



DANNY LENNON:

Gab, welcome back to the podcast. So great to see you again.

GAB FUNDARO:

Thank you. Great to see you again too, this time not in a storage closet.

DANNY LENNON:

Yes, you're at safe distance, so you can be more relaxed now. I know you are locked in a storage closet on the other side of the world. So yeah, how have you been since what is going on, and maybe actually, if we take a step back for people who maybe didn't catch that last episode, just give them a brief introduction to you, what your work is like, and then maybe also an introduction to your kind of interest at the moment, because I think that will set the stage for this conversation.

GAB FUNDARO:

Yeah. So we'll take a rewind back to June 2019. We met at UEBC and that's when I was on your podcast to talk about the gut microbiome. So we spoke at length about sort of the diet exercise interactions and the gut microbiome back there. And so for folks who are unfamiliar with me and sort of my background, I am on Instagram as vitaminphd, and, I guess, a lot of people look to me for evidence based information about the gut microbiome, and gut health as sort of the colloquial term. I have my PhD in human nutrition foods and exercise from Virginia Tech,

and from there I went on to teach for four years in exercise science. I really didn't intend to do much with the gut microbiome, but when I decided to make the switch from academia to coaching full time, after a year with renaissance periodization, that's when I really was granted the opportunity and platforms to talk about the gut microbiome and gut health and that sort of took off. So about maybe less than a year after resigning I started my own company and focused primarily on telehealth. So video, chats with clients, and I had a little bit of a different clientele from those that I was working with via RP which is email coaching. And I found sort of a niche with folks who were navigating their relationship with food, as they were trying to determine what foods would digest comfortably for them. And there's a great deal of overlap there in terms of sort of food anxiety, and GI distress, and I also realized that there's quite an overlap between sort of the fad diet culture and gut health as well, that gut health is this sort of, it's like a version of healthism. You have this problem, you didn't know that you had it, but now you know, your problem is that you don't have great gut health, and then here are all these expensive supplements and protocols that you need to purchase in order to gain optimal gut health.

As I was working with clients that didn't necessarily want to take a macro tracking approach, I started to learn more about intuitive eating, and I use that formally, intuitive eating, as developed by Tribole and Resch, and other internally regulated forms of nutrient acquisition. And I realized there were a lot of misconceptions around intuitive eating and mindful eating, and really, I think at the core, my purpose and my values are about empowering people and providing information that is, I hope to be, objective, as unbiased as possible to say, like, well, here are the actual applications of intuitive eating, here are the actual applications of mindful eating, so that we can have productive conversations, and so that we can more effectively guide our clients.

So that started is like an article that I was going to write, and then my colleague, Shannon Beer, helped me out with that. So we collaborated on this. A year later, we've got five articles. Our articles have been translated into multiple languages. We have a small but growing Facebook community. We've done a whole series of webinars. So that project we call bridging the gap, so we're trying to bridge the gap between these various ideologies in the industry. And then we also conceptualized this comprehensive coaching framework, which is nothing that's incredibly novel, but I think the structure that we've created is novel. So we've taken things that already existed, motivational interviewing, cognitive behavioral coaching, acceptance and commitment therapy practices, and we've organized them in a way that seems to support strengthening client's motivation and commitment to change, as well as how they might navigate the roadblocks that they come across as they're pursuing these lifestyle changes with an outcome of religious increased client capacity to do whatever, for the purpose of flourishing health, which is just prosperity across all of life's domains.

So we are trying to help coaches who want to learn more about this, and this is the framework that we engage our clients with, as well. And so, those are sort of my two hats right now, and they overlap in terms of trying to empower clients and make flourishing health and gut health accessible, and remove the roadblocks and the barriers to health – health being whatever the client has determined it looks like for them.

DANNY LENNON:

And I think you noted that some of the aspects of the framework you've created aren't novel or they're taken from other areas. But I think the beauty in that is that it's integrating them all in a very useful way. Clearly, and you've probably seen it from the feedback you've got from this, there's a real appetite from coaches to want to be able to understand this, right? A lot of people know that behavior change and being able to

interact and communicate is a huge part of the coaching process, and maybe more important than subject knowledge in many sense. But there's this trap that can often fall into of acknowledging that's the case, and then you often see people falling for pop psychology or trying to pull bits and pieces of information from habit formation or behavior change from maybe sources that may not be appropriate.

