Well hey there, my friend. How's it going? Welcome back. So glad to have you here today and if you're new, I am so glad to have you here.

So what I want to talk about today is at what point you should stop trying to lose weight. Might seem a little strange coming from a weight loss podcast, and I'm going to talk to you about stopping trying to lose weight, but this is a really, really important topic. It's an important discussion, important thing for you to think about, especially if you're someone who, like me, struggled with your weight, has struggled with your weight for years and years, possibly decades, just weight up, weight down, every time you gain it back, there's even more, and you're just always in some state of trying to loseweight or figure out your weight or somehow dealing with that. Especially that.

But also maybe you never had a weight issue and you gained some weight because of some stress in your life or because you had a baby or two or three, maybe this is your first time even working on really losing weight. Regardless, I think it's really important to know when you should stop. I think there are definitely some times when it is a good idea to stop and that doesn't mean that you never go back to it again, it doesn't mean that you don't ever revisit the idea again, but there is definitely a time and place for taking a break, like maybe an extended break, and just slowing your roll on focusing on your body and your food and instead focusing on some other things. So let's talk about that a little bit.

So what I see is that trying to lose weight becomes almost part of your identity when you've been overweight for a long time. Thinking about food, obsessing about food, complaining about how hard it is to lose weight, complaining about how much easier it is for men to lose weight than women, talking about how good food tastes and how hard it is, and constantly thinking negative thoughts about yourself, and trying to make excuses for yourself, and justifying why you do what you do but then redoubling down your effort again and trying again, trying something new, trying diets that are basically borderline eating disorders, all of that stuff, it becomes who you are and I think it can become so much of a habit that it feels uncomfortable to even stop.

The idea of stopping is like, "But then who would I be if I wasn't always trying to lose weight?" So there's this identity shift that can happen for some people where you realize that's actually a very uninteresting part about you, what size your body is and what food you decided to chew up and swallow. Right?

It really is not very interesting yet we allow it to take up so much of our brain space, so much of our topics of thought and conversation, and it's just a complete waste, right? It really isn't creating anything good. If it were creating something good, then you would have solved the problem and you'd be moving on to bigger and better things.

So it becomes this thing that, even though it's uncomfortable to be in that cycle of trying to lose weight and gaining it back and all the hubbub that goes along with that, it actually can keep you safe feeling because youdon't have to then solve the problem and move forward and do something else, you don't have to figure out who you are as a thin person, and it's a complete identity shift. You really have to create that new future version of yourself and then get to know her.

I teach that you should start figuring out who she is right now, before you've even become her, so that when you become her, you already are her and then it's just how you roll. It's not like you become this thin person and then you're like, "Wait a minute. Now I have to completely shift my identity." You can do that but it's so much harder and it will probably involve a lot of drama around food and probably a lot of up and down on the scale and a whole lot of other nonsense going on.

I think that anytime you are trying to lose weight and the main focus of it is that, once you've lost the weight then you'll be acceptable, then you'll be valuable, then you'll be a good enough human being, a good enough doctor, then you'll finally have solved the problem of what's wrong with you. Anything like that that's driving you to try to lose weight right now we've got to stop that, that is just not the way that is going to get you to permanent weight loss. What it ends up doing is, because it comes from such a place of kind of like this panicky drive, like, "But I have to do it."

And of course, as a physician, you're clearly very skilled at overachieving so then you're like, "Let me just achieve. And I've got to figure out this weight thing and like whatever, I just won't eat and I'll do all these crazy diet mentality things so that I can get to that point where I finally am acceptable." And the problem with this is that your brain will be the same. Your body will be smaller but your brain will be the same and you will go right back to gain that weight back again.

