Introduction to Weight Loss and Mindset

So if we only think about the science of when and what to eat and look at meal plans and input, our calories and our exercise like that's a component of it.

But we can't just tackle the the ins and outs. We also have to look at the emotions. And I really believe that we drop weight in this trajectory where we can look at the science, focus on our food and our metabolism.

It's a component of it's super important. We can see our weight drop down. We have to let go of the emotions that are tied to that weight simultaneously.

If we don't do the deep work, if we don't look at our emotions, habits, behaviors, then our weight might drop down, but it's not going to stay there. It's going to move back up and meet where the mind is.

Welcome to Doctor Talks, the podcast where every episode leads to a healthier you. Join us as we navigate the world of optimal health, uncovering groundbreaking strategies to conquer chronic disease.

In each episode, we'll bring you the latest insights from leading health experts, medical innovators, and wellness warriors. If you're seeking to transform your health journey, or if you're looking for answers to burning questions.

You've come to the right place. Get ready to unlock the secrets of lifelong health and vitality. This is Doctor Talks, real talk from real doctors on the issues that matter to you most.

Hello. Welcome back to the Integrative Health Podcast with Doctor Jen. Today we're going to be talking about something that everyone always wants to talk about.

And that is weight loss. So today we have Doctor Ashley Lucas. She's the owner and founder of PhD, a weight loss and supplement line doctor Ashley Wellness, also with a PhD in sports nutrition and chronic disease.

And as a registered dietitian doctor, Ashley brings a unique perspective to weight management.

Doctor Ashley's Background and Career Shift

A former professional ballet dancer, she understands firsthand the importance of nutrition and performance. Her number one Amazon bestselling book, Five Steps to Reset the Scale and podcast and YouTube channel The Doctor Ashley Show, reflect her unique philosophies and extensive expertise in the metabolic wellness and sustainable transformation.

Get ready to be inspired by Doctor Ashley's science based approach to weight loss and wellness. Welcome, Doctor Ashley. Thanks for being here today. My pleasure.

Thanks for having me. Yes. So I loved meeting you. We were at a conference together and we just started talking. And I was so impressed with you. A mother of three, and you have this amazing business that's brick and mortar.

And now online. So how did you get into this space? Well, just like you shared, I come from a background of being a professional ballet dancer. My mom put me in ballet when I was a young girl.

I absolutely loved it, but I physically wasn't very talented at it. And back then they put all the kids not so talented, not so lean, like in the back row.

The talented kids were in the front and in my life for ten years was like, back row, left corner. I just wasn't physically

created for it, you know, it's a very statically demanding sport.

And so I, I don't know, I it's this thing about me when someone says something's not possible, I have to prove them wrong. And so it just lit a fire within my belly and I was like, I just have to I have to prove that I can do this. And I love it so much.

And so I was very persistent and dedicated and, my career dancing was fairly successful. Like I danced in, many national ballet companies. I danced in probably over 600 nutcrackers across the country.

I went to a boarding school for it during high school. That was really selective. But it was just because of my fortitude to push through big challenges.

I was always told that I was fat, even though I restricted calories like crazy. I didn't eat fat because I was told if you eat fat, you get fat. I remember counting the grams of fat I would eat in a day, and I'd get to like five grams of fat a day and think that, you know, that was a big win.

I didn't eat red meat because I thought that that caused heart disease. I was vegetarian for a really long time and I was just injured as a result. I never met my body weight goals.

I had stress fractures in my feet. And the end of my dancing career happened when I was in my mid 20s, and at that time I was selected to go perform up in New York City.

You know, every dancer's dream. Very excited. I thought, here I am, these once in a lifetime opportunities, and instead of finding myself in the spotlight, I had landed myself in the air.

I did what was happening with my body, with my health. I was so fearful. And after a whole bunch of tests, the doctor just said I was underfed. I was over exercise, and mind you, I still wasn't at my the weight that I needed to be to get all the roles that I wanted.

And he just said, you know, you can't keep doing this. You're done. You, you're, you know, you're killing your body. And so I flew home from that experience.

I was so fearful of my health future, still didn't really know what was going on with my body. And, it was like an identity crisis that it might not sound like a big deal, but to me, yeah, 20 plus years of struggle and sacrifice.

I know your daughter is an athlete. Like at some level, you just give everything to it. I didn't even go to regular high school. I mean, it was who I was.

I was, and I was probably top 1% of dancers in the world. Like, it was like, equivalent to Michael Phelps being pulled off the starting line of an Olympic level swim and saying, you can't swim anymore.

So I didn't know what to do. But I did understand how significantly nutrition impacted my performance. And that, you know, was really the reason why I had to step away from a career I fought my entire life up to, you know, 23 years for.