GAB FUNDARO:

And it's so funny you say that because really Shannon and I had sort of made that mistake initially, and I think mistakes are fine to make. We have, from the very onset, said, neither one of us have formal education in that area. I mean, we've gone through courses in motivational interviewing. I learned about appreciative advising, which is sort of the academic version, and I did a fellowship in pedagogy. So I know a great deal about how people learn, but learning and doing are two different things. So when we first developed the framework, we heard from a prominent sports psychologist, and my first interactions with him were a little gruff, I think, it's because he's Irish, and I guess that's just the thing. But it's...

DANNY LENNON:

Yeah, that makes sense.

GAB FUNDARO:

Yeah, so I think had I not given myself the space to make mistakes and learn and change things, then maybe I would have bristled a little bit at that and shut down. But I'm thankful that I've read a lot of Bernie Brown's work, and regardless of I think the evidence base of that, giving yourself the space to make mistakes without feeling shame is really important to the whole process of learning. So when he gave me this feedback, I was like, I really, I want to hear more, like, tell me how we can be better. And so, we've had his insights, had a couple of other health psychologists give their insights as well, and other practitioners in the field, so we had sort of this review process, where – so we were able to refine that framework and bolster I think against that potential fall of getting into the pop side and getting too focused on, you know, some

people really latch on to growth mindset, or they latch on to positive psychology, or they latch on to certain aspects of books. I'm thinking of like Man's Search for Meaning, I just finished that, and I thought, gosh, there are some aspects of this book that are really not shared on social media, that are really overlooked. I think of when he talks about, like, the innate capacity for change, that's not something that people focus on so much. They focus more on, like, using it to say, buck up, and no matter what your circumstances, succeed, achieve. That's really not his message. His message was that like you don't have to be – you don't achieve things, you don't have to be useful to have meaning, you don't have to be what society deems as useful.

So I'm really glad that we had that feedback, and we were able to refine and change things and sort of soften our focus on some areas, like, we soften the focus on positive psychology, we soften focus on the transtheoretical model of change, anything more appropriately explained their role in the whole framework, but also the limitations. So we can avoid things like toxic positivity or like always talking about internal locus of control and always having growth mindset. I think the field of psychology, in general, just like in many fields, there are limitations and sort of like the reproducibility of findings and whatnot, so it's just important that we have that iterative mindset, and that we are changing things in response to people who have greater expertise in the field than we do, so we don't end up sort of as that kind of trope of just like pull yourself up by your bootstraps and just do the thing.

DANNY LENNON:

So maybe to explore some of the specifics of that, in your first part of your answer, you discussed two terms that people have probably heard before. You mentioned intuitive eating, you then also mentioned mindful eating, and I know you're keen to maybe distinguish those for people, because, again, it's an often point of confusion. Can you maybe take each one of those, explain what they are, and then discuss

where they overlap, but also where they are distinct?

GAB FUNDARO:

And yes, you're right, I am always keen to try and provide working definitions for these. So I think when people use the term eating intuitively, in a colloquial way, they mean just eating without counting things, eating without weighing or tracking. But intuitive eating, as developed by Tribole and Resch is a self-care framework, and there are these 10 sort of guideposts and they've rewritten as of this year, so they've put them in a different order. But the central themes of intuitive eating are to remove oneself from the cycle of chronic dieting, so sort of ends that pursuit of a smaller body, and to establish a more adaptive and maybe less chaotic relationship with food. So they choose food, based on how that food makes them feel physically as well as how satisfying it is, and perhaps moral and ethical considerations and eating for well being, which we can talk about what that actually means later on, but that's sort of one of the Health at Every Size principles.