This I know for sure. This is how it goes. This is this rollercoaster that we're just on forever that we just don't know how to get off of. I think, when you find yourself in a position like that where the drama around food, it becomes almost like the wallpaper in the background, you didn't even notice it's happening anymore because it's just so a part of who you are. We've got to stop all of that. We have to just hit the pause button on losing weight and instead take a moment and clean our brains up and do the self-worth work first to recognize that, if you never changed anything about the way you ate ever again, if you never lost another pound, even if yougained another 20 pounds or 50 pounds or a hundred or even more, that wouldn't change how valuable you are as a human being. It would not change your worthiness as a person taking up space and oxygen on this planet. You still would be a wonderful, perfect human being in this world.

That is the work that you have to do so that you can then go, "You know what? If I really truly value myself, I really am totally 100% acceptable, then maybe I can just not eat excessive food that doesn't serve me and actually kind of makes me feel sick."

The weight loss is so much easier when it's going that direction. We think, "Let me just lose the weight first because then I will feel acceptable, then I will feel worthy, then I will be valuable," but that's not how it works. You have to do that in your brain first.

So now can you lose the weight and then do all this work on your brain? 100% you can. It's basically how I did it. 100%. Because I white knuckle my way through the weight loss, a lot of it, now in hindsight when I look at it, wanting to get that A+, wanting to get the approval of the coach. So I did all that stuff. I had a lot more work to do after the fact. So as fun as it is to lose the weight, once you get to maintenance and you're not getting all those dopamine hits of people noticing that you're losing weight, people noticing that your clothes are smaller or making comments or even just, if you don't like the attention from other people, maybe you just like seeing the scale going down, you don't get any of that anymore. Then it's real life and then you have to really face what's going on in your brain.

So, if you are trying to lose weight right now and it is coming from a place of desperation, it's coming from a place of self-loathing, which I just want to take a moment here to just talk about the term self-loathing because, up until probably the last year, I would have said, "I don't think I've ever done that." I don't loathe myself. I was always just like, "That's such a weird kind of phrase." I've never really done that. I think some people definitely identify with it, there's for sure many of you out there that the daily thoughts that you're thinking about yourself on a regular basis are all very mean, very negative towards yourself, just speaking very, very rudely to yourself all the time. I think people who do that can definitely identify with self-loathing, ... they do all the time.

My self-loathing has been much, much sneakier and not as easy to become aware of. It is much trickier, it's much more below the surface, it'smuch more like, "No, but this is just the truth about you, this is just how it is, this is just the part of you that is never going to be good enough," as though that's a fact. It's always easier for us to see it in other people as well than it is for us to see it in ourselves, I will just say that.

So my point on that is that, if you hear self-loathing you think, "I don't do that, self-loathing is not really a thing that is anything that I would identify with," you probably do and you probably just aren't realizing it. So it's there, most likely, if we really dig in.

So if you're trying to lose weight from desperation, from self-loathing, from hoping that your life will change for the better and that things will be so much more acceptable once you've lost this weight, I want you to consider just taking a break. Now, what I think a lot of people worry about is that if they take the break, then if you're not trying to lose weight, then what are you doing? Of course, you're gaining weight. So if I'm not trying really hard to lose weight, then I'll just go and eat a huge ice cream cone three times a day or something like that. I'm just going to gain so much more weight and I can't say that won't happen, you might choose to do those things, but it's not a guarantee. I think that those things happen, that kind of eating behavior and the weight gain like that happens when you have this idea that if I'm not trying to lose weight, then I'm completely "off the wagon", which by the way, the wagon doesn't exist. There's no wagon, there's just what you're choosing to eat.

But if you think, "I'm off the wagon, this is my chance. I'm going to eat all of these foods. I don't know when I'm going to be able to eat like this again." It's like how I ate when I was pregnant. I'm like, "Well, why not all the Easter candy? Why give myself limits? I'm pregnant, I can eat whatever I want." So you're doing all of that and eating all of that because of how you're thinking about it. You're thinking, "Well, if I'm not trying to lose weight, then I'm eating all of the things so I'm going to go ahead and eat all the things," rather than thinking, "I'm going to stop trying to lose weight but instead when I'm going to do is I'm going to be with myself. I'm going to work on awareness of being with myself, not only in my brain, but also in my body."