And so I decided I'm going to go back to school and I'm going to learn. I know there's a way that we can hit our optimal weight and maintain a healthy place without it being such a fight and an internal battle, and an obsession, you know?

And I knew there had to be a way to not ruin our metabolism during the process of dropping this excess fat weight. So I went on, earned my PhD in sports nutrition and chronic disease.

I'd studied energy metabolism. And then coming from an athletic background, I understood that 80% of any change has to come from the mind as well. So I studied cognitive behavioral therapy, you know, the mental emotional habits, behaviors and put all of that together.

And after that, I was like, gosh, I still don't feel like I'm a true expert in the field of weight management. I think I need to go back to school again.

And so I did, and I went back to school and became a registered dietitian. And during my dietetic internship, I realized that there's yet another problem.

And the problem is, is that we're being taught all the wrong things. Weren't you just need to eat less and move more, or maybe take some medications that make you eat less.

You need to avoid red meat. You need to eat 6 to 11 servings of whole grain. I'm like, well, this doesn't make sense. I did all these things and I had very, very high discipline and I still was struggling.

I was like raising my hand. It doesn't make sense to me why we feed type two diabetic patients high levels of carbs and just like there's something wrong here.

So I took all of my doctoral work and research and education and flipped everything that I learned upside down through my dietetic internship. And now that's how I created PhD.

We basically do the opposite of conventional wisdom and actually reverse chronic progressive, quote unquote diseases and make huge changes in people's lives by truly supporting their metabolism in a healthy way, and then focusing on the mental and emotional components, too.

So that's a long winded story of sharing how I got to where I am today. Oh, it's amazing. So many things to unpack. I feel like with your story and the fact that you went through that hardness of saying that your body was broken because you were pushing so hard and you, you were doing all the right things and all the right things you were told.

So I couldn't imagine flying home from that air visit and oh, that's that's a big deal. Especially like you said, you went to a special high school for that.

I mean, you were just this was your goal. But sometimes, you know, out of messes, miracles come. So it seems you really made a lot out of it. But the other thing that I find hilarious is, like you said, the registered dietitian, you know, dietitian school.

Why Weight Gain Is Not Just Personal Failure

Yes, these are great, but the ones that, you know, you can use that as just like, oh, I'm an RDA, I can say all these things, but you're actually, like you said, flipped that on its head because a lot of like medical school, a lot of the dietitian schools in this school, lean is sponsored by these big companies, is sponsored by medicine.

Why are they recommending. And sure. And like you said, carbs to to diabetics. I remember I had to see a dietitian because I refused the glucose testing when I was pregnant and I was advanced maternal age.

And they're like, oh yeah, like this was before continuous glucose monitors were just available. More to non diabetics. But I would bring in all of my information.

She's like, you should eat a snack of carbs right before bed. And I'm like, no thanks, I'm cool not doing that. But but thank you. And that's what we have to realize that we are empowered with information.

You guys are empowered by listening to podcasts, by actual professionals, by reading on your own. And sometimes you have to use that discernment when you go into a doctor's office or someone paid by your insurance company because you're not always getting good information.

Unfortunately. Yeah for sure. So why do you believe that weight gain just isn't our fault? Because when people go to the doctor's office or to a dietitian, sometimes they're kind of shamed.

Almost. Yeah, yeah, a lot of people, a lot of our clients coming into weight loss, but, like, I just know what I need to do. I just need to eat everything in moderation and that I just need to eat less and move more, because that's what we've been indoctrinated with.

But I do have a different philosophy, and I honestly don't think it has much to do with us when we are struggling with weight gain. And the reason why is because of how this, fat works in our body.

So specifically, my focus is on the belly fat. It's called visceral fat. Medically is the term, and the visceral fat is that fat that packs into your belly area.

It's the type of fat that fills up your organs, like your liver, your pancreas, your gallbladder. But usually, you know where we focus and talk a lot about liver.

Like if you have fatty liver, that means that you have significant infiltrates of of fat in the liver. And this fat gets in there, it fills it up, it wraps around it, and it squeezes your organs like it's a straight jacket.

After, a little bit of time, this fat mass in there that's squeezing the liver starts to grow its own blood vessels. It gets its own oxygen supply, and these fat cells actually secrete their own hormones.

So we don't quite realize it. But the fat mass, like, if you got a lot of fat in the belly, and it's the stuff that you can't pinch, you can't melt it, you can't freeze it off, you can't lipo it out like it's the stuff that's deep down in there.

I can explain it like, a ribeye beef steak. Like, if you took a slice of that and you see that ribeye and it's marbled in there and it has the thick white stuff around it, that's like the visceral fat, that's the fat we carry in the belly.