So intuitive eating is weight neutral, so it's Health at Every Size aligned, and it's really just to foster and perhaps even rehabilitate one's relationship with food. So the analogy that I would make, the parallel that maybe people would be familiar with, would be to say that the practice of intuitive eating is sort of like a physical therapy for one's relationship with food. So when people criticize it, because it's not going to help people with weight management or with sport performance, or how can you eat intuitively if you haven't tracked macros before. They are viewing intuitive eating through the lens of an externally regulated diet type of narrative. That's not what it's for. We wouldn't say you need to go to, you need to have your squat form perfect before you can go to physical therapy. That really makes no sense, of course not. If someone's injured, they go to physical therapy to regain mobility and function of that limb, and then they can go back to whatever they were doing before. So intuitive eating, it's not

the accidentally hit your macros without counting diet. It is the macros don't matter right now, we have another goal, and that goal is to learn and attune with your hunger and satiety signals, move your body in enjoyable ways, respect your body and find more effective ways of meeting your non-food needs. If you have an emotional need, then you're likely going to better meet that in other ways outside of food, but also to remove moralization and stigmatization of certain foods and of certain body types. So that's intuitive eating. It's not just let's not track in eyeball portions.

Mindful eating, as defined by the Center for Mindful Eating is also weight neutral, and the reason that it's weight neutral is a little bit different from that of intuitive eating. Intuitive eating sort of needs to be weight neutral, because how can you break the cycle of chronic dieting, if you're still trying to use that to change your weight. Mindful eating is weight neutral, so that you can focus your attention and intention on the meal experience, that the meal doesn't need to be serving a specific purpose, weight loss or weight change, that the purpose of that meal experience is just to experience it with all of your senses. So Michelle May who wrote a few different books about applying mindful eating, she calls it eating with attention and intention. So you go into that meal with a purpose of feeling a certain way, once you're done with that experience, and that you eat without distraction. And that allows you to really determine how much you're enjoying the meal, and how satisfying that meal is, and how much you actually really need to eat of that meal to feel that you're satisfied. And I use satisfaction sort of with a double meaning here, because satisfaction actually really refers to sort of like the cognitive aspects of feeling done with a meal and really satisfied, whereas we also have satiety, which is feeling physically that you are no longer hungry. And quite often, people will eat around what they want to eat, and they may eat much more of the foods that aren't quite as good, that aren't really what they want. And they

may eat less of the food that they really wanted to eat, with some caveats, I mean, if people are anticipating that they're going to be restricting in the near future, then they may have a harder time eating an intentional amount. And that's also part of the reason why it's very helpful to have a weight neutral approach with mindful eating, because you can be present with that meal, you know you can eat this at any point in time, so you don't need to eat an amount that is physically uncomfortable, and you don't need to worry about what might be happening in the future, you just focus on that meal. So mindful eating is one practice that falls under the umbrella of intuitive eating.

DANNY LENNON:

And I like that you highlighted that it's both attention and intention, because I think the common thing to think and understandably so is that mindful eating, oh that's, yeah, just not eating when you're distracted. Right? Don't eat in front of the TV, we know that's bad. So mindful eating is, instead, focus on your meal whilst you're doing that. But as you've outlined, there's this intention part that fits into this broader perspective of how we should think about food more generally, and think about how that ties into the positive things within our life.

GAB FUNDARO:

Exactly. And I think it also helps people to have a more realistic perspective of how intuitive eating might look in practice, because I think quite often people assume that if they give themselves unconditional permission to eat that they'll eat hyperpalatable foods in excess, until they feel really uncomfortable. And that really is not – that would be sort of tantamount to the principles of intuitive eating, not in a shameful way that you need to feel bad if that happens, but part of respecting your body and respecting your fullness is to pay attention to how you're feeling as you're eating. And if you were to eat that food and feel really sick and uncomfortable afterwards that you may then reflect and say, it doesn't feel great to eat that in that amount, next time I'll eat less. And anecdotal evidence, but my experience, I can give someone an example with



Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. I love Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, and while my taste hunger might say, eat all of the Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, I know that after two, I'm kind of like, oh that was satisfying; if I go to three, I'm kind of like, oh maybe that was a little bit too much. Sometimes I want to have like a quick little snack before I work out. I know I can do one Reese's Peanut Butter Cup.