As physicians, we are so used to denying ourselves whatever it is that our body is asking us to do, whatever our needs are. Our bodies give ussignals, like we become tired and it's time to sleep, we become hungry and it's time to eat, we have to pee and we go and empty our bladders. There's a lot of signs and symptoms and sensations that we feel in our bodies that are just an indication to the brain of what's going on in the periphery and during our medical training and even afterward what we do is we are just like, "Nope, not listening, cutting the wire there." Doesn't matter that you have things to do, you need to just keep going until it's literally the difference between wetting your pants or getting to the bathroom in time, you just completely deny yourself of meeting any of your needs.

So what then happens is that, when you stop trying to lose weight, you can start to recheck in with your body. It turns out that your body actually knows how much food you should eat and, believe it or not, and I'm not saying this facetiously, believe it or not, it really doesn't feel good to overeat. I mean this, truly. I had overeaten for so many years that it just felt normal to me and, any discomfort that I experienced because of it, I just thought that's what it was like when you eat. I honest to goodness did not know what it felt like to finish a meal and be totally content in my body to feel really good, to have the right amount of food, and to not fill up too much.

That's something that you can practice when you're not trying to lose weight. You're not doing it because you're trying to lose weight, you're doing it because you're working on figuring out how do you actually honor the signals that your body is giving you? When I say it's a novel concept, some people that are like, "Oh, she's being sarcastic." I'm really not, for a lot of us it really is a totally new concept.

I just recently wrote an article for kevinmd.com and published it and I talked about the first 10 pounds that I lost. If you just go to kevinmd.com and search my name, I'm sure you'll find it. I talked about how I lost my first 10 pounds and how it was so simple. I couldn't believe how simple it was. It was all about checking back in to my body. So check out that article if you're interested. It's short, very quick read, five minutes tops.

So, when you're not trying to lose weight, you're figuring out what's going on in your brain. And all that time you're trying to lose weight, you're completely blocking all the access you have to what is actually in your best interest, what you're actually thinking and how rude you're being to yourself, how you should be eating and how you should be taking care ofyourself in ways that actually support you, because all you're focusing on is the weight loss stuff and what food you should eat and should you be having this kind of diet bread or just no bread at all?

Maybe it's Keto and maybe you should be doing low carb? Is high fat okay or is it not okay? All of that, literally, I promise you, none of that matters. It's not relevant.

Eventually, sure, you find a way of eating that really supports you and feels good in your body, but when you are first getting going here, none of that matters. What you have to do is honor the signals that are in your body and know that your body knows better than you. Your body knows better than your brain, how much you should be eating and what you should be eating.

When it's time to start making those micro, fine tuning adjustments is when you're eating in a way that supports your body and you're still not getting the results that you want. But I promise you many of you can lose your weight, all of it, just by paying attention to your body. It is not that often that I have a client who has to really start getting very, very, very serious about eliminating food groups or anything like that in order to lose the weight.

Once you get your body really functioning in the way a human body was always meant to function and you work on your brain and you work on not using food to dampen your emotions and instead you're willing to feel them and you recognize and take ownership of the fact that your thoughts are what's creating those feelings, and they will go away just as quickly as they come if you're willing to be there with them and process them, whereas when you eat food to make them go away, they wait for you and then they build up and that manifests itself as burnout, resentment, anger, being so frustrated about things, lashing out at people. Eating the food doesn't make the emotions go away, you've got to do this brain work.

So, can you do all of this work and lose weight at the same time? Of course you can, but I think that if you are just up and down and struggling with the weight and you are just not doing this brain part with it, you're missing a huge component of it. I don't think there's anything wrong with taking a break from losing weight and sorting yourself out. I do this with my clients all the time. We always start the program with working to lose weight and then there's always a subset of people where that is not working well for them. Honestly, if I had told them right when they first started, "Don't try and lose weight," they would have been like, "What? What are you kidding me? It's a weight loss program."