And it's like Kryptonite because it gets its own blood vessels and secretes its own hormones. So I want you to think of the fat mass like an entity in and of itself.

And all it wants to do is grow and get fat or as fast as possible. So if you've got this belly fat in there, you really don't have to eat a significant amount.

Because what happens over time and because of the hormones it's secreting, it causes a dysregulated partitioning of energy. So what I mean by that is let's say you have this belly fat and you eat a breakfast of, say, steel cut oats, blueberries and an organic, fat free vanilla flavored yogurt.

Well, let's say you take in that breakfast, and that could be maybe an okay, I don't think it is, but it could be an okay breakfast for your neighbor who's naturally lean.

But if you've got this belly fat, what's going to happen is all of that is going to be digested out into sugar, into your bloodstream. Your body doesn't like that.

That level of sugar is toxic to the body. And so the body, goes and tells the pancreas to release insulin. And insulin is this fat storage hormone. And what happens when we have the belly fat is it helps to drive that energy, that sugar or those calories in to feed the fat first.

So here your fat mass is getting fat, but your muscle cells are being left empty. So you're not getting this trigger to the brain saying, hey, you've eaten your full stop eating.

Instead, your body is physiologically starving inside. It's actually really still hungry. It doesn't acknowledge that you've actually eaten that pretty decent sized breakfast.

So then you have cravings. You're hungry more often. You want to eat every 3 to 4 hours because your body's saying, hey, you haven't fed me yet because you have fed it.

But instead, metabolically, there is there is an issue. It's dysregulated, and it's going in to feed the fat. So then the

fat gets fatter and fatter and fatter.

We're thinking, oh my gosh, I'm really not eating that much. I'm doing what my doctor says, but I'm still getting fatter. And that's why I say that it's really not your fault.

It's all driven hormonally and by this fat mass that has demands and urges and cravings and desires and oh my gosh, if you do not feed it, it gets hungry and it just wants to grow.

So I just hope that people understand if you're struggling with this belly fat, it's not just it's not you. It's not that you have a, lack of willpower.

It's not that you have a flawed personality. You don't have less discipline than a leaner individual. You just have this thing in there, this entity that is causing a metabolic dysregulation.

And in addition, it secretes hormones like interleukin six, which is a major inflammatory hormone. We think that the issues of carrying this fat mass largely are just like the excess weight and pressure it puts on the joint in the body, but it's really these inflammatory hormones.

It's secreting kind of like a tumor that's causing a big issue. An interleukin six is linked to a whole host of negative health consequences, like cancer, like autoimmune conditions, like skin irritation, all of these small things.

And so we have clients who come in and they're dropping this belly fat, they're shifting their metabolism. And they can't believe it, that all these symptoms they were associating with an autoimmune condition actually go away.

You know, my blood pressure can go away in a matter of weeks because we're shifting the metabolism. We're not just eating less and moving more. So I just, you know, I hope that that's that's clear.

In in men, this belly fat actually secretes aromatase. Aromatase takes testosterone, converts it into estrogen. And so then these men carrying around this belly fat have low T levels higher estrogen levels.

And as they continue to gain fat which they will because the thing only wants to get bigger, it's going to go in the chest, the throat and head. And now they're at increased risk of high blood pressure, sleep apnea, sleep issues.

So they all kind of tie together and I just hope people understand that it's this metabolic situation that's occurring to them that's causing this ease of continued weight gain.

Yeah. And and it's super frustrating for them because they're just trying to eat less, but they're eating the wrong things too. So it's it's really frustrating when they go to their doctor and they say, you know, all calories are the same.

So can you break down why that is so false? There? There's a cardiologist that practices around where I'm at, and he says that and I'm like, oh, nope, that's it.

Calories, Metabolism, and the Limits of Calorie Counting

Please don't say that because you're gonna you're gonna trigger me. So can you explain why calories in calories out is like. Or when people say all calories are the same. Why?

That is like a false state. Yeah, yeah. So so when I explain this, I'm not saying that we don't defy the law of thermodynamics. It matter, right? We have to be aware of that.

But saying all calories are equal is like saying that, all miles that you walk are the same, but you know that you're going to have a totally different experience if you walk a mile up a steep hill, if you walk a mile down a hill, or if you walk a mile on flat land.

So the source of our calories truly matter because they have different metabolic impact. If you eat 100 calories coming from a banana, that metabolic response is going to be completely different than 100 calories coming from an egg.

If you eat 100 calories from an egg, you're getting protein and fat. You're going to feed your body in a way that you're going to be more satiated. You're going to be fuller, longer.

You're going to have less cravings. So then you probably are going to be consuming less throughout the day. You're not going to have an insulin response, so you're not going to have inflammation in there.

