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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] Hello, everyone. Welcome back to The Fasting Method podcast. This is Dr. Terri Lance and this is a solo episode. I spent some time thinking about what topic do I want to talk about when the floor is only mine? Although I'm missing both of my co-hosts today, I wanted to take this opportunity to choose something that I could talk about for a while and not even need someone else to be asking me any questions or chiming in. So I chose something that is a concept that I kind of created on my own and have used throughout my work with clients and in the Community, and I've talked about it here on the podcast. But I thought today I would take a deeper dive in talking about my concept of the fasting dial. Some of you may have heard, again, this being talked about here on the podcast or in other places, but to me the fasting-dial analogy is really important. My hope is that for many of you it will help you start to have a framework to use when you are planning your fasts and celebrating the accomplishments that you're doing as far as the fasting.

[00:02:42] What I'd like you first to do is to imagine an old-fashioned television. You know, one where you didn't have a remote control or a radio. It wasn't your phone, it wasn't a Bluetooth speaker, but it was one where you actually had to get up and walk over to the television or to the radio, and there was a volume switch, and you actually had to turn it. I think for most of these dials, it was clockwise to increase the volume or increase the intensity. So again, I want you to think about this when it comes to your fasting dial. So if we picture this dial-- now, I am imitating the dial movement as I'm recording this, and I know that you can't see me. I would need to put this on a YouTube channel to really give the hand gestures, but I think you'll be able to picture it. If you picture holding up your hand, putting it on that knob, and taking it from the little line on that knob that's in the lower, left-hand corner and you start to turn it up until it goes up and around. That's how we increase the intensity, that's how we increase the amount or degree of fasting that we're doing, just like it was how we turned up the volume on that radio or on that television.

[00:04:14] Now, why did I start referring to the dial? Why did I even come up with this and why has it stuck? I wanted to choose something that helped us to really kind of visualize and relate to the idea that there are a number of increments along the way as we think about lowering our fasting amount or increasing our fasting. I even think of it when it comes to food choices. Sometimes that dial is dialed in much more clearly into certain

things being off the table and certain things being included, and then other times it's a little more liberal and what's allowed with what you eat. So this dial of intensity is a concept, a way of thinking about it that made a lot of sense to me. I wanted people to be able to have something that helped them to recognize when they are increasing their amount of fasting, what that looks like, and when they need to back off.

[00:05:22] The important thing about this volume switch, on this television or radio that we're looking at here in our mind's eye, is that you stay in the on position. You don't turn it off with this knob. It's not an off-and-on switch. And many of us think about fasting as something that is more of an off-and-on and we think of success or fail. "I planned to do a 42 and I did it. Yay! I succeeded," or, "I only did 28 hours. I failed." That's how I hear so many people talking about their fasting. So if you use this dial, this fasting-dial analogy, it's always on. At the lowest level, I would say start where you started. Maybe the lowest level or degree on your dial is only eating meals. So you know that we refer to that as time-restricted eating, TRE, only eating meals. So let's say, for example, I eat breakfast first thing in the morning, then I eat lunch, and then I eat dinner. No snacks, no grazing. That's the lowest setting on my dial. And then when I'm ready, I turn it up one increment at a time, one degree, one notch. You can almost imagine on a dial that there are little lines that demarcate where the increase is. There might be numbers. You might even hear on this dial a little bit of a click when you get to that next increment. So that's what we want to be picturing when we think about this fasting dial. It's in its lowest gear, it's at the lowest stage, and then we have all of these opportunities to turn it up, turn up the volume, turn up the intensity.

[00:07:36] The beauty of it is there's not just one or two notches. There are lots of ways that you can set that dial depending on what's going on. So let's talk a little bit about some ways to use the fasting dial. The first thing I encourage everyone to think about is if you're just starting out, start low and slow on this dial of intensity, this fasting dial. Now what I mean by 'low and slow' is that I'm going to start off at a low setting, low volume level. I'm going to hear this music just kind of in the background. So for many of us, that would be, again, starting out with TRE, working on getting rid of snacks, getting rid of that grazing behavior, and working on getting just mealtimes. So whether that's three meals a day or two meals a day, on an eating day for you, that's kind of the low end of your setting. Now, going slow - you don't jump from two meals a day to a five-day fast. Now you can, but what I'm encouraging you to think about with this analogy is building up to more fasting, building that fasting muscle, being ready, being prepared, rather than putting yourself into this really intense setting that your body and your brain is not yet prepared for. So starting low and then going slow as you increase the intensity.

