

Lesson 2: Growth Mindset

Hi, I'm coach Terri Lance, and welcome to lesson number two. We're going to be talking about the power of our mindset, specifically, focusing on a growth mindset, and we're also going to be talking about self-compassion and why these are so important to you in this journey. The first thing I want to talk to you about today is the power of what happens in our minds. People learn a lot of information about fasting and they learn a lot of information about healthy eating. That's not where the difficulty lies for many people. Where the challenge comes in is in implementing all of this information in a way that fits in their lifestyle and part of this is challenging because we've had years and years and years of thinking and behaving in certain ways that now interfere. So let's focus on the power of what we think. Our mind does what we show it through our words and through pictures we create.

So if we walk through steps to do something in our mind, we help teach our mind the steps that we're going to be taking. If we say words in our mind to ourselves, our brain listens and then uses those words to make sense of things. Therefore, if our words about ourselves are negative, if our words about fasting are that, "It's too difficult," "It's impossible," then we are going to struggle. Our brain is not going to put in that effort it takes to learn these new skills and implement them successfully. The positive versus negative words, negative words have four to seven times more strength than positive words. It's quite a bit of a difference. And the words we say aloud versus just in our head has 10 times more power. So saying something negative to yourself has 40 to 70 times more power than saying something positive to yourself.

This is why we really have to work on this. If you want to make lasting changes and want to feel successful in your journey, these are important things to be focused on. So let's talk, as I mentioned earlier, about the growth mindset. The growth mindset is stemming from research from Carol Dweck. She's a psychologist who's been studying mindset for many years and her study first started in looking at students in an academic setting. And she was looking at cognitive function and how that was affected by mindset. What she found is that students who had a growth mindset did better. They learned more, they improved their academic abilities, academic functioning, intellectual functioning, measures that they gave them. They improved when they had a growth mindset and did not when they didn't. A growth mindset is the idea that what you can do, your possibilities, your skills, what you can accomplish, how you can deal with something, you see it as something that is trainable.

You see it as a skill, a piece of information that you can obtain through further learning, through more exercise, more effort put in, that you can develop this skill or this knowledge base. When you struggle, you take this on as information. "It didn't work when I pedaled my pedals this way on my bike. But when I pedal this way, I can stay upright and I move forward." So you take not doing well or not knowing how to do something as a challenge to figure out and you learn from it. In a growth mindset, you watch other people, you observe how other people do this task. "That person stops by putting back their feet this way. Let me try that," rather than thinking that person just knows how to ride a bike and I don't. Growth mindset is very focused on potential

and the idea that potential can grow, that we can gain more potential through effort and further learning.

We see challenges as ways to learn more, and we watch other people to learn. We model ourselves after what we see. Now, the opposite of a growth mindset is a fixed mindset. In a fixed mindset, there's this belief that the skills, talents, abilities that I have are fixed. I'm born with them or I wasn't born with them. There's really no point in doing more effort, learning more, or practicing more because they're fixed. They're going to stay what they are. You can already imagine from what I'm describing this makes it a lot harder for your brain to feel motivated to do anything that's challenging. If you have the mindset that, "I can't lose weight, it's not in my abilities," your brain is not going to get on board with changing how you're eating or looking at fasting, because it already knows it can't achieve it because you have a fixed mindset.

You also tend to see challenges or mistakes or times when you don't succeed at something, you see them as defining you. You see them as failure and further confirmation that you don't have that ability and can't develop it. With a fixed mindset, you tend to watch other people and you may feel resentful or jealous or just more negative about your own performance when you see them succeeding. What it means to you is they were born with that ability, that skill, that knowledge, whatever, and you were not. There's nothing you can do about it. So you can probably tell from what I'm describing, it's very important for all of us to work on having more of a growth mindset rather than a fixed mindset. Now this can help in all areas of life, but especially when it comes to fasting and eating well, because this is something that's not natural for many of us.

We learned a lot of things about how often you should eat and how much you should eat and which foods you should eat and you're unlearning a lot and you're learning new information so a growth mindset is super important. You may have joined a Facebook group before and watched other people tell their success stories. You may have felt excited when you saw someone else lose 110 pounds and reversed their diabetes. You looked at that and you said, "Wow, if he can do it, I bet I can. What can I learn from what he's doing that I can apply and achieve the same thing?" Or you may have watched someone and said, "Wow, she lost 130 pounds. That's amazing. I don't want to watch this anymore. It's so frustrating. How come she can lose 130 pounds and I can't? It stinks that I wasn't born with that ability." You can hear the difference between a growth mindset and a fixed mindset.