So it's the application of our awareness and our intention that I don't necessarily need to know the macros in a food to know how that food will make me feel physically and how it could even affect my performance. It does take more thought, I've had clients that say, gosh, when I go to the fridge now, I really am thinking hard, and I may be taking things in and out and rethinking what meal I want to have, because there are a lot of moving pieces to that. And macros are not one of those moving pieces, but there are other considerations. So it is not just eat anything in any amount, regardless of how it makes you feel. It's about another version of self-care that is not, that doesn't require weighing or tracking things.

DANNY LENNON:

Yeah, that's the crucial thing, because it's once you bring awareness to that, you don't see these crazy straw man arguments of, oh it's just an excuse for people to eat nonsense all the time. Nobody really does that once there's that awareness brought to it; and it's not, you can eat whatever on autopilot; it's once you put your focused attention on it and then have an intention for what's happening to you, then it kind of takes care of some of those criticisms. So with the transition to a more, to approach that is maybe weight neutral, whether that's including intuitive eating, mindful eating, or both, what does that typically look like for people initially, because presumably, depending on where someone's starting from, that can be quite a tough process?

GAB FUNDARO:

I think this is a great opportunity to talk about ambivalence. When Shannon and I really were

thinking about, I think – I can't remember how it struck us, I want to say we were like in Madrid and we were talking about how to help people when they're really undecided about something. And we'd gone through this, this motivational interviewing training, and we realized that ambivalence, this is just wanting two things that are at odds, it's so often pathologized in the industry. People take that and they call it lack of motivation. They call it laziness. They call it lack of self-control, lack of willpower. And it's none of those things. It's just a very normal human experience to want to eat a lot of tasty foods. And then also, because we're socialized and women to want to be smaller, or men want to have a six pack.

And so when a person has come to me and they are experiencing that ambivalence between, I don't think that I can keep dieting, or I can't keep engaging in the behaviors that I've been doing to be smaller, but I also am really afraid to stop doing that, my role, as I view it, and what we talk about in the comprehensive coaching framework, is that motivational interviewing is really, at its core, just a way of being with someone and a way of giving someone the space to explore the opportunity or the possibility of change in any direction. And that when a person is experiencing that ambivalence, the most helpful thing that we can do is not to give them advice or send them in one direction. That's like the, that's not what is useful in that moment. It's just to actively listen, reflect their words back to them, and provide them with the unconditional acceptance that whatever they're ready for, will meet them there. So if a person is telling me I want to do X, Y, and Z, but I only feel ready for X, then we start at X, and we figure out what are the reasonable, achievable behaviors that they can engage in to start out.

So most of the time, I would say that folks feel more comfortable maybe like tracking one macro for a little while, or maybe they are – a lot of people like to start with play planning. So that's sort of a structure in which half the play is

a form of a vegetable and a quarter is a form of a starch and a quarter is a form of lean protein. Motivational interviewing can also be a little more directional in terms of helping people when they have decided that they want to make a change or they're leaning sort of in one direction that you can apply those MI skills of open ended questions, for example, and reflections, to strengthen their readiness really. So they feel motivated to make a change, they feel committed to the change, and then you can help them feel really ready and confident that they are going to be able to make that change. So that's sort of the initial phase. And the way that we've conceptualized a framework is that sort of like what you're doing to start off with the client is more of that like real motivational interviewing. And then as they have really gotten into the change, and they're not really struggling with ambivalence anymore, then they might come up against unhelpful thought patterns, cravings, difficult emotions. And that's when things like cognitive behavioral coaching and the acceptance and commitment therapy practices can help them maintain intentional action that's aligned with their values. So it kind of looks different for every person.

DANNY LENNON:

One of the really interesting things you said was that listening process at the start of this active listening, hearing what the person is saying, certainly not pathologizing the ambivalence that is there, and I think that can go against the temptation a lot of the time for many practitioners, particularly because I think it just draws people who want to be problem solvers, who want to help people, who want to fix an issue. And so, there's this pull towards trying to fix an issue and prescribe someone what the solution is. But that may be indicated based on some of the things you're saying that instead of we have to pull away from that a bit and hold ourselves back and not give advice before it's necessary to allow someone the space to be able to make themselves heard. So what advice would you have for practitioners in that sense of how should we think about giving feedback or

talking to someone in those early moments that doesn't veer into this fixer mindset of needing to give advice immediately?

