

## Lesson 4: Build Healthy Habits

Hi everybody. This is Coach Terri Lance. Today we're going to focus on building healthy habits and replacing unhealthy habits as far as your eating, fasting and other self care activities. The first thing I want to take note of is that our brains prefer routine. It likes it when it already knows what to expect. It seeks familiarity, so the challenge with this is that we have created habits that are already familiar and when it comes to our habits about food, eating, the frequency of eating, we've probably created habits that are actually getting in our way and may have even led us to a really difficult place. This fact that our brain wants to stay with what is familiar means that you're going to have to work against it. You're going to want to rewire your brain to start paying attention to new habits rather than old habits. The good news is that this is doable.

It's going to take a period of time, but you can teach your brain new patterns of behavior and of thought to create these new healthy habits. How long does it take to eliminate an old habit and create a new one? Some researchers even believed that we actually can't extinguish old habits, but that we can just replace them with new habits. I would argue that if we ignore old habits and don't engage them, our brain will lose track of them. However, it will go back to them pretty easily if we go back onto that same track. Some people say that it takes at least 21 days to create a new habit and others say 30 days. The people I follow and trust would argue that that's not a long enough time and I tend to agree. So let's think more 66 to 90 days is what it really takes to create new habits in our behaviors and our thinking.

As you're fasting, learning how to do this, changing your eating habits, changing your meal times, how frequently you eat, 66 to 90 days of a pattern before it starts to become a habit, you're going to have a lot of things to look at over these next couple of months. So please don't expect yourself to have all of your habits created by tomorrow or new habits all set up within these first three weeks. It's really not enough time to get them totally ingrained in your mind so that they become habitual and that's what we want. Habits happen through habitual repetition. We keep thinking the same thought. We keep doing the same behavior. We go through that same pattern and that becomes a habit. Likewise, when we want to break a habit, we need to stop going through those same thoughts. We need to stop going through those same behavior patterns in order to break old problematic habits.

Oftentimes you hear people talk a lot about setting goals, having your eye on the prize, knowing what you are reaching for. I think this is really important. It's good to know that if you are working on decreasing your HbA1c from 6.9 or 7.4, all the way down to 5.2, it's great to have that vision, but it's not really a clear why that really will motivate habit change. I want you to start thinking about your why. Why are you working toward this goal? What will achieving this goal mean for you? What will it feel like? What will it look like and what will it bring to your life? Or what will it eliminate from your life that you want to have gone? This is your why. It's not just an arbitrary number, a weight loss goal, an HbA1c goal, wearing a certain size dress before the wedding.

It's really about why that is important to you. What will it mean to you? How will it feel? What will you be able to do? If you think about these things, then you can also think about when I succeed at achieving this goal, so my why is being realized, you can also then think about what will my life look like? How will my life be? What will my blood tests look like? What will my weight be? Or how will I feel in my clothes? What will my mindset be and how will I feel, how mobile will I be? And what about those aches and pains that I've been feeling? These are all important questions to be thinking about the true motivation behind your goal. Your why. What I find is that when people only focus on the number of pounds they want to lose, or the A1C they want to achieve, they often have a harder time creating habits because they focus on the end result rather than the process.

So let's say for example, someone wants to lose 125 pounds and it's their only focus. What happens is when they lose four pounds, they don't see clearly enough yet how connected this is to 125 pounds and they feel a little bit overwhelmed. They feel like they have nothing to celebrate and it makes moving forward, it makes building momentum more challenging. But instead, if you can look at, "I want to lose 125 pounds because I want to be mobile. I want to be able to hop on my bike and go for a long ride with my grandchildren or my spouse. I want to wear clothes. I want to shop in that store and find clothes that fit my body well and that I feel confident in," it's easier to build habits toward those things rather than just that number.

My hope for all of you in this Masterclass is ultimately that you'll be working toward creating habits that optimize your health and improve your body weight. You focus on creating the lifestyle you want, rather than a number that you're seeking. Find habits to create and then make it sustainable.

There are three keys to creating effective habit change. The first one is to choose habits that are congruent with your goals and your identity. An example I often use to exemplify this is to think about people who have chosen to eat with a vegan approach. It's very clear to them that they're not going to be eating animal protein anymore. Very clear identity around what being vegan means to them. When they have a rough day or it's Saturday night, that identity is still front and center for them. They don't say, "My gosh, it's been such a long week. I'm going to go ahead and eat some bacon tonight." Or, "Wow, it's Saturday. I want to celebrate a little bit. I'm going to go have a steak."

Instead, they find other ways to relax. They find other ways to enjoy a Saturday night, but they keep them congruent with their identity. So the habits we are building need to be congruent with the identity that we either already have or are building. So if I want to be someone who is healthy, who's nondiabetic and at a healthy body weight for me, I want to build habits that get me there and then habits that will keep me there. So let's say for example, you want to live the identity of someone who weighs under 200 pounds. You have to be setting goals and creating habits that are congruent with who you'll be at under 200 pounds. If you choose goals and habits that aren't congruent with this identity, it's much harder to make them stick.