Whereas the complete opposite is true. If you ate 100 calories from a banana, or let's say you ate, your whole day's worth just to have an extreme example of bananas versus a thousand calories of eggs, your body would be in a completely different metabolic state.

In one, you're going to be burning fat for fuel, and in the other you're going to be burning carbohydrate for fuel with cravings and inflammation and increased hunger.

So when we look at thermodynamics, maybe, you know, a calorie is an equal unit of energy no matter where it comes from. But the metabolic impact of those is completely different.

Absolutely. And that's when we say that calories in versus calories out. That doesn't work either because of what your body, the state of your body. Can you explain that a little bit more?

Yeah. So like if you, I mean, if, if you have well, just like I shared earlier, if you're carrying more visceral fat than the partitioning of the calories is going to be different.

So more of the energy is going to be stored rather than burned. So if someone's in that state than the amount of calories they need to expend through exercise would likely need to be more to create the same impact.

So it just depends on your metabolic state and where you are and how the body responds to the energy output. Exercise, for example, is a really, really great wellness tool, right?

Like you're walking right now. It's helpful for heart health. It improves stress and sleep and mood. But it's not a huge weight loss tool because our body, at certain periods of time, certain levels of exercise, for example, the body is going to hold on to access to two calories as a protection mode.

For example, I always experienced this if I'm training for a fitness competition or something, like I did this crazy bike race called the Iron Horse. I used to be after I quit dancing, I had to like, run my body somehow and was just like needed to exhaust it in a way.

So I went into cycling and I was like pretty fast again, just because of this sheer persistence and dedication I have in my mind. And so I decided, hey, I'm going to train for this 50 mile bike ride.

It's from Durango, Colorado. Colorado to Silverton fit 50 miles of intense elevation and I trained really, really hard for it. Ate the same amount, put on 10 pounds, an 8 pounds of it was fat weight, you know, it was not all muscle because the body at some point is like, oh my gosh, this is stressful.

You're going to start secreting cortisol, you're going to start getting adrenal fatigue. And then your body does different things with those calories.

Just like if you're carrying this excess fat weight in your belly, it does different things with the calories. We are just not run by calorie sensors.

Our body is much more complicated than a calorie in and calorie out equation. So we just have to look at all the different factors that are going on in our lives.

Because you could be just putting all your things into My Fitness Pal and it's outputting. Hey, you should be in this big deficit. You should be dropping weight.

And then it's so frustrating when you don't. But there's just all these different factors into the puzzle that we need to consider. Yeah, absolutely. Like sleep, muscle mass, like you said, cortisol.

I've had a few patients that decided, you know, in their perimenopause years in their mid 30s, mid 40s to train for a marathon, check it off the bucket list.

And they gained similar to you. They gained fat. They gained belly fat like 10 pounds. And gosh, it took a whole year for this one patient to regulate that and to get her cortisol, because it takes about a year to regulate your cortisol levels back.

And she was patient with herself and knew what had happened because we talked about cortisol, we talked about hormones. We talked about progesterone. So it's very complicated.

And I think women especially are so hard on themselves because if they are eating perfectly, like you were saying, doctor actually like put it in their fitness pal and told, you know, I should be losing weight, but I'm not.

And they're just walking and they're not lifting weights where lifting weights is going to make you more insulin sensitive. So it's it's bigger than the calories in, calories out and it's bigger than going to a doctor and having them say, oh yeah, just eat less and move more.

You know, it's because they're putting the blame on you and it's definitely not your fault. So why is this a whole holistic approach to weight loss behavioral therapy, including, essential for successful weight loss?

Yeah. Well, just like I shared earlier, any big change has to come from the mind, and dropping weight and keeping it off is a huge change. So I really believe that losing weight is a process of letting go.

It's letting go of the excess fat weight that no longer serves us, and all the emotions that are tied to it.

Why Holistic Weight Loss Must Include Behavior Change

So if we only think about the science of when and what to eat and look at meal plans and input, our calories and our exercise like that's a component of it.

But we can't just tackle the ins and outs. We also have to look at the emotions. And I really believe that we drop weight in this trajectory where we can look at the science, focus on our food and our metabolism.

It's a component of it's super important. We can see our weight drop down. We have to let go of the emotions that are tied to that weight simultaneously.

If we don't do the deep work, if we don't look at our emotions, habits, behaviors, then our weight might drop down, but it's not going to stay there. It's going to move back up and meet where the mind is.

So we have to make sure that we tackle both components. And I think this is a huge issue with a lot of programs, especially right now with all of these, weight loss medications like Ozempic and such out there, where we're really not tackling the root cause of the underlying reasons why we eat the way that we do.

So, you know, no matter what route you are going, I really encourage you to think about, the habits and the emotions. I also think from my experience, you know, we've helped over 10,000 people drop, you know, close to 400,000 pounds across the U. S over a decade of, of work and specifically and only in weight loss.

