

The Fasting Method - Episode #146: Hope

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.

[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.

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

Terri [00:01:19] Hello and welcome back to another episode of the Fasting Method podcast. This is Dr. Terri Lance, Coach Terri, and I'm going to do a solo episode today. Hopefully, it's something that will kind of resonate with some of you who might be struggling in your journey at this point. Now, it might be that you are early on in your journey, or you might be later on in your journey and just really struggling to keep going. What I want to talk about today is hope.

[00:01:53] Now, why would I talk about hope when we're talking about fasting and eating in a way that helps us to change our body weight, or change our physical health, or our biomarkers? What does hope have to do with this? Well, the other day we were in a coaching team meeting and Coach Larry shared an example of some research done long ago about hope. The details of this study are a little gruesome, so I won't actually share the study, but it really reminded me that that is so important for all of us, that if we are not holding on to some type of hope, we are going to easily become discouraged, we're going to become overwhelmed, and we're not going to keep going. We're going to just kind of drop out of our goal seeking and kind of fall back into all of our old patterns and, therefore, all of our old same results.

[00:02:56] Then Coach Lisa brought up an article about hope molecules. Now why in the heck are we talking about hope and molecules in our body? The fascinating thing about this is there's been a lot of research, and some of you might be familiar with a psychologist named Kelly McGonigal. She has written about this and talked about it, other science journals have posted things about this. And really what they're identifying, or what they have been identifying, is that when we exercise-- and, no, this whole episode will not be about exercise, I promise. When we exercise, when we contract our muscles, a protein is released. And the cool thing about this protein (they're called myokines) is that they cross the blood-brain barrier. And once there, these proteins get the brain into this positive state. This is why sometimes people talk about a 'runner's high' or feeling good after they dance, or do anything that involves contracting your muscles, because these proteins are released to the brain and, there, they get us going with more joy, more pleasure, more satisfaction, and, ultimately, more hope. So they are hope molecules. I use this example just to kind of highlight how important hope is in our overall well-being. It also affects our physical health. There have been studies that have researched how people think and their

hopefulness, how much hope they have. What they have found is that people who have more hope have fewer chronic illnesses, it affects how your body functions. And people who have more-- spend more time in a state of hopelessness, actually have more illness, more chronic health concerns. And so, again, this is a podcast about fasting and about eating well and changing all of those habits, but I think if we never talk about this underlying piece, we're really missing out on something that's really important.

[00:05:28] So why is it that some of us might struggle with hope? Some of you might be familiar with some other places where I've talked about mindset and I've talked about growth mindset versus a fixed mindset, but why is it that some of us are kind of in one camp and others of us might be in another camp? One thing I encourage you to think about is, early on in life, were you taught to have dreams? Were you encouraged to pursue your dreams? Were you surrounded by people who are optimistic and saw the good in things? And when it comes to hope, were you ever taught, or did you kind of figure out on your own (based on some things going on in your world) that the best thing you could do is not get your hopes up? This is a really common phrase, and we offer it to each other and we offer it to ourselves - "Well, don't get your hopes up." Now, all these years later, we've created a pattern of blocking ourselves from hope. And some of you might be listening to this and wondering, "Well, is hope just something that we have or don't have?" kind of like that growth mindset or fixed mindset. No, we're not born with hope or without hope. We're not born hopeless or filled with hope. Hope is a mindset, a way of thinking. And then that results in a way of feeling that can be learned, it can be taught, but many of us were not taught this and haven't learned it.

[00:07:19] So, if you are struggling right now, I encourage you to kind of pause and reflect and see what might be getting in the way? Not just behaviorally, like, "Well, I get home from work at this time and I need to eat at this time, and so fasting doesn't work." Not just those behavioral barriers that you're identifying, but do you have some ways of thinking that are serving as barriers? Are you telling yourself, "Well, don't get your hopes up about reversing this diabetes. I mean, I hear all these other people are doing it, but, you know, I just don't think that's available from me." That's the fixed mindset. You've learned to not allow yourself to have hope.

[00:08:04] Now, hope is a noun and hope is also a verb. So we can hope for something. We can believe in its possibility and want to see its fulfillment. And hope is also a noun. It, again, is that state of mind. It's a state of kind of cognitive and affect experiences that tell us something is possible and that we can move toward it. Now, sometimes, in English at least, and I assume in other languages, there are words that we use kind of interchangeably. And you might use hope and optimism and dreaming and wishing all kind of interchangeably. And the people who research these things and work on kind of developing the concept and understanding the concept really try to help us separate them out a little bit. So some of us might think hope is like having a wish. "If I wish for it, it will come." Now notice, in that statement, 'wishing' is kind of like I'm just sitting here imagining something and just hoping that it drops in my lap, it just descends upon me somehow. Maybe I should wish to win the lottery, because there's not a lot I can do besides buying a ticket to make that happen. So wishing is kind of appropriate when you're talking about, "Geez, I wish I could win the lottery." But when it comes to changing our life, developing ourselves, changing our health, changing our body and our metabolism, that takes more than a wish.

