

## **The Fasting Method - Episode #141: Weight Loss or Health Goal Barriers: Fear of Failure/Success**

**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 to 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.

**Terri** [00:01:19] Welcome back to The Fasting Method podcast, everyone. This is Dr. Terri Lance and I'm very excited to do a solo episode today. It's been a bit since I've done a solo episode. The challenge of doing a solo episode for me is I don't have someone like Megan, or Coach Nadia, or someone else kind of prompting me to think of ways to explain things, so I'm just kind of going from the gut here about some things that I hear in our Fasting Method Community. It's been coming up fairly often in some of my groups that I lead there in the Community and also in my coaching with individuals. So, I wanted to talk a little bit about some things that, on the surface, probably sound pretty obvious to most people, and yet, if you really allowed yourself to sink in and think about it a little more deeply, I think you would find some really interesting things. So, really, I wanted to talk to you today about fear of failure and fear of success. And I didn't find a nice little phrase to kind of sandwich those in, but I think about why is it that we struggle?

[00:02:37] Many of you are familiar with my work and my background is as a psychologist, and so I do talk a lot about kind of human nature, how our mind works, how our brain works, some about neurotransmitters and things. But this concept of a fear of failure and fear of success - I really started looking at it years ago when I read a book about procrastination. Because if procrastination were an Olympic sport, I would probably have five or more gold medals. So I pursued trying to kind of understand myself better. And one of the themes that really struck me in-- I read a book-- I kind of joked that I never finished the book because it was about procrastination, and I procrastinated finishing it. But I read this book, and one of the explanations they gave about why we procrastinate is a fear of failure/fear of success. And I think from the get-go, as I was reading that, I thought, "Yeah, I can understand the fear of failure." If I don't start this project, or if I don't complete this project, I won't have to get the feedback that it wasn't good enough, or that I didn't learn what I was supposed to learn, or I didn't perform well enough, or whatever it is. So some fear of failure just kind of intuitively made sense to me. "But this idea of fear of success, that's crazy. I don't even know why they put this in this book. Of course I don't fear succeeding." Well, this was probably 25, 30 years ago, and I think I have a little more insight into my own struggles and successes. And in working with clients as a psychologist and then working with so many people in The Fasting Method Community, I definitely think that the fear of failure and the fear of success play a role for many of us.

[00:04:42] So you may be resonating with this already. You know there's something going on for you, and you're curious and want to learn a little bit more about this. I'm going to point out that I hear the fear of failure being a little bit more on the front end of this journey. People don't really have a sense of what is possible, and, unfortunately, for many of us, this is magnified by the fact that we've tried many other things in the past. We have done, you know, 20 different weight-loss programs in the past three years, we have been on every diet known to humankind, we have been to fat-loss camps as a kid. You know, we've tried everything. And so the idea that this new thing of fasting and eating the right foods at the right times, it sounds good on paper, but many of us still have this underlying belief that we aren't going to make it, that, because of our history, we just don't have the ability to succeed with this. We might do pretty well for a couple of weeks, maybe even a couple of months, but that we won't really reach our goal. So like I said, this fear of failure, this fear that, "I'm not going to be able to do this, I'm going to find out that I can't," they just think, "I can't do this." Why would our brain, why would our mind put any energy into something that we already believe is not possible? So that fear of failure, for many of us, gets in the way. Usually, this happens early on in the journey. It actually holds us back from getting started, or maybe holds us back from moving through the process and learning the next set of skills.

[00:06:35] Many of us see ourselves as competent in many ways, and I think especially for many of us, when it comes to weight loss, feeling like we have failed in past attempts, maybe even taking on an identity as a failure really holds us back from fully engaging in the process. So if you are recognizing yourself in this, if you have been working on getting started, you've been trying to fast a little bit, or trying to change the way you eat, and you're just really noticing that you're not going fully in, you're not stepping fully into it, I really encourage you to take some time to explore, "Do I fear failing at this?" And if you are aware that that's happening for you, then I really encourage you to get some support. This might be through people close to you, it might be through a coach, it might be with a therapist, it might be with self-help books, but really dig into, "How do I conquer this fear of failure? How do I get out of that mindset that doing whatever it is that I want to do will be short lived, and I actually won't be able to succeed?" Some of us need to go way back. Like I said, many of us have been put on diets from the time we were very young. Or if you're working on reversing type two diabetes, you've been told repeatedly that it's a chronic progressive disease. So of course we think we will probably fail.

[00:08:26] So that's the first part. If this first part of what I've been sharing, the fear of failure, resonates with you, I really encourage you to dig into that a little bit, and maybe even spend some time journaling and doing some things to think of, of course, not succeeding can happen (there are reasons why that happens), but what if I instead explore, "What if I succeed? How might I feel then? What might that bring to me?" and start opening up those possibilities. Because when we're stuck in that fear of failure, we're really kind of closed in on the doom and gloom. We are often catastrophizing (that's one of my favorite words as a psychologist), that we really kind of hold ourselves back based on these things.