And I found that when we drop weight, it's kind of like the equivalent to the rings around a tree. And when we drop weight and we get to this new weight, we, we experience and have to release the emotions that are tied to that

weight.

At the time that we were that weight in the past. I hope that I said that clearly. And then we have to, you know, we're going to get to the next milestone and then there need to be we need to bring up those emotions and those habits and behaviors and whatever we need to work through that happened in our lives so that we can move on to the next stage and the next stage.

So I really want to change the mindset around just not releasing the fat weight, but those emotions that are tied to that weight at that, at that time in our lives.

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And I, you know, if I've heard before, you know, sometimes emotionally people that have had adverse like ace events, adverse childhood events that they tend to be more overweight because they're like holding on to that trauma in the weight.

Or if they were, you know, had a sexual abuse or something that they can hold on to that. So definitely it is emotional too. And you also, you view, some of this weight loss, almost like an addiction recovery process.

Can you talk about that a little bit more? Yeah. You know, I think there are a few different reasons why we are addicted to foods. And sometimes for our clients, they'll come in and they're like, oh my gosh, I had no idea that I was so addicted.

I was not that's not the case for everybody. But I would say we we do have to acknowledge that weight loss is largely an addiction recovery process. And one of the reasons why is because the foods that we have big food, it's highly addictive.

It's hyper palatable. All, we've got the the sugar and the salt and the fat at the specific level, it's called the bliss point where they've created these foods to be specifically addictive.

An example is Doritos. You know, they have the perfect spiciness, saltiness, crunch and texture, and they actually put in their Doritos bag some chips that have more flavor than others, because when you eat that, your brain signals, oh my gosh, I need to find another chip like that, and you're going to eat all of them in search of that.

I need tasting chip. Really, really. Yeah. They do that on purpose, not on purpose. Yeah. So like so it's like a dopamine. It's hitting the dopamine to like oh am I going to get like that.

Really good chip. Really good thing I won't allow Doritos in my house. My kids. I wonder if they put them in the little snack bags even because those portion ones.

Because sometimes my kids will get that. Church unfortunately. But yeah, that's that's what that's that is messed up. I'm sorry that they I didn't know that.

Let me just be baffled and upset and hope that that changes in 2025. Anyway, I'm sorry I interrupted you because I don't know if anyone else listening out there is like one that I never heard of that.

But but yes, I, I agree, it's an even so like, oh gosh. Like, sometimes, you know, it's been birthday season at my house, so I'm going to have a little bit of the gluten free cake and ice cream and then you just get it sets you up for craving that sugar.

And then I'm like, okay, I got to shut it down. I'm going to do a couple days of high fat, high protein, no sugar, which I don't eat a lot of sugar. But the problem is it is it's, you know, we know sugar is addictive.

We have rat studies showing that they prefer sugar over cocaine. So we we have to think of it as a drug. And I hate that. But it is. And also Candida in your gut.

And gut dysbiosis can drive some of that sugar cravings. But it is it's addiction. It's an addiction. And I love that.

That's what you call it because it is.

It can be for so many people. Yeah for sure. So part of the weight loss for certain people would be addressing that addiction and making sure that they have the steps to realize when they go to the grocery store or they're eating out, that they know how to recognize that right?

Yeah. That's why I don't believe in this. You just need to eat everything in moderation. I think that that's a phrase that was coined by a naturally lean person.

Well, maybe, a minority of us can do that if we're just a type of person who's not driven by food at all. You know, there are those people, like, they just don't want to eat throughout the day.

That's fine. They have their other challenges that they're going through. It's just not food.

Addictive Foods, Trigger Foods, and Emotional Eating

But for the majority of us, especially with these hyper palatable foods, it's like telling an alcoholic, well, you should just drink one glass of wine a day.

They are just not wired to do that. And that's not a problem with them. Again, it's not it's not an issue. It's just the what the way their brain is wired.

And so some of us have wiring where we're super sensitive to these highly palatable foods, or we've been through a lot in our past that drive a connection to eating and dopamine and, you know, trying to, just change our state and kind of numb ourselves a little bit.

That might be another reason why we go to food. All the different reasons why we go to food besides hunger, we can get addicted to those. And we create these neural pathways in the brain.

And so it's just, to me, totally unfair to say you need to eat everything in moderation because there are some specific wiring and specific foods where we just eat one bite and we really can't just eat it in moderation.

I have my own and I, you know, I call these our gateway food, our trigger foods, where you just can't eat, moderate to cated portion of it. So for me, this would be cookie dough Haagen-Dazs ice cream.