[00:09:59] When I was a kid, I did celebrate Christmas, and I remember we used to get the Sears Roebuck-- I don't even remember if I'm saying that right. The Sears, Roebuck & Co

catalog. And I would look through every page and I would turn down the corner of all of the things I was wishing that Santa would bring. And, again, nothing I needed to do, just sit there and wait until December 25th and just imagine walking down and looking under the Christmas tree and all of those things I had wished for were there. If that's how you are approaching your health journey or your weight-loss journey, I'm sorry to say that that's not enough. We need to develop hope.

[00:10:46] And hope actually has some other parts to it. If you look at what one person created as the hope theory, and a lot of people use this and research this, but, in the hope theory, the first part is goal setting, having a goal. You have to kind of know what it is that you want. What is the desire? What is this thing that you want to move toward? And then, besides having a goal, the next part of this theory is super important, and this is really where all of the details of what we teach you through this podcast, and what we share with everyone over in the TFM Community, is pathways. We need to have some thoughts about what are the steps I can take to move toward that thing I'm hoping to create, that I have hope about. So, again, hope and hoping - they're not just passive concepts. They actually involve us doing something, engaging in something in a way. So this part is really important - creating pathways. And it might mean really creating some options. And research shows that people who have more than one pathway actually do better in reaching their goals. They have more hope. So have multiple pathways.

[00:12:24] Another part of the hope theory is agency. And this is where I think most of us struggle, or some of us if you've ever noticed that you struggle with this concept of hope. Agency is the belief in ourselves and our ability to get to this goal. So if I say, "I would like to lose 100 pounds," "I wish I could lose 100 pounds," and I sit back and do nothing, obviously, I'm never going to reach that goal. But if I say, "What I really want is to lose weight and fit into the clothes that I imagine wearing." So I'm creating this positive belief in what I want. I'm setting a goal. I'm creating goal thinking. And then I think about, "How will I do that?" "Well, I'm going to work on developing these skills that these people keep telling me about. I'm going to work on developing time-restricted eating. I'm going to stop snacking and grazing. I'm going to focus on eating good meals when it's time for me to eat. And then I'm going to work on spacing out when I eat, skipping meals on some days, skipping a whole day or two days of eating." So this is the pathway building. Another pathway that we talk a lot about here, and I certainly encourage all of my clients to focus on this as well as the fasting piece, is one pathway I'm going to take to reach this goal is eating the foods that support my body, and not eating the foods that don't support my body. So that's another pathway. Now I've got some options.

[00:14:11] So if you are someone who kind of uses the mindset that having hope is dangerous, you're only going to get disappointed, your best strategy is to not get your hopes up, those kinds of things, I really encourage you to start working on this concept that hope can be built and taught. Like I said, it doesn't just land in your lap. And so it's not like having hope is dangerous. Remember early on I told you about of the health benefits? There are psychological wellness benefits from having hope. And I get it, none of us want to have our hopes dashed. We don't want to have the rug pulled out from under us. But the reality is, if we go into a complicated change process without hope, the odds are really against us. We are unlikely to do things that challenge us. We are unlikely to persevere when we are not using a basis of hope to guide us.

[00:15:18] So remember, the hope theory is having the goal, having the pathways, and then having the agency, the sense that I can do this, I can navigate these pathways. I'm not going to be perfect, but I certainly can navigate these pathways. And if these pathways

don't work exactly as I've laid them out, I can create more pathways. I'm going to keep moving toward my goal. We can teach ourselves to do that. We can learn how to have hope. It's a thought process. Like I said, it's not like a DNA thing that we were born with hope, DNA, or hope thoughts. We build them, and some of us have not yet really learned to build them or trust ourselves to build them and have them.

[00:16:14] So some people, when they talk about this concept of having hope and building hope, they talk about the first step being allowing yourself to have hope. It might seem weird to you, but giving yourself permission because you've been working under this premise that you should not. Now you need to be able to tell yourself it's okay. It's good for me to have hope. The only chance I have of reaching my goals is to use hope in that process. So it's not like it's the barrier that's going to ruin everything for me. It actually is-- it's like the water in the river that's going to carry me. It has to be here or I can't go tubing down the river if there's no water. I can't change my life, I can't change my body if I'm not on that flow of hope.