GAB FUNDARO:

I think one thing is being aware of what's going on in your mind. So it's, I would say, pretty impossible to listen actively, while also developing the answer, your next response. It's much easier, in some ways, to listen just for the purpose of really absorbing what the person is saying, and listening with the intention that you will be giving them back their language with deeper meaning. So if you notice that most of the words in your head are your own, and they're not your client's, then you may be veering into that territory of, oh I'm going to come up with some solutions for this person. So that's called the righting reflex. When someone comes to us with a problem, and because we want to help, which is a great intention, we want to return a solution to them. Or maybe we believe, understandably that because they're paying us, we have to give them solutions. So they're paying us for the solutions or for the results. And if we don't provide those, what in the world are we even doing, what am I selling.

I had to stop the other day, because someone had asked me a while back, like, don't you sell diets, like, how can you talk about weight neutral stuff, don't you sell diets. And I thought, no, no, that's not really what I sell. I kind of sell, like, I sell space. I sell cognitive and emotional space for people so that they know they can come to me and talk about anything, and there's no judgment. And when they're speaking to me, I'm really just thinking about what's the deeper meaning to what they're saying. So that when I respond to them, it's a reflection. It's what they've given to me, and then what I've interpreted from beneath what they're saying. So I try to give more context back to them, and the intention there is really just to show that I understand them, and that I empathize with them. And empathy isn't feeling bad for someone, empathy is really just expressing that you have experienced that emotion before at

some point in time, because we all have. So a person then feels heard and understood and validated. Those are really important, that they need to know that we realize that their reality, their perspectives, that's true to them.

The provision of information from us actually comes much later. So once the person had, you know, we've given them that space to talk about what brought them there, what they've been struggling with, and what they want to change, and importantly, why, a strong why is really helpful that – when I talk about increasing motivation, I don't mean like turning it up like a volume knob, really more so, I mean, can we identify your values and the parts of your identity that we can then align this change with, and help you talk about why it's so important for you to make this change. So most of what we do in those initial sessions, it's reflections, I'm just telling you what I'm hearing from you with more context. It's summarizing, it's just, oh you've said this and this and this, just want to make sure I understand. And those open ended questions, how did that work for you in the past; oh gosh, well, why do you think that happened. And then affirmations. So that's one way that we can tell a person, hey, I see these character traits in you, I see these strengths in you. And so if a person is saying, I can't ever stick to a diet, I don't know what to do; oh, you're open minded, you want to try a lot of new things.

The way that we provide information comes later in more of like the planning phase. So when a person, we've done all that, they say, I want to make this change. All right, awesome, how are we going to make that change? And they're like, well, I think I'm going to go to the gym every day this week. Oh, okay, cool. Well, it sounds like you have a really busy schedule. When do you think you'd be able to go? And then, when we find a topic where our expertise can really help them, so we are providing information not to change their mind, and not to give them a solution right off the bat, but because the supplementation will really fortify whatever it is

they want to do. Hey, do you mind if I give you some feedback on blah, blah, blah, blah? And they say, yes. So I elicited their permission to give them some feedback, and then I give them the feedback. Oh, okay, well, safe rates of weight loss are probably around a pound per week. What do you think of that? And then they say, oh, wow, gosh, I didn't know; I thought that like I was going to be losing five pounds in the first week. No wonder I was so disappointed. So we've empowered them in that way. So I think it's just, it's not that we are never giving advice, it's just that we want to wait for the right timing, so that the person really wants and asks for our advice. Now, if it's a consulting kind of thing, it's a little bit different. A person has literally said, I'm going to pay you for an hour to ask you questions about this thing, and then we can just say that. But consulting and coaching are two very different things.

DANNY LENNON:

In relation to the open ended questioning or providing these probing questions that can lead someone to have these insights about not only how they currently view food, or their current relationship with it, but why they even want to do something in the first place, outside of a, say, one-to-one coaching setup, is there any types of questions that you could advise people to reflect on, maybe if they wanted to do this for themselves, maybe if they just never thought of why they even eat in a certain way, or is there anything that could be useful just to reflect on as an exercise?

