those early pandemic days. I haven't been ordered to stay at home and I need to make this healthy lifestyle fit for me now that my life has more social engagements, has more requirements to travel, or more vacations to travel." So to really kind of change the way you're talking and thinking about it, "This isn't something I can do in isolation."

[00:28:19] Now, I know it would be great if we had time where we could just focus on ourselves without having to worry about anything else, but that's just not really how life works. So what I encourage you to do is to start thinking about, "How do I have a full life

and a healthy life?" These are not two things that are on separate planets. They exist together. Again, talk about coherence. "I have a healthy life. I have a full life." And many of us have learned that those are two separate things that can't exist together. We have one life, and my hope for all of you is that it's full, it's got social connection, it's got travel, it's got work if you work in the office, and it's got space to focus on you. Eating well can happen at work. Eating well can happen in Italy. Eating well can happen at your family's get-together. They are not separate things. I know most of us get it that if we did not have to worry about life happening, fasting and eating well would seem so much easier. But we have full lives with other people, with other commitments, other entertainment, other things that make life worth living. And doing that in a way that also supports your health is really the place where I hope all of you are striving toward, and listening to us, finding ways-- if you're in the TFM Community, coming to meetings and learning how other people are navigating these two things together. I don't want any of us to have to go into stay-at-home orders in order to be well.

[00:30:13] All right, everyone. That's the end of my Q&A episode. There will be another episode coming up next week, and we look forward to sharing more with you. We hope you've enjoyed this episode. If you have, please don't hesitate to share it with someone. I'll say what Megan usually says here. Happy fasting, everyone.