[00:09:18] Now, for some of you, you may have noticed you got a little bit tense when I just said that, that you might think about, "What if I succeed?" Now, again, I don't think anyone starts a goal hoping that they don't succeed, or even thinking that it would be okay if they don't succeed. I don't know any, you know, teams, sport teams that go into the game thinking, realistically thinking, "I just hope we do okay," or, "You know what? Whatever will be will be." No, they go in it to win. We go into our goals with the intent to succeed, the

hope of success. Unfortunately, many of us don't have a clear-set vision of what success will look like and what it will mean. So this is where we start to get into the flip side of the fear of failure being the fear of success.

[00:10:26] So, again, why would any of us fear achieving the outcome that we're seeking? If I want to lose 120 pounds, why on earth would I fear that I might be able to do that? If I want to come off all of my diabetes medications and, you know, not be ruled by the insulin beast anymore, why in the world would I not want that? Why would I claim it as my goal and yet fear getting there? Now some of you are already scratching your head thinking, "Hmm, I don't know where she's going with this," and some of you are probably thinking, "I'm not sure, but I can relate. I get this nervous feeling." I see people struggle with the fear of success a little bit further into their journey, so maybe as they get a little bit closer to their goal.

[00:11:30] So I'm going to use my example again that I just mentioned - if I have a goal to lose 120 pounds. I see people clipping through, once they maybe get over that fear of failure, and they seem to do okay. But let's say they get maybe halfway there. They lose 60 pounds, they have to buy new clothes, people are noticing, starting to, you know, gather some attention because of this. And all of a sudden they stall and they can't seem to complete a fast that they schedule. They can't seem to follow through with their commitments about what foods they're going to have in their food plan. Why is this? They've made great progress. In this example, they already lost 60 pounds. It would seem like the momentum would be building. They would be so excited. They would feel so proud and so accomplished that they would just gather more and more motivation to do well and to keep doing the things that help them. But oftentimes, this is where I start to see people kind of fall off.

[00:12:39] And I know a few episodes ago, Dr. Nadia and I talked about why people sometimes don't continue to succeed once they get going. And so I know I'm taking this in a little different direction here, but this fear of success often kind of rears its head as we get there - maybe halfway there, maybe even closer. Let's say I wanted to lose 40 pounds, and I've already lost 30 of them and I've got ten more to go, but I can't for the life of me get past an 18-hour fast. I can't seem to not want to go grab something to eat at night, even though for the past six months I've been doing very successful TRE and following through on longer fasts, suddenly, I'm struggling with shorter fasts, suddenly, food choices are getting much more complicated. I'm kind of falling off track daily, or every couple of days, and then struggling to get back on track. Why is this? I'm getting close to goal. And for some people, it is just infuriating and they get really frustrated with themselves. It's like, "Oh my gosh, I've only got this ten more pounds or half of the way to go. Why am I backing off?"

[00:14:03] So what is this fear of success? What I remember from that book that I read (or at least partially read) so many years ago, is they talked about the idea that, for most of us, the idea of success triggers some other things that might feel uncomfortable. So for many of us, the actual success might not be what's triggering and uncomfortable. But let's say, for example, if I know that I worked really hard to get to this goal, and it's something that I've wanted to do for 20 or 30 years, and I buckle down, I learn these new strategies, and I get there. One reason we might fear that is because it now means I have to sustain it. It's a lot easier to think of doing a short-term goal - "I do something really hard, and then it's over." But if I really understand this journey, I know that I am going to have to continue working on it. The work is not done when I get to goal. New work begins. And for some

people, maintaining just poses a lot of different things to them than the original process of getting there.

[00:15:21] So for some of us, the fear of success is that when I get there, what am I going to have to do to sustain it? What am I going to expect of myself? What are other people going to expect of me? If everyone kind of acknowledges my success, what happens in six months if I'm no longer quite so successful? And some of us, without even really thinking it consciously, decide it would be better to stop here rather than get all the way to goal and then backslide, and feel disappointed, and feel frustrated with myself, and maybe even feel like other people are disappointed in me. So that might be one reason you might fear success.

[00:16:10] Another reason that people sometimes fear success is because they have no real kind of vision of what it will look like or what it would be. If I have been overweight for 65 years and my goal is to be at a healthy body weight, whatever that means for me, I may not have any sense of what that will feel like or look like, or how I will navigate the world. I might have to shop in different stores. I might be able to do things that I have been kind of limited to do in the past. Will that feel like pressure? So for some of us, fear of success is a little bit like fear of the unknown. We don't know who we will be at that point. I recently had a client touch on this - some fear that she will change. I have a pretty strong belief about this. I don't think, as people, we change drastically. We become more ourselves or we get more disconnected from ourselves, based on what we're going through or what is happening or what goals we've reached. So rather than fearing you're going to become someone that you don't like, or someone that other people are going to have a hard time with, I encourage you to think about, "I'm going to become more comfortable with me. I'm going to become more authentic and more fully me when I'm at this goal place."