I was someone who ate ketogenic for several years and then loosened it up a little bit into a low carb category. When a friend asks me if I want to go to dinner, I don't have to question how I'm

going to eat. Whatever restaurant we go to I know how I'm going to explore the menu. I know there are sections I don't even bother looking at anymore because they don't fit my identity. I don't look at the pasta menu. It doesn't fit my identity as someone who eats very low carb. So choosing your identity that you're working on, and then building the habits that support that is going to help you to be more successful.

Two of my favorite books about habit change are *Tiny Habits* by BJ Fogg and *Atomic Habits* by James Clear. These two authors have a lot of overlap in their books, but if you read either of them or both of them, you're sure to get a lot of great information. Some of the points that they both talk about really important to building habit change.

And the first one is to develop your habits in small steps and focusing on what steps will get you where you want to be. So for example, in *Tiny Habits*, the author BJ Fogg decided he wanted to work on creating a pushup habit. He wanted to achieve being able to do pushups, but he wasn't able to do pushups. So what he started with was a really small increment. He would do two wall pushups each time when he left the bathroom, he started small, something that was doable, yet still new for him. And he linked it to something he already did. So an anchor or a cue. So each time I leave the bathroom, I do two wall pushups. And then over time he could increase that to 4 to 10 to 15, and eventually he could do pushups on the floor. Finding incremental steps is one thing to do. Finding ways to connect it to things you already do.

When I put the coffee maker away, I brush my teeth and then I'm done eating for the next eight hours. That way, you know everything's been set up. You're creating a system that enforces the new habit that allows you to follow through.

The next important piece that both authors talk about is how to reinforce the small steps. What a lot of us do is we think of a big goal. Let's say, for example, if I want to lose 20 pounds. We're making our way there, but we're not really acknowledging it until we get to 20 pounds. We need much more reinforcement than that. We need to acknowledge every step we make that helps us move toward that 20 pounds, rather other than waiting until the end. So if you're celebrating the achievement of the goal, I encourage you to work on finding ways you can celebrate the small steps, congratulating yourself, giving yourself a high five. Some people do a little star system, or they track their habits so they get to color in something. A lot of us have learned to use food, especially problematic food as reward. We use it as motivation. We use it as a way to be nice to ourselves. This is really problematic.

So if you are someone who wants to reward your behavior outside of congratulating yourself, or checking it off on a chart, what I encourage you to do is find a system that does not involve food or drink. One of our community members a while back shared that she enjoys quilting. And it's a hobby that requires a lot of supplies. So what she did is she set up her plan that each week, based on her fasting plans and her eating on target plans, she can earn credit. So each day when she reaches her goal, when she eats the healthy meal, or when she fasts during a meal, instead of eating, she gives herself credit.



And then she uses these credits. She cashes them in to purchase her quilting supplies. So this is a great way for her to reward each step, reinforcing it, helping her to build that motivation, but not doing so with food or treats or beverages.

The next step I wanted to talk about in creating healthy habits also involves extinguishing unhealthy habits or those habits that interfere with us reaching our goals. And this is that we want to build the new habits, strengthen them, make them habitual so that we do them without even thinking about it. We want the ones that we currently use habitually without thinking about it that gets our way. We want to stop using those. We want those to become unfamiliar to us. So we're really working on shifting that balance. I would encourage you to think about what barriers are in place that make building your new habits more difficult for you.

If I want to get in the habit of using magnesium while I'm fasting, and also to make it easier for me to remember on eating days, I want to put my magnesium somewhere where it's very accessible. I often have it sitting right here next to me while I'm working. That way I have it available all day. Much more likely to remember to take it rather than having to go into the medicine cabinet, open it up and remember to get it three or four times throughout the day. So thinking about the habits you want to build as far as fasting, eating healthy, taking good care of yourself, maybe it's a goal of more movement, what barriers do you need to remove? What things can you put in place? What systems can you put in place to make completing that new behavior, that pattern, that thought more common, more likely to occur?

You can probably imagine the flip side is also true. With the habits that I want to decrease or extinguish, what barriers could I put in place to make them more difficult to do? So let's say for example, my goal is to watch less TV. I'm getting sucked into watching Netflix for hours and hours and I want to change that habit. One thing I could do is I could get rid of the remote control, put it away. So every time I want to turn on the TV, when I want to advance through a show or find a new show, I actually have to get up, walk over to the TV and find those little controls on the back of my TV. That makes it harder to do. For me it would even make it a little less enjoyable. So that may serve as a barrier enough to slow down my TV watching.