GAB FUNDARO:

There are questions and then there's also sort of the way that we deliver those questions, because I don't want to overlook the motivational interviewing spirit, because that's really, am I without the spirit is just manipulation. Honestly, when we try to use the skills in a sneaky way, like, oh I'm going to ask this person this question and lead them, you know, we don't want to lead the witness. And it can be challenging for us, especially, when we have ideas or perspectives or biases, and we talked earlier about sort of like how we're viewing

things through a specific lens. So if we have, you know, if we're biased toward weight neutral approaches, we think dieting is inherently disordered and everyone should be doing intuitive eating. Or if we think intuitive eating, well, that's just total bull, like, people need to track macros or else they're not going to know what they're doing. We have to be very aware of those because those might prevent us from really engaging in an I consistent way with the spirit. So that spirit is one of collaboration, evocation, empathy and acceptance.

So when we ask a person or when we ask ourselves about dieting history, so when a person says, well, I kind, maybe I want to do keto again, I did that in the past and I lost X amount of weight; and I am sincerely curious when I ask, oh okay, cool, well, what was that like for you, you lost a lot of weight, why didn't you keep doing that. And that way, I'm not like, oh, well, how did that work for you; hmm, why didn't you keep doing that. There's such a difference, that's the same question, but the tone indicates one of, like, curiosity versus judgment. One is I want to know more about your experiences, and the other one is, I already think that that's a bad idea, and I'm trying to convince you without saying so. But when we're trying to think about what eating approach or what might be useful for us, the way that we have conceptualized a coaching for, what we call, intentional eating – so we have a spectrum of intentional eating, it's got weight neutral and weight focused approaches on it – it's at the intersection of the client's goals, experiences and preferences.

So we think about what has worked well for you in the past. So just ask yourself like, hmm, how was that really, like, did that feel sustainable, is that something that I enjoyed, did it get in the way of my social life. And then preferences, what types of foods do I like to eat, do I really like avocados, or am I more of like an oatmeal person. And then what are my goals? Are my goals really – and this is where it can get, so we

talked about goals, I think we have to kind of talk about values first. And so the way we determine our values, we can look at who's important to me, what's important to me, and how do I spend most of my free time. Sometimes we think things are important to us. We think things are values. But when we look at like how we spend our free time, we might get a different message from our actions. And then we look at like, what are the things that I'm doing in my life that really show that I'm living in accordance with my values. Those things feel good. I feel most myself, I feel really fulfilled when I'm doing those things.

So we can derive goals from that. And so often, when I'm getting to know a client, I want to learn about their values. So I ask them things like what's important to you, what do you like to do in your free time. And from there, we can establish goals that are more aligned with their values. Quite often, there's something below that I want a six pack. Okay, why do you want a six pack? So you could even ask yourself questions like, give yourself like 10 reasons, 10 Whys. Like, why do I want a six pack? Because I think I look better with a six pack. Why is that? Why? Why? Why? Until we get to something that's deeper and has a real meaning that resonates with something in our identity; and from there, that's usually where we can foster more internal forms of motivation.

DANNY LENNON:

That aspect of connecting to value seems to be that key part in transcending that kind of daily motivation that people think they need to conjure up that once you connect it to a value, that is enough to keep you on that path. And there was actually a paper from earlier this year, looking at adherence I think in different diets. It was kind of qualitative work out of Australia, I think, and they showed that a vegan diet had really high adherence to it. And through some of the questionnaires they were finding that it was people reporting that it was part of their identity, that it fit these certain values, and it was because they identified with it, and it fed



into these core values that are important in your life, that made it easy to stick to these dietary choices that other diets or dieting patterns didn't have. And so, that kind of speaks the same idea of, like, attaching it to values. But I would think it's quite rare that people even take the time to think what are my values, or how do we even go about establishing them, never mind connecting them to some of these goals.