When you work on doing a fast, let's say you are stretching yourself to go beyond 18 hours and you are working on your first 24 hour fast. If you have a growth mindset and at hour 22, you just feel like you can't take it anymore and you decide to eat, you think, "Great. I did 22 hours. That's more than I've ever done before. What can I learn about what was going on that might help me get to 24. Let me look at some other people who have accomplished 24 hours and learn from what they've done. Let me model my attempts after what they've done." And also just thinking, "I can learn this. I didn't come here knowing how to do a 24 hour fast, but I can learn it. I can develop it. I can develop that fasting muscle." If you have a fixed mindset, you're working on your first 24 hour fast, hour 21, you're just overwhelmed and you decide to eat. It's going to be further confirmation.

"See, I knew it wouldn't work. I know I don't have these skills. Losing weight just isn't in my cards. I was born to become diabetic and I am just going to stay stuck here. Those other people, I don't know how they're doing it, but I don't have that gift. They're lucky and I'm not." This is how it plays out when it comes to fasting and eating. Listen to how you're talking about fasting, listen to how you're talking about yourself, work on developing more ways of talking to yourself and thinking that are in line with the growth mindset rather than getting stuck in that fixed mindset. And you may sometimes catch where you fall into that. It's natural, but you're going to have to make some conscious effort to move over to this growth mindset. And you will see that it really does help you.

The next topic that I want to talk about in today's lesson is to talk about self-compassion. And sometimes when I talk about self-compassion, I see some people's eyes roll, I see some people get pretty skeptical. "This sounds woo-woo." I'm a psychologist by training so this is an area that I love. But self-compassion is so important in this journey because you're going to be doing things that are challenging, you're going to be learning information and practicing skills that butt up against paradigms that you've held for a long time. Many of us held paradigms that eating six meals a day was the healthiest thing for us. It was the way to keep our weight down. And it was a way to manage our blood sugar numbers or our diabetes.

We learned that eating certain foods were healthy and would help us lose weight or manage our glucose. And then you come here and we start talking about a lot of information that really is in contradiction to that. Learning new information and changing what we do requires us to be gentle with ourselves, to be nurturing, and to know that we're going to struggle. It is normal that when you're working on something new, it doesn't come easily. It takes practice. It takes time. It takes repetition to make something be something that works for you. Sometimes you succeed on the first attempt, but then the second, third, and fourth, you don't do as well. That's natural. People can get discouraged and what I find for so many people who come to us here at the Fasting Method is that we have spent a lifetime working on our health, working on weight loss, and we have come here probably discouraged. We've made many attempts. We've had some success and then we backslid. We regained the weight, our blood sugars went back up and we just feel discouraged.

One of the problems is that what we often do is we talk to ourselves negatively, we hold beliefs about ourselves that we have affirmed over the years, and we say things like, "You're never going to be able to succeed. You've tried so many times. Just stop, give it up. You can't do this." We might say, "I'm just destined to carry excess body fat," or, "Everyone in my family struggles with diabetes. Of course, I'm going to have diabetes." We hold these kinds of negative statements, we hold these limiting beliefs, and then when we work on changing things, we work on changing our behaviors, our eating, or fasting, what I often see is that when people struggle, they get very frustrated with themselves. They say negative things. They call themselves lazy, stupid. They question, "What's wrong with me? I know the information. Why am I not doing it? I am just stubborn. I'm broken. I'm flawed." And we carry around these negative beliefs about ourselves and we talk to ourselves in this negative way.

I want you to think about your best friend, sister, brother, parent, someone that you love and are very close to. And I want you to imagine that they're taking on a new endeavor. They're learning new skills, life-saving skills, and they're struggling. They know it, they've read it, they've heard it, but they are having a hard time implementing it, having a hard time breaking old habits, establishing new habits. How would you talk with them about what they're doing? Would you say things to them like, "Well, I knew you weren't going to succeed. You've tried a lot of times and I knew this was just stupid to even try. This just isn't possible for you. You're just not someone who can do this. You've tried and it's just not possible. I knew you weren't going to succeed because you're actually pretty lazy. And you don't like to do things that are difficult so I'm not surprised that you've failed."

No, you would say to them, "I know this is a big effort that you've taken on. You are working on changing your life, changing your health, changing everything you've learned, and I see that that's difficult. Is there any way I can help you? Do you need any resources?" You would almost cheer them on. You would acknowledge, "It's challenging. Of course, you're struggling. You can still do it. One little step at a time." You would give them that little engine that could talk because you care about them and you don't want them to feel defeated. You want them to feel supported. You want them to feel able and capable to do what they want to do. You want them to build confidence. When you're having a hard time implementing new information or practicing a new skill, are you this gentle with yourself? Are you encouraging? Are you nurturing yourself? This is self-compassion. Now self-compassion is not coddling. It's not pity. And it's not just telling someone. "Oh, it's okay. It's okay that you didn't do it. You're fine. You're great. I love you anyway."