[00:09:20] So what might this look like if I'm just beginning? The first week-- might be one week, might be two. It may take me three weeks to get rid of my snacking and grazing and focus solely on my meals. Again, whether I'm eating two meals a day or three. So I've taken some time to really get that strong. And now I'm ready to touch that dial and turn it up to the next notch. What is that next notch? For some of us, it's going to be a number of hours. For some of us, it's going to be getting rid of one meal in that day.

[00:10:05] So, for example, let's say I have started working on two meals a day. And the way I'm working on them-- I'm going to choose easy things, for example's sake. But let's say, for example, I eat my first meal at noon and I eat my second meal at 6 pm. That means from 6 pm until noon the next day, I'm doing an 18-hour fast, and then I'm going to wait six hours and then I'm going to eat my dinner. So many of us refer to that, and many

of you are familiar with 18/6. That's our pattern that we do, that's our eating pattern. So 18 hours of fasting, then a meal, then 6 hours of fasting, and then a meal.

[00:10:57] So we did that the first week or two, we got that solid, and now we're ready to turn it up. For some people, they may be ready to take lunch out tomorrow, meaning they eat lunch and dinner today, finish with their dinner at 6 o'clock, skip lunch tomorrow and have their dinner. So now they did a 24-hour fast. For some of us, this is going to be a little bit too big of a leap, too quickly turning up that fasting dial. So instead, we're going to start with, "Okay, I can do 18 hours. I've been doing that. Now I'm going to work on getting up to 20 hours. So I ate dinner last night at six. Today, instead of eating at noon, I'm going to see if I can go until 2 o'clock." I'm hoping that you can imagine that that's this really gradual, small turning up of that dial. It's practicing, it's stretching. And now I can start to become very confident in doing that, where I can do 20 hours quite easily. I might need to go up a couple more hours, go to the 22-hour mark before I try the 24. There's no harm in going too slow with your dial. More people get in trouble when they go too fast with their dial, so it's okay to go slowly. Build up to it.

[00:12:31] My next increment may be, "I'm ready to skip that first meal and have only one meal on that day." Many of you know, if you've been listening to the podcast, we don't really encourage that people do one meal every day. So if I did my 24-hour today, I go back to 18 the next day, and then see if I can go back, whichever increment - to the 20, the 22, or the 24. But now I have this pattern that I'm going to start working on. I want to gain competence, meaning I can do this well, and confidence - I feel good about my ability to do this at each level.

[00:13:17] So let's say, for example, I got to the place where I can really competently do that 24-hour fast, meaning I ate dinner last night and I didn't eat again until dinner tonight. And then I go overnight. And then tomorrow, I start with lunch again, and I start doing this alternating 24. So 24 hours, the next night is 18, the next night is 24. And I've created that pattern. This is a huge step forward from when I was snacking and grazing. It's a huge step forward from when I was doing two meals every day.

[00:13:59] What's next? If I'm ready, I can dial up again. And again, for some of us, that's going to mean adding a few more hours. And for some of us it might mean taking out another meal. So let's say, for example, I'm working on increasing my increment of fasting. I have accomplished 24 hours and it's coming up on the 24-hour mark. I might decide I'm going to push through the 24 and I'm going to go up to 26 today. Yes, that means my mealtime is a little later, but I'm just teaching my body to stretch to that 26 instead of the 24.

[00:14:45] Some of you might have even listened to some examples we've shared, or you may have found it in The Fasting Method Community, but there's another fast that does involve only eating one meal that day, but the meal (the last meal the day before) was earlier in the day. So if I stopped eating yesterday at lunch and today don't eat until dinner, it's probably going to be about a 30-hour fast. That is quite a bit longer than when I was doing 24s, but maybe I'm not yet ready to go up to that overnight again. So you can see once again, I'm going one notch up on that dial until I gain enough confidence and clear competence. "I know how to do it. I'm doing it well. Now I'm ready to stretch." Then I may go to a 36, meaning I ate dinner last night, I don't eat today, and tomorrow I'll have breakfast. That would be 36. Maybe I'm going to go a 38 and eat a couple hours later. Maybe I'm going to go all the way to 42 because I stopped at dinner last night and I'm going to start with lunch tomorrow. That would be a 42.

[00:16:10] Now, I have in front of my eyes all of these little notches on that fasting dial - 12 hours, 14 hours, 16, 18, 20, 24, 30, 36, 42. And it can go on from there. It can go up to a 66-hour fast. It can go up to a 72-hour fast. But again, there's the dial. I may never use those higher increments, and that's okay, but I've started slow and low and, eventually, increased to where my body most needs me to be with my fasting. And for many of us, that may be a therapeutic level of fasting - so getting into the 36-hour fast, or the 42s, or the 48s.