Like, if that's in the freezer, I'm going to eat the majority of it. And a serving of it isn't going to cut it for me. And then I actually find, like you said, with the cake, like it drives more desires for different foods.

So some people might say, you know, I don't you know, I'm just going to use an example of a healthy food. Sweet potato doesn't cause any issues for me.

But then the next day they're craving corn chips. And then after that they're craving chocolate. And then after the chocolate, it's the gummy bears. And they're like, oh my gosh, what's going well?

Maybe it was like this sweet potato actually, that has a healthy cover to it, but for you, it knocked you out of fat burn, allowed you to eat above your carb tolerance level.

And it just, you know, it was a gateway food. It could be bad. So I just want but you know, for other people it might be that, like me, the Haagen-Dazs cookie dough ice cream, one food that you would expect could be a trigger food.

And then I just can't stop. And I'm a decent, highly disciplined person for my husband. He doesn't look at the ice cream, but for him it's chips and salsa like tortilla chips.

If that is in the pantry, he is just going to go for it. And he's like, really? It's hard for him to stop. He has to be like, you know, really fully present, put maybe, the chips in a cup.

But even then, like, it's going to drive the desire for more. And I see him in the pantry, he's like, what the heck am I doing? Especially if he's got high cortisol.

If there's a lot of stuff going on, if he hasn't slept well, it's like a perfect storm. So I always encourage people to take a look and be like, okay, what is my trigger food?

What are my gateway foods? And then if we can even take a step beyond that and be like, okay, what emotion or what happened in my life that triggered me to go for this food in the first place?

And that could be an example, might be a stressful email from your boss, or it could be, I'll give you some examples of my life, like my kids being sick and staying home and me being the only parent and support person for three kids and maybe like, oh my gosh, how am I going to work and manage all of this all on my own?

So there are these different things, but if we can step back and be like, okay, the next time I have this stressful trigger, here's what I'm going to do.

And this could be like ideally a non food related reward. Like I'm going to go for a walk, get outside and see the sun. Just that could change our state.

It could be like okay I'm going to take a minute and sit down and do some box breathing and meditate. It could be I'm going to do some prayer. It could be I'm going to call a friend and talk to somebody who cares about me.

You know, we could all have our different non-food related. It could be I'm going to get a massage. I'm going to, I don't know, go buy a silly magazine and read it.

So it's just something to change our state and get us out that, non-food related item that can help us to change our state, reduce our stress, and get us out of that desire for that dopamine hit.

Yes, absolutely. And some people are moderation moderators. They can eat in moderation things. So, I feel like my husband is like that more so than I am.

And some they have to just abstain like that alcoholic or, you know, you can't just have a bite of the chocolate chip cookie or, you know, because that will set you off.

So I love like recognizing your trigger foods for sure and and stress. Yeah. So how does stress and cortisol affect weight loss or weight gain. Right.

You can see it. You know, if someone's gaining that weight around their belly and you're like, okay, how are you stressed out? And I really think people try to blame weight loss on a lot of things like thyroid and hormones, when a lot of those are being affected by cortisol and stress.

Yeah. I actually did an entire episode on my podcast about cortisol and stress because it's a big deal for a lot of people. So what happens is, first, what happens in the pipeline of this, in the cascade of this is how we experience stress.

And we've given stress a really negative connotation for a long time. So we think when we're stressed, inevitably it's going to have a negative outcome.

So the first step that we can do is when we experienced stress, we could change our perspective around it and think about how maybe it could encourage us to be more resilient.

How could we learn from it? How could we say, gosh, this event is happening for me rather than to me? And when we come at this quote unquote stressful event with a different mindset, an open mind, a growth mindset, a resilient mindset, how is this happening for me?

Mindset, then the hormones, our body secretes are actually different. Like we secrete, we secrete DHEA, which is helpful in getting more mental clarity and focus.

And, so we can actually change our body physiology around the quote unquote stressful event if we come at it with a different perspective. So I'd say that's that's first, but most of us aren't there quite yet.

So let's say we do get into this stressful thing and we're like, oh my gosh, it's overwhelming or whatever it might be that our body secretes cortisol and cortisol, specifically when the body is in a high insulin state, which we are when we're carrying a lot of belly fat, when we're eating above our carbohydrate tolerance level, when we're addicted to sugar, we're going to have a higher insulin fasting level.

So when we've got high insulin and we've got high cortisol, especially if we've got lower estrogen levels. So think of a woman in perimenopause as menopause postmenopausal.

This is a perfect storm to accrue belly fat. The reason why is because what happens is it's our body starts to also secrete hormone sensitive lipase. And this is a hormone that tags on to the fat cells specifically in the belly.

In this hormonal state. I'm explaining, and I want you to think of hormone sensitive face like a little vacuum sucker. And it goes around and it sucks up the fat and pulls it into the fat cell.