That is nice to say, of course, but self-compassion is really acknowledging, "That didn't go well. I saw how hard you worked on it and I know you didn't get the result you wanted. I'm sorry. That was hard." It's not Pollyannaish. It's not just telling them positive things. It's acknowledging the struggle and acknowledging that they can continue to move forward, that you are supportive of them. This is compassion, how you would demonstrate it to other people, and this is the way we need to demonstrate compassion toward ourselves, to be able to say, "Okay, I was working on my first 24 hour fast and at hour 20, I just got overwhelmed. I was having cravings and I stopped. And now I feel bad because I was so close. And now I just don't think I can do it."

Self-compassion would say, "Of course, it was hard. It used to be hard to go four hours without eating. You went over 20 hours. That's amazing. It didn't go as well as you wanted to in the end. You got overwhelmed by the cravings and thoughts about food. How do you want to do this next time? Do you need any more skills or more practice? Do you need to do some more 18 hours before you stretch to a 24? Did you need some more electrolytes during this day? Is there anything that could have made you feel more successful and more able to move on?" That's self-compassion and I guarantee you, you are going to struggle at times along this journey. We all do. And if you are harsh, kind of like a drill sergeant to yourself, it's not very motivating for your brain. If you think about when you're teaching young kids, if you're teaching a young kid how to walk, you don't say, "Oh, you fell down. You're so stupid. Why can't you just do this? It's one foot in front of the other. Geez."

No. You say, "Buddy, you almost had it. You got it. Keep going." You find the encouragement to help them figure out what to do to feel supported and that's what I'm encouraging you to work on for yourself. Self-compassion, being kind, offering support to yourself, being honest. What are we learning from this? How can you make this different next time? That is self-compassion. And it goes a long way. There's a lot of research about self-compassion and how it helps people in so many ways, even in their health, because being more gentle to themselves, more accepting to themselves in our brain, it helps our brain feel more motivated and able to do things rather than feeling defeated. And the last point I want to make today is about the importance of developing a positive self-coach. There was a famous basketball coach, Bobby Knight, but he was famous for being very abusive, yelling at his players, throwing chairs at them, hitting them, punching them, screaming at refs.

He was just out of control. This is the way a lot of us coach ourselves. We yell, we name call, we do all of these hurtful things to try to push us forward. And many people say to me, "Terri, I do it that way because I'm afraid if I give myself any room, I'll just go completely off course," maybe about their fasting or about their food. But instead of this negative kind of abusive coach, I encourage you to think about a positive coach, going back to self-compassion, a coach who says to you, "Look, this is a rough game right now. We're down. What do you need? Here's our plan of attack. How can I help you? You can do this. Let's keep going." It's resourceful. It's supportive. It's nurturing.

Again, it's not codling. It doesn't make excuses. It doesn't say, "Well, that was a hard fast. You might as well go ahead and eat dessert." It doesn't do that. It holds you to your goals, it holds you to your plans, but it supports you in doing that. So working on developing that positive self-coach during this journey is going to be super important. So the action points for today's lesson, I want to invite you to identify your most common, problematic self-talk. What are the negative things that you say to yourself about yourself, about your weight and your health especially? And then to think about positive language you can use to replace these messages. So an example would be one of my negative self-talk things is, "You can't get through the night without snacking. You're a bad snacker."

So I might say something to myself like, "I've never been able to be successful in my weight loss or my health journey so there's no reason I should think I can do it now." A positive way to reframe that is, "I'm learning new skills now that I can apply to help me improve how I manage my weight and my health." And the second action point for today is I want to invite you to write out five statements using growth mindset language that you can use to describe your journey. So for example, "I'm learning how to manage when I eat and what I eat to improve my health. I am watching other people in the community and learning from their examples when they succeed and when they struggle."

I invite you to join our Healthy Mindset, Healthy Habits, and Healthy Emotions classes that meet each week and also to take a look at the Healthy Habits group challenge each week. These are things that can help you in the mindset and habits part of this journey. Don't forget to register for the next masterclass question and answer session where we answer your questions. All sessions are listed in your course syllabus. Make sure to check it regularly so that you don't miss any of these exciting events. Stop in and say hi, let us know how you're doing, and what



questions you have in the exclusive forum thread for this masterclass. I hope you're enjoying these lessons so far. I look forward to seeing you soon. Have a great day.