[00:17:01] So there are some other reasons why I think this fasting-dial analogy is a meaningful one, and that is because many of us get kind of in the mindset that, "If I can do a 24, if I do anything less than that, it's not good enough," or, "If I can do a 42, any time I don't do a 42, I'm not doing enough." And this is really problematic logic for all of us. Holding ourselves to, "There's only one right way to fast", "There's only one right protocol for me," "There's only one way I'm going to succeed," - that gets most of us in trouble. So instead, if I see every option on this dial as a choice I can make, now I have so much more room to decide what actually fits for me.

[00:18:01] So let's say, for example, I am in a week with a lot of stress, maybe a lot of work stress, or a lot of family stress, or just a week where there are so many moving parts, a lot going on - "I'm traveling on this day and then my partner's traveling and then the kids have a soccer game and then the in-laws are coming for the weekend." There's just a lot of moving parts. The cool thing about the fasting-dial analogy is now I can decide what fits this week. So let's say, for example, I was doing three 42s last week and I come into this week with all of this, you know, stressful stuff or all these moving pieces going on. What I can do is I can decide, do I want to change the protocol? Last week it was three 42's. This week I actually think two fasts that are a little bit longer is going to work better for me. So I'm going to dial up the number of hours, but I'm lowering the frequency by doing two 48s. So let's say, for example, I realized that there is just so much going on this week. So instead of those three 42s that I did last week, maybe I do a 36 on Monday, and then on Wednesday, I'm fasting but I plan a dinner because I have a commitment that happens at dinnertime so that one becomes a 24, and maybe I do a 30-hour on Friday by finishing my last meal on Thursday around lunch and then eating dinner on Friday. So now, all of a sudden, I still did three fasts, but I did a 42, I did a 24, and a 30. So that dial has changed. I've made adjustments in my week, but, again-- I haven't emphasized this enough yet today, but I'm not turning off the dial because it's a stressful week. Just because there's a lot going on in my family or in my home or at work, it doesn't mean I just turn off the dial and forget about it, because so many of us have done so many different weight-loss or health strategies and we just turned it off. We didn't keep it in the on setting. We didn't look at increasing it and turning it down incrementally. We just turned it on and turned it off and, therefore, we couldn't sustain. If this is a really stressful week, I may not be able to do that same intense level of fasting that I did last week.

[00:20:52] Let's say, for example, I'm going on vacation or traveling for work. I might decide that I do a 24-hour fast on the day that I travel. That way, I don't have to eat at all in the airport or on the plane. I don't have to carry any food with me. I don't have to navigate any of that, but I will eat once I get there. So I'll have my one meal when I arrive. If I am hanging out with people or I'm at a conference or work meetings, maybe it means I go back to having two meals most of the days that week. Maybe one of the days I can do a 24-hour fast. But again, if you could see me right now, you'd know I'm just dialing up and down. I'm adjusting for the week based on staying in my fasting zone, but making

adjustments so that I can be successful, give my body what it needs, and not overtax my system or turn it off and walk away.

[00:21:59] Another time that I talk a lot about this fasting dial, and I think for many of us this is an important way to think about it-- when we've reached that place in our journey where we feel like we've accomplished our goal-- now, maybe that was a weight-loss goal, or maybe that was a health goal, a diabetes-marker goal or something, but we feel like we've reached it. So some of us might refer to that as 'maintenance', where we're now not working on weight loss, we're not working on healing this health issue, we're working on maintaining where we are. What many people find in maintenance is they also have to be willing to use that fasting dial. It might mean that most days they do two meals, and then once a week they do a 24 or 42, or once a month they do a 48 or a 72. And what I've noticed for so many people is, in maintenance, they need to keep about them a little bit of flexibility.

[00:23:09] So let's say, for example, I'm in maintenance. I feel good with my weight loss goal, I'm in a good place. And I go along for a few weeks, a couple of months, and maybe I notice that my pants are getting a little bit snug. This is a great time for me to think about that fasting dial and see where I am (What have I been doing? Am I doing TRE? Am I doing any fasting?) and, if I want to make an adjustment, what's the next increment? So again, I would not go from three meals a day to a 72-hour fast every week. That is such a huge leap and, oftentimes, not even warranted. But instead, what I'm going to do is dial up a little bit. So let's say, for example, I've been eating two meals every day in maintenance and it's working pretty well, but I start to notice my pants are getting a little snug, so I'm going to dial up and see if the 24s will be helpful. So I may move up to alternate-day, 24-hour fasts or I might do some-- a few weeks of the 30-hour, like I mentioned, where I eat two meals one day, or one, either way, but I'm done earlier. It's kind of a brunch-time meal maybe, or I finish at lunch, and then I don't eat again until the following day at dinnertime. That gives me a nice long stretch of 30 hours, longer than a 24, but I'm still eating each day. So I do that for maybe a couple of weeks, or maybe I work up to some 42s again until I feel like I'm back where I want to be feeling good in my body, feeling good with everything that's happening, and then I can dial back again and move down to the 24s, do some alternating, 24-hour fasts, and then move back down to the 18/6.

[00:25:20] I think the important thing with this is to really get into visualizing that dial. I can click up a few notches. I can click down a few notches. I'm not going to turn it off, but I'm going to make adjustments based on what's going on. Am I early on in my journey and I'm learning how to fast? I want to go nice and slow, incrementally changing it. For most people that I work with (clients and in the Community), I even talk about as you're building your fasting muscle, the fasting dial, that intensity part might also refer to how many fasts, how frequently you fast.

[00:26:07] So let's say, for example, I have worked up to the point where I can do a 36 or a 42-hour fast. So I do one at the beginning of the week. And then for my second fast, maybe that comes on Wednesday, I don't feel quite ready to do another 36 or 42, I can turn that one into a 24, so I have dinner Wednesday night and two meals again on Thursday. Maybe I do another 24 on Friday. So now the incremental change that I made as I went from, let's say, three 24s to one 42 and two 24s in that week. I may stay there for a few weeks until I'm ready to turn up the intensity a little more. And that changing the intensity might mean increasing one more fast to a 42. So that week I do a 42 on Monday, I do a 42 on Wednesday, and Friday I may do another 24. So again, I did three fasts but they weren't all the same number, and that's okay. It might be a couple more weeks and I

feel ready to do all three as 42-hour fasts. And then the next week might be a really stressful week at work and I dial back and those three fasts, I turn them all back to 24s, or two of them into 24s, or one of them.

[00:27:43] You can see I could go on for hours talking about all of these permutations. So I'm hoping that you're really getting that sense that that's what the fasting dial allows you to do, to really visualize the incremental, gradual up and down in degree of intensity rather than success/fail, off/on. Our fasting looks different depending on what's going on. Let's say you're not feeling as well one week and you have lower energy - maybe you dial back a little bit. Let's say you're recovering from being sick - you might dial back a little bit. Or let's say, for some reason, your food is just a little more off track that week - you might want to dial back your fasting. And then there might be times, like I said before, where you are ready to dial up your fasting. I've heard this before with clients when maybe their spouse is out of town and so it's almost like. "I don't have to worry about anyone else in my fasting so, ooh, I'm going to do a longer fast this week. I'm going to dial up. And then when my spouse comes back, I'll dial back down to this place where I am now." So up and down on that dial, that levels of intensity.

[00:29:13] And I think the important thing is that, for most of us, it's not just willy-nilly. We don't just randomly choose times or frequencies of fasts. We really assess. How are we doing? What are our goals? How is our metabolic health going? How are my blood sugar numbers going? How do I feel? What's my hunger level? What's my exercise, my stress levels? What are the situations around me, family and work and things like that? It's really a kind of finely-tuned system that most of us really develop in this, deciding when to increase and when to dial back.

[00:30:02] So my hope is that you'll take this analogy, visualize it-- as I said, this would probably make a great YouTube video because there's a lot of me talking with my hands here. But I really want to encourage you to think about the increments along the dial. What are those for you? Are they meals? Are they hours? Are they days? You know, how do you kind of measure those increments? And I encourage you to be a little bit careful not to make the increments too big. Give yourself some options so that if I'm doing a 42-hour fast this week and I dial it to 36, that's still super successful. Or if I dial back my hours and do fat-fasting foods, that is still a really powerful way to take care of my body. So, if you can, start thinking about these increments of intensity, turning up the dial when you're ready, turning down the dial when you need to back off a little bit, rather than, "I failed," "I blew it," "I didn't do anything." If you picture this dial and don't turn it off, you're always doing something good for your body as long as you're somewhere in those increments.

[00:31:31] All right, everybody. I hope this has been helpful. I hope to record soon again with my co-hosts. I'll be back again soon. Take good care, everybody, and happy fasting.