But they get to the point where they realize, "You know what? I can not get this to work for me. I cannot follow the plan. I cannot do what I need to do." And I say, "You know what? Stop. Stop with all of it and let's work on your brain." And here's what's so fascinating. Once we start doing that, two things happen, one of two things.

The first is they just maintain their weight, they're not gaining it back. If they've lost a little bit, they keep it off. If they haven't lost anything yet, at least they're not gaining anymore. So they maintain. The second thing that can happen is they actually inadvertently start losing weight without even trying to, which don't we always hate those people? They're like, "Oh, I just lost 10 pounds. I didn't even mean to." And we're like, "I hate you." That's always how we're thinking about it.

But seriously, they become that person where they are working on their brain and working on their opinion of themselves and how to love themselves and how to support themselves and how to stop being so mean to themselves all the time and figuring out what's really going on behind the scenes with this whole weight issue, and from that place, it turns out you don't eat as much food. And when you don't overeat food, turns out your body will access your fat for fuel and then you have less fat and then your body is smaller and you weigh less. That's how this works. Okay?

So I want you to know that stopping trying to lose weight is a legitimate weight loss tactic. This is not something where you're just giving up, giving in, settling for mediocrity or, worse, failure or something like that. A lot of people will look at it like, "Oh, and see, I can't even do this right?" because they're in such a habit of just regarding themselves so negatively all the time that this really, truly is a very, very important step in weight loss.

Once you've done this work and then you start again, trying to lose weight intentionally, it is, number one, so much more pleasant of an experience first of all. But number two, it becomes something that is relatively easy because you're not wrestling with yourself so much. It's not so dire, like I have to do this or something is really terrible or that I'm going to die and I'm going to orphan my children and all of the things. None of that is what's going on in your brain, you're like, "I just value myself and my body so much that I want to eat the right amount of food and I want to eat in a waythat actually serves it and I'm willing to stop eating even when the food continues to taste good in order to do that."

This has taken me a while to get to because finally, finally, finally, I've gotten it through my thick skull that it feels better to not overeat even when it tastes really good, even when it tastes really good, if I eat too much, it ruins experience. Even if it's just a little bit too much, it ruins the experience. And so I'm telling you this is the work, this is how you really get to that place where you're supporting yourself, you're supporting your brain, you're supporting your body and you truly do solve that weight problem for good.

So this is 100% something that I can help you with in my program. Of course, I teach you how to lose weight too. So let's just say we spent the whole six months working on your brain and your opinion of yourself and all of that and then you want to start losing the weight. You would still have access to all the weight loss information and, of course, you have the opportunity to continue on in the master's program and get more help with that as well so it's not like you have to hit the ground running day one, the minute we start the program if that's not where you're at, if that's not the real goal for yourself.

I do this all the time with my clients who binge as well. If you're binging then we don't try to lose weight. The first thing we do is we stop binging. Number one, we stopped binging. Once we're no longer binging, then we get started losing weight because you can lose weight while you're still binging but only so much, you can only get to a certain point with it before you have to address the binging. So I just look at it like, "Let's just address the binging," because when you have uncontrolled binging, you generally are not controlling your brain very well, which means that you're often binging more because you're also trying to lose weight.

So this is it you guys. I'm telling you, this is really the important stuff. So, as counterintuitive as it sounds, sometimes you really do have to stop losing weight for a while in order to get to the place where you actually can lose the weight. And then I tell you, once you get to that place, you'll lose the weight and you'd be like, "That was fun. That was great. I'm glad I did it." But that's not even remotely the best part of this whole process. We keep thinking like, "Once we've lost the weight then that will be the best part, it'll be so amazing, it'll be a dream come true." And it is a dream come true, but it's not nearly as amazing as the dream come true of no longer beating yourself up and actually loving yourself is. That, hands down, the best.

On that note, I want to wish you a wonderful week and I will talk to you next time. Take care, bye bye.