GAB FUNDARO:

But you know what, I love doing things like this. I love that, you know, I think we are adding more context to these discussions around motivation and willpower and self-control. Because quite often, clients are looking at these as though it's a volume knob or it is liquid in a container, and so we can say, oh well, you have like 500 mils of willpower, I must only have 200 mils, because it's really hard for me to stick to this. And so, they come at this thinking that they're at a deficit or they have this sort of, I think, like a meritocracy view of things and they're assuming that, okay, I have to have like this amount of self-control. And like, if I am diligent and hardworking, that's what it takes and I'll succeed, no matter what. And we miss out on the whole person, the whole context of, like, why people eat and engage in physical activity. And there are different forms of motivation, there's not one form of motivation, and it's not like we can just build that up like a muscle or use it up by the end of the day. And we get I think even mixed signals from other practitioners when we hear things like you can't rely on motivation, and motivation is finite and willpower is finite.

Well, some people really just are intrinsically motivated to exercise and intrinsically motivated or even internally regulated to eat a vegan diet. So they might be intrinsically motivated, if it's just those are foods that they really love, and they just don't like meat, and so it's easy for them to stick to. Or there are certain forms of internal regulation that are associated with identity, and so, they might not be a huge fan of all vegan foods, but it's part of their

identity that they are a vegan. And so that makes it feel easier, it makes it feel like they need less motivation. But we don't do anything without motivation. We require – motivation is just like all of the brain processes that regulate, you know, that drive our behavior. So everything is initiated because we have motivation to do so. But people I think often are equating – they think all motivation is external motivation; they think that it has to be from a coach telling them what to do or punishing them if they don't do it, or it has to be in pursuit of a physical appearance because that's what makes them acceptable or prevents them from being unacceptable. So those are more external forms of motivation that just don't seem to be as powerful when it comes to certain behaviors that require problem solving.

So whereas if it's something that's like a really menial task, like, okay, I'll give you \$1 every time you push this button, oh okay, I can push that button like a jillion times. But if it's something that's like, hey, I need you to change your lifestyle, I need you to sometimes make decisions about foods where you're not eating the things that you kind of want to eat in big amounts because they might be high energy dense, that the external forms of regulation don't seem as powerful as the internal forms of motivation. So when we can give clients that knowledge, and now they're empowered with that understanding of motivation, now they have that tool forever. Now they can say, hey, you know what, hmm, I'm not feeling a strong drive to do this thing today. Why not? Hmm, what's why? Why is it important for me to do this? Oh, because I want to be a role model. Now, then they can go on, like, that's fostering independence. They don't need to rely on a coach. But at the same time, some people find there is a form of internal motivation that comes from working with a coach, because now they identify as like, oh I'm a person who, like, I have this great dynamic with my coach, and it makes me feel really good when the coach says, like, hey, you're such a hard worker.

So not to, like, there is going to, there's going to be context for everything. But just to say that we need to be more clear about the psychology of behavior change, because that makes things clearer for clients. So understanding motivation, and understanding the lack of clarity that we have around, like, whether willpower is actually finite or not, and understanding the history of how we've applied self-control to food intake for not very long. It's not like this is something that's like an inherently human thing. We all have super great self-control. We just have to exert it. So those are the things that I think are really valuable to clients. And in terms of identifying values, I kind of start with like a worksheet, so we've got like a values sorting worksheet, and we can start from there, and just have a conversation about it. They kind of select from a number of different values, rate them in order, and then we talk about how, when do you feel like you're living in accordance with those, like, how do you know, what does your life look like, what does your life look like when you feel like you're not in alignment with those, how can we bring you closer to what's in alignment.

DANNY LENNON:

Because it seems that the behaviors or the actions that need to be taken, aren't going to change necessarily in difficulty, but by going from the sole relying on this, like, external willpower to something that's connected to values, you bring a meaningfulness to that. And it just seems that generally humans seem to be able to derive meaning from things that are, even though they're difficult, so we can perceive difficult things in a different manner. And it seems that, to some degree, that's what you're able to do here by shifting how someone views motivation, but also how they use this through maybe connecting it with values. To maybe tie all these points that we've brought together, because we've opened up a number of different tabs here, we can only really scratch the surface of kind of the framework that you've put