I invite you to think about how you can make these new habits easier and the old habits more difficult? What resources do you need? How do you need your day set up or your home set up, your kitchen, whatever it is to either remove barriers, to build new habits or put in place more barriers to deter you from the problematic habits. If my goal is to drink more water, I want to make my water more accessible. I don't want my water to be in a jar way back in the back of the refrigerator that I have to dig through all of the other food to get through. That's actually going to make me want to drink water less often. How can I make it easier? If there's a food I know I'm working to eat less often, that would be a good thing to put way back in the refrigerator or on a top shelf in the cupboard that I actually have to get out a step stool to reach. That would take me more work.

When it comes to food habits, one of the things that many of us focus on is accessibility. How easy is it for us to get the food or how much work does it require? And many times when people are struggling to change their eating habits, one of the reasons is because of convenience.

So let's talk about one more important thing about building new habits and eliminating old habits. And that is, not to try to conquer everything all at once. Oftentimes people come here and they're very excited. They have great goals and visions of the future and they know some steps to be taking now. And so they set up five or six or seven or ten goals, and it's really overwhelming and they can do it for about two days before it becomes just too much. I'd like you to think about one or two specific examples that you believe would help you to reach your goals in doing so.

I encourage you to think of what it would take to fulfill that habit. Say my new habit is eating healthier. That's a very broad definition. And how will I know if I'm doing it? How will I know if I'm doing enough of it? So instead, if I say, "I'm going to eat two servings of vegetables on eating days," then it'll be very easy to know if I've completed that goal and that target behavior, that habit builds toward my overall goal of eating healthier. And I can reinforce it because I can measure it. But if I just say, "I'm going to eat healthier," how do I know when to reinforce that? And how do I know if I'm really doing it or enough of it? So make the habits you're creating as specific as possible so that you know what the criteria is. You know if you're completing it. You would also then know if you need to do some different effort.

Let's say, for example, one of your goals is to reduce the amount of sugar. Maybe you're not someone who's yet ready to completely give up sugar, but maybe you're someone who has decided that you're going to start to limit your sugar use. What exactly does that mean? If you normally eat 16 teaspoons of sugar, now you're only going to eat 15? Because that's less, but it's probably not really significant enough to achieve the goals that you've set out for yourself. So what would it mean to reduce your intake of sugar? Maybe you would say something like, "I only eat one food per week that contains sugar or only two meals in the week that have any type of sugar in them." That way it's very specific, it's measurable and it's reinforceable.

The next step I want you to do is to identify what resources or support you need to be sure to implement the behavior or thoughts in creating a new habit. So for example, if I want to create some new habits of thinking, I might create a list of statements, put it on my phone so that several times throughout the day, maybe every time I grab my phone, I can click on that and read my list of positive statements. Do you need any supplies for these new habits? Do you need to have things set up in a particular way? And then the next thing I would invite you to do is to identify how you'll reinforce the habit, the steps, the progress, the effort. Some of you might even decide to set up a system if you're working on eliminating some habits that actually provide some negative consequences if you continue to do that habit.

So the next time I eat this thing that I'm no longer planning to eat, I have to write a check to support a group that I really don't support, or I have to do something that would be more aversive to me. Maybe for some of you, that would be a helpful way to avoid the old habits, setting up a negative reinforcer, something that you want to avoid, helping you to stop the behavior. If it's a habit that I'm wanting to eliminate, how do I make it more difficult to complete the action? Let's say for example, one of the habits you have is that while you're working on your fast, you get on an app and you start scrolling through looking at food you could order. Very easy barrier to set up, remove the app from your phone. This makes it harder to you, slows you

down so the next time you decide you want to start looking through that food, you would actually have to download the app again.

Sometimes a step this small can prevent you from reinforcing that old behavior. It deters us. It slows us down and sets up a barrier. And to make things easier, do I need to put my shoes next to the door so that I remember to go for a walk each day? Do I need to put some water bottles in the fridge each night to make sure that tomorrow I drink the amount of water that I think is healthiest for me.

Creating habits that you want, that are congruent with your identity and eliminating habits that don't want, or that interfere with your goal is super important and needs to be reinforced. I invite you to practice these steps. Start by identifying only one or two habits you're going to focus on at a time. What a lot of us do is we take on too many and we get overwhelmed. So take on one or two and when you become really good at those two, you can add another one.

So your action points from today's lesson, number one is to develop a clear description of your why. Detailing the reasons that your goals that you're working on are so important to you. What will they do to enhance your life? How will they improve things? How will it feel and how will life look?

And then number two, identify ways you can celebrate or acknowledge the steps you take in making progress in building habits. How will you measure that you're working towards your goal? How can you reinforce those tiny steps, those little things that you're doing to build towards your goal, rather than waiting until the end? And to help support you while you're trying to implement these action items, try joining the Weekly Group Fasting Challenge or join the Weekly Healthy Habits Challenge.

Don't forget to register for the next Masterclass Q&A where we answer your questions. All sessions are listed in your course syllabus. Make sure to check it out regularly so you don't miss any of these events. Also, make sure you drop in and say, "Hi." Just let us know how you're doing and ask what questions you have in the exclusive forum thread for this Masterclass. Take good care everybody. I'll see you again soon.