[00:17:51] And then this other large piece of fear of success, for many of us, is a challenging topic. And when we talk about this in the Community, in our live meetings, you can just feel the heaviness when people share this, and your heart just really goes out and probably can relate. Sometimes our fear of success is because reaching that goal triggers something that we are uncomfortable with based on past experience or past learnings. We might associate getting lighter, smaller-- we might start associating it negatively, even though we've been saying for years that's what we wanted. Suddenly, we're reminded, "Hmm, I might get more attention. People might give me compliments. People might notice and talk about how I look. Will I maybe get some unwanted attention?" Many of us don't want people talking about our body. And, of course, this goes into all kinds of really uncomfortable, unsafe feelings for people. We might associate, if we have a trauma history, that traumas happened to us when we were thinner, and, maybe, without even really knowing it, we've kind of insulated our body, and insulated and distanced ourselves from that time when that trauma happened. Now, suddenly, succeeding doesn't sound very attractive. It sounds scary, it sounds very vulnerable, and, of course, our mind may push away from it. We start doing these behaviors to try to kind of get ourselves back into that safer place.

[00:19:57] So if any of this part of what I've been saying kind of resonates for you, again, I encourage you to get some support, do some journaling, do some healing work. Again, whether that's with a coach, or a therapist, or on your own (kind of through self-help, through loved ones), there really is so much support available nowadays that you don't have to do this alone. I really encourage you to dig in to, "Is there something about getting to goal that brings up some tension, discomfort, or fear in me?" And sometimes you won't be able to really detect it at first. You might feel it, like you might feel some hesitation, but

you don't have it kind of connected with anything in your mind. Take some time. Keep exploring it. Take some weeks and months to explore this theme, because we didn't develop a fear of success or a fear of failure overnight. It didn't just happen like a light switch turns on and off. It's built over time based on our experiences, based on watching other people's experiences, and based on messaging that we've gotten from other people and other, you know, media and everything.

[00:21:26] So I really encourage you to take some time to think about this, depending on where you are in your journey. Perhaps you're having a hard time really committing. And, again, I encourage you mostly, at that time, to check, "Am I fearing failure? Am I holding on to a mindset that tells me this isn't really possible, so don't bother?" No one wants to work really hard if the belief is, "This isn't possible." And then, on the other side, if you're maybe partway through your journey, or nearing reaching goal, and you find yourself kind of backsliding a lot and just having a hard time following through in ways that you had been able to follow through prior to this, then I encourage you, again, think about, "Is there any reason that succeeding is making me not want to move forward? Am I afraid of what that will be like? Do I have a sense of what it would be like or is it just this kind of unknown land and I'm kind of afraid to get there?" Some of you know many people, and you may also talk about this, when they get under the 200-pound mark, they talk about being in Onderland. Well, if you have not been in Onderland for the past 40 years, it might actually feel a little scary. On the surface, you might think, "Oh my gosh, that's going to be so great. I'm going to buy some new clothes and I'm going to love being in my body," but part of your deeper mind is telling you, "Uh oh, I don't even know who that person would be." And let's face it, that's a scary proposition - to feel like we don't know ourselves anymore.

[00:23:18] I have touched on all of the angles I can right now in a discussion with myself, so I encourage you to be digging into this, thinking about it, talking with others about it, seeking support, coming to the TFM Community. We talk about this a lot. But what I really encourage, no matter where you are in your journey and whether either of these makes more sense to you, I encourage you not to start to frame it as, "I'm just broken." For whatever reason, "I can't get there even though I'm so close. What is wrong with me?" Please stop asking what is wrong with you? There are ways to understand why your mind hesitates, why it tries to distance from these things. It is trying to protect you but that backfires, because the way to protect you is to keep you stuck in the place that you don't want to be stuck in. So please keep working on that inner coach that doesn't berate you and doesn't have negative things for you, but really instead says, "It's okay to have these fears. Let's work on uncovering them and releasing them."

[00:24:37] If you've appreciated anything that I've shared here today, and you know someone else that you think would benefit from hearing it, please share this episode. You can post it, you can share it with family members or loved ones or friends or colleagues, anyone that you think would benefit. If you'd like to let me know that it was helpful, please write us a review. Give us some feedback. This really helps us in planning future content and planning future masterclasses that we can offer. We need to hear from you. So if you like what you heard here today and it's helpful to you, please let us know. Write a review and share it with people that you care about.

[00:25:22] All right, I'm going to stop here today, folks. It's great to be here sharing this information with you and I look forward to coming back to you soon with another episode. Until then, happy fasting and take good care.