So now you've got this really sensitive fat cell that's taking in as much fat as it can. So it's getting bigger. We get more fat cells with it specifically in the belly when we've got low estrogen, high cortisol and high insulin levels.

So if you're in that state is just a perfect storm to experience. Belly fat accrual. Yeah. And that's where we see it a lot. And it's women are stressed at that time in their lives too.

They usually have a couple kids. A lot of women are working outside the home now. So that's just added stress. Plus you know, all of their their wife and mother duties.

So definitely that could be hard. But I love what you said about turning the negative into a positive. It really is such a good mindset shift. And know that when you're going through things like that, you know, oh gosh, what did someone just say?

I went to a Christian concert and they were like those mountains, you know, that or the valleys produce miracles, right?

Stress, Cortisol, and Belly Fat

The hard things that you're going through, you just have to see, like, what is this for? This is going to turn into something good, right? And sometimes we get stuck in such a negative mindset because the news is negative.

If you listen to the radio, some of those songs are really weird. And and we just get in this negative trance almost. And that's just going to drive cortisol.

So you gotta snap out of it. And I know you doctor, actually you just you've had a lot to like stress about with, with home and the flooding and everything.

And how did how did you guys do you just you turn it into a positive, right. You do. But I mean, it's easy to get locked into it. I was talking to my husband a few days ago and I was like, oh my gosh, I'm just in such a victim mindset.

And that victim mindset is, very powerless and helpless and does not feel good. But it's easy because you can be like, let's just happening to me this and this.

And I mean, it has been like, if if I could list it out and you'd be like, oh my gosh, it fits a lot. And like, what does that

get you? It just like lets you sit in your misery.

And so, I mean, it's just recognizing like I was like, okay, I'm just done being in this type of mindset. And so to get out of it is expressing gratitude, you know, to celebrate the small wins like I shared with you 55 days later after Hurricane Helene, we got city water back.

You know, what are the small wins that we've had? The kids are back in a makeshift school. You know, we're we're our team. I have 70 team members at PhD, and they all united together in a most amazing way to support each other, the community and our clients.

So it's just easy to get locked in to what is wrong rather than what's right. But we really, really have to focus on what's right. And the human brain is is created for survival.

And so I think it likes to lock in on to the negative. It likes it's like it's like a part of the human condition is to wallow in our pain. So, you know, we just have to step up above it and train and be like, no, okay, what are the winds?

What are my gratitude however I like? How can I take personal responsibility for any of this? Because whatever I take responsibility for, I can change and that's empowering.

Even though if it's kind of scary, it puts more of the onus on you. I think it's totally worth just getting. Same with weight. You know, if you're experiencing weight gain, you're like, it's a, you know, oh my gosh, this and this.

And this is why it's hard to be like okay, but what can I control. What can I put winds on. What can I do to step up? And what can I take personal responsibility for?

And it might be harder in the short term. But man, it's very empowering and allows you to get out and and just just move forward through through. The next thing everything passes is what I tell myself.

The good stuff passes, the bad stuff passes. We just need to keep moving forward and learning. And, another thing that really helps me is, is in service of others.

Like how can I help others? Gets me a little bit out of my kind of victim funk that I just really don't like? Yes, yes, service definitely will help with that.

And with kids too, if they're getting a little funky, just have them serve. Now, why would you say exercise isn't always a good weight loss tool? Yeah, well, like I shared earlier, the body just responds to exercise differently.

Some people genetically aren't going to respond to exercise by dropping weight, though. Respond the other way and put on weight. If we exercise too much, it's actually a stressor.

So I really don't like this chronic cardio where we're just moving at a moderate pace on the elliptical to burn calories. I think a lot of us as women, we go toward the elliptical and cardio first rather than lifting weights.

I was taking the kids to Disneyland, and we were in a gym, and it was me and my husband, and we were lifting weights, and it was so crazy because the couples would come in and the woman would go on the elliptical and the man would go to the weight, I mean, six times in a row, to the point where I took a picture of it and I was like, this isn't And so we're really still in this mindset of calories in and calories out and wanting to create this deficit and see red on our food tracker.

I did I do not like food trackers, by the way. I think it takes our intuitive eating out of this out of it. And again, we're more complicated than a computer.

And, and they equation so I just think we need to be smart around exercise. It's important, but, it's different. It's not like we need to go do orange theory and just kill ourselves.

From a cardio perspective anymore, we need to be smart and being smart in the gym. Smart around exercise is lifting things. It can be dog food. It can be your own body weight.

Ideally, there's some weights and overload of the muscles to maintain muscle mass. So I'd say, you know, that's number one. In tie in with walking like you're doing, brisk walk at least 30 minutes of a walk every day if we can get that in is great.