[00:17:11] So I want to tie this back and emphasize that. And you might hear in my voice that I'm getting kind of adamant about this. All the research shows that when people are in a state of hopelessness, they can't generate new pathways. They have a hard time creating new thoughts and new approaches, so they get more stuck. And when we get more stuck, we get more hopeless, we're more discouraged. I, certainly, have been in those places, and not just around this health journey but in other areas of my life. So really working on that hope building, giving yourself permission, imagining what's possible, dreaming, envisioning, creating a dream board. Remember when everyone created dream boards for a while? It's really helpful because it helps you see that you can get there. It helps make it possible for you. And, again, if what's getting in our way is an underlying belief that this isn't possible for me, that will hold me back.

[00:18:23] And when my brain has to make a choice between two behaviors-- let's just think about this for a second. Is it going to go for the one that seems challenging without any real sense of it will pay off? Heck, no! My brain is smarter than that. It's going to say, "Let's go back to that tried and true one." Even though that tried and true effort gets us in a bad place every time eventually, it works in the moment so let's go back to that. But what we're all doing here is we're working on changing our approach, changing our relationship with food, changing the frequency with which we eat, changing the choices. Those take effort from our brain. And if we want our brain to exert that effort and give us that work effort, we have to offer it hope. There's a reason I'm doing this because I see where it can take me. I have hope that, in doing this, it will take me to that next place.

[00:19:39] And I have talked with so many clients recently that have all of the knowledge, but they don't really have the hope, because they've had some past messaging that this isn't available to them, that this won't work for them. Let's face it, when it comes to weight and health, we've all been taught, "You're just genetically set up this way," "There's no hope," "It doesn't matter what you do, you're just kind of doomed to live out this same pattern." That is hogwash. We are not destined for those things. So, if we can work on seeing possibility for ourselves, this is where optimism comes in. Seeing that there is the possibility of something positive - that is really important. But, again, just seeing it won't get us there. Again, hope is a more active engagement with that optimistic, positive thinking. It's coming up with the goals, it's creating the pathways, and it's having that belief in our own agency.

[00:20:52] Doing this whole process, and one of the reasons we have a TFM Community is because another way to build hope is to get to talk to others, get to hear from others who have hope. When you are most discouraged, you kind of need to be around someone who says, "You know what? This actually works and it's going to be okay." It also helps to understand or to be exposed to other people succeeding in it. That's inspiration to know, "Huh! If they could do it, I can do it." That adds to our sense of agency. But if you, in the background, are thinking, "Yeah, that's great that so-and-so did that, but I know that doesn't work for me," that's actually dashing hope, that's ruling out, that's telling yourself, "Don't have hope."

[00:21:52] So my encouragement to everyone who might be struggling (either right now or you might revisit this later) is to really dig into not just the fasting behaviors and the food choices (obviously, you all know I think those are really important), but to dig down into are you using this hope process in your journey? Are you allowing yourself to have hope? Are you creating goals, meaning a vision of where you're going? It doesn't have to be a five-point goal or something, but you have a goal or have goals. You have pathways that you create, and your pathways change as they need to. And part of the advocacy part, the third part of that theory, again, is believing I will handle the obstacles that come up. My chosen pathways aren't necessarily going to go swimmingly perfect all of the time, but I have the faith that I can adapt. I can create more pathways. I can add more resources. I can gain more momentum. That's part of that advocacy.

[00:23:10] So, again, if you're struggling, dig into this. Do some thinking about am I using hope in this journey or am I trying to wing it without this necessary component? And remember, many of you may be experiencing this, or you may hear others who talk about it. When you use hope in this process, when you get really good at developing your hope in this journey, it's going to affect your hope in other areas of life. It's going to affect your creativity, your joy experiences, all of these positive things because it naturally just kind of generates in us. Hope builds more hope. Hope opens up more room for positive emotions. People who have more hope tend to have less occurrence of depression and anxiety because those are wrapped up in the other ways of thinking and the other emotional reactions. So, working on your hope right now, in my way of seeing it, is not only looking at how you're doing in your fasting journey and your weight loss or your biological marker changes, but it's really changing your whole life by working on hope, even in this specific area, and letting it spill into other areas.

[00:24:36] I hope that this discussion has been helpful. I look forward to coming back to you again with another episode soon, and we will keep coming to you with all of the things that we've been offering. So good luck with your fasting. Take good care and we'll be back soon.