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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.

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[00:01:13] All right. And now we'll get started with today's episode.

Terri [00:01:19] Hi, everybody. Welcome back to another episode of The Fasting Method podcast. This is Dr. Terri Lance and this is a solo Bitesize episode. Today, what I wanted to talk to you about is the idea of thinking about the new habits that you're working on building in your life, relating to either your health goals, or your weight, or both.

[00:01:44] So what I encourage you to do is think about who you see yourself becoming - envisioning your habits, your approach to things, how you appear in your body, how you feel in your body - and really start to create that as your identity. And then I encourage you to think about what are the habits that someone who fits that identity, what do they do? So, "If I'm healthier in my body, what does a healthy person do?" "If I'm eating as a healthy person, what do I eat?" "If I'm fasting as a healthy person, how do I fast?" And really start to use that as your frame for deciding what your behaviors will be moving forward rather than reverting back to all of your old behaviors. That's your past identity, as far as your health and your weight, but you're creating a new identity as far as your health and your weight.

[00:02:46] Many of you know from listening to other episodes, I love a lot of books that are about changing our habits and building new habits. And James Clear, who wrote Atomic Habits, is one of my favorite authors for this topic, and this is one of my favorite books. If you haven't read it, I highly encourage it. One of the things I heard him talk about in an interview is the idea that creating habits that are congruent with your identity makes them so much easier to create. It's easier to build habits that fit how you see yourself, how you think of yourself. So let's use, for example, if your current identity or current way of thinking about yourself is, "I'm overweight. I've never succeeded for long on a weight-loss plan. I'm not healthy." You might think of yourself as having a particular health condition or just think of yourself as an emotional eater, or think of yourself as a late-night eater, or any of these ways of seeing yourself. And then you decide you're going to work on this and you want to create a habit where you don't eat at night, or you want to create a habit where you only eat the foods that work best for your body. Some of you might be wanting to create a habit of a particular style of eating. You might be vegan or you might want to do low carb or something else. But you can see already where I'm going with this, probably, in that that new behavior is incongruent with how you are currently identifying yourself. So we have to work on that self identity and then build the habits that support that identity.

[00:04:39] So I'm going to talk a little bit about my example of this that I share often with my clients and in our Community. Many years ago, I changed how I was eating. I was very unhealthy and I was struggling with my weight, was on a lot of medications, and I realized I had to make a change. I had to change my relationship with food. And I went through-- I did the Whole30. I actually did the Whole30 for 100 days. And then I started doing paleo, primal - you know, eating whole foods, not eating processed foods, not snacking. And then I got to the place where I started to learn about doing some fasting. I realized for me I had to go even lower carb because of my insulin resistance, so I started to identify more as someone who ate ketogenically and still as someone who was doing TRE and doing fasting. Fast forward a little bit. Once these pieces of my identity became really clear, other behaviors and habits started to gel and make more sense, and become easier to continue or further develop. So because I identified as someone who eats very low carb or ketogenically, if my friends asked if I wanted to go to a restaurant, I said, "Sure," and I didn't have to ask myself, "Hmm, will I stay on plan today? Will I eat low carb or ketogenically today?" I knew the answer was yes because that was my identity - "I am someone who eats this way." So whether I go to this restaurant or this restaurant or eat at home, these are the foods that fit my approach. So I don't even have to look at certain parts of the menu because they don't fit my identity of who I am as an eater.

[00:06:43] Now, yours may not be low carb or ketogenic or vegan or carnivore. It may not be any of those labels and that is fine. Actually, I love it when people have a way of identifying it without one of those labels. But let's say, for example, you just see yourself as someone who is a healthy eater or a whole-food eater, and you know what that means for you. That's going to make your decisions a lot easier. But where I see people struggle is if they say, "I want to be healthier. I want to lose weight. Oh, but I really like to eat this food," or, "I really want to still be able to do this." You have to create the identity that you're building and then create those habits that support that identity.

[00:07:32] As James Clear talked about it, as I mentioned earlier, this is how you're going to make those new habits become solid for you. If they're incongruent, your brain is not going to latch on to them. They're too foreign. They don't make sense. They don't fit like they're puzzle pieces to the wrong puzzle, and so your brain can't really make them happen. Similarly, if you want to change your habits around physical activity, you can't describe yourself as, "I'm a lazy person. I really don't like to exercise," while you're trying to build an exercise or movement habit. You're going to have to start seeing yourself differently, talking about yourself differently. Create that identity - "I'm someone who moves well in my body. Oh, well, then I can go for a walk today." Now this walking habit fits my identity rather than, "Hmm, I'm not really someone who likes very much exercise. I probably should go to the gym." It's going to be really hard to create that new habit of going to the gym or going on a walk when your identity says that those behaviors don't fit.

[00:08:54] So the big kind of takeaway from this, again, just to simplify it, is think about the identity that you want to embody. It can be broad or it can be really specific, but let's say I want to even just say, "I am a healthy person. I make decisions based on what creates a healthy body and a healthy lifestyle." Then I can focus on the habits that create that, the habits that help me to achieve that goal. "Does a healthy person do this? Hmm, not so much. Okay, then I don't do that very much or at all." "Does a healthy person do this? Yeah, that's a healthy behavior that healthy people do. Well, great. I'm going to start doing that. I'm going to make that habit."

[00:09:42] So work on the identity - who you want to be, how you would describe yourself, how you want to see yourself - and then start to build the habits that support that, rather than trying to do a mismatch of seeing yourself one way and then trying these goals. This is also true to think about yourself as a faster. If I'm someone who doesn't really like to fast, it's going to be really hard to create good fasting habits. But if instead, if I see myself as someone who's capable of learning how to fast and develop my fasting muscle, I can start to build those habits.

[00:10:30] So really simple here, folks. I know doing all of it is not simple, but the concept is really simple. So keep working on, "What is the identity that I want to carry and embody," and then, "What are the habits that I want to put in place?" Those habits will happen much more easily when they're congruent with that identity.

[00:10:54] I will be back in a few weeks. Take good care, everybody. Bye bye.