So I'm not saying we need to be sedentary, but I am saying that if you're depending upon exercise specific specifically cardio to drop the weight and keep it off, it's likely not going to be successful for you.

Right? And then you get more frustrated. And I see, yeah. Like I see all these like, ladies and women, you know, on the cardio. And I'm like, come over to the free weights.

Let's go. You're wasting not wasting your time, but kind of so, so yeah, definitely. I mean if, if going for a little run or walk helps with stress, then that's great.

But you also need to be lifting weights. Like I lifted weights this morning and now I'm just walking on the treadmill to keep my step thing, because I have another interview later and I don't want to sit for two hours.

So just really be mindful. Especially ladies. You do. You need to lift weights and so do men and ladies. We have testosterone to help us build muscle, but we're not going to get jacked.

You're not going to look like a man. I mean, I've been lifting really heavy consistently for almost four years, and I do not look like a man. I mean that anything.

And it's nice because then you can you can actually eat a little more because your resting metabolic rate is a little better. So when we look at another aspect of weight loss, these cravings that we have.

So what causes cravings and hunger and what can help to get rid of them? A few things. So one thing that causes cravings and hunger is if we have the belly fat because like I like I shared before, it's an entity.

It has demands, urges, cravings, desires. It secretes hormones that, decrease your full hormones and increase your, hunger hormones. So you're going to just have more cravings and hunger.

Exercise, Cravings, and Practical Weight Loss Strategies

The belly fat. Also, I didn't mention is why we, drop weight, but only regain it. So if you think of the belly fat like a tumor and you only get rid of part of the tumor, you know, it's just going to come back.

It's like shaving the top off of a weed and leaving the root. It's just a matter of time until it comes back because it has cravings, hunger and secretes these hormones.

So if you are on the journey of dropping weight or you are getting started, you want to make sure you go all the way and fully get rid of that visceral fat so you can make your metabolism more fast and efficient and actually keep the weight off for good.

So so that's one reason why. And then another reason why is because of these hyper palatable foods and the addiction to these foods. We have, because of their hyper palatability and also because of, you know, the habits and triggers we have around foods.

So that's another reason why. And then if we are in a state of sugar burn, if we are, eating carbs as our primary source of, of energy, then we're going to be in this constant state of hunger and cravings.

So what we really want to do is we want to teach the body metabolically how to burn fat for fuel. This does not mean we need to be ketogenic. It does not mean that we need to follow a high protein, high fat diet, but it does

mean we need to be aware of the carbs we're consuming, the amounts that we are consuming.

Everyone's different, and what they can tolerate and still have metabolic flexibility is what I call it. So that those are really the three main reasons I see why we have cravings and hunger.

Yes, absolutely. And and then we can have stress to drive some cravings. And, and being aware of that, you know, especially this episode will come out with the holidays, right, with Thanksgiving and Christmas.

So, try to. Yeah. Just have fun with it. Put on some Christmas movies and wrap those presents. Because I don't know about your home, but for me, it's just me.

Like, my husband has so many other things, so I'm fine taking on this task, you know, seeing it as fun and not a burden. And then I gift myself stuff, too.

Like, I have some presents I open. It's so fun, I don't do you let me know if you do this, but I, I will, like, wrap things I got myself and open them and be like, oh, thanks, honey.

Anyway, I just think it's funny. So. So you got to have fun. You got to have fun with that. And then my parents and I, we give each other, like, things from my childhood.

Like back and forth. Like I'm wrapping up some old CDs for my dad. Some people listening might be like, what are CD's anyway? Anyway. Okay. Well, thank you, doctor Ashley.

This has been so informative. I know it's really going to help a lot of our listeners, especially with New Year's resolutions coming up the holidays, you know, maybe like my trigger.

Oh, thinking about thinking about the holidays. Sugar cookies, homemade sugar cookies. That's a trigger. I just need to shut that down and eat a carnivore bar or something instead.

So or maybe just say, I'm just going to have these Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. I'm not going to have them the whole week before Christmas. So, because we all want to be in the best mindset, you know, with family and holidays.

So try to try to look at your trigger foods. So you're balanced more on the holidays, but how can everyone find you? What is your favorite social media platform to hang out on, and how can our listeners connect with you?

Yeah, well, our website is my FD weight loss.com. And if you go on there, my book, Five Steps to Reset the Scale is on the website if you want to check that out.

And then I am on Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. And my handle is Doctor Dr.. And then underscore Ashley Lucas and then the podcast YouTube channels the Doctor Ashley show.

So I'm everywhere in that way. Yeah that's amazing. Well thank you so much for being here today and just loved all the great tips you gave. Thank you doctor Jen I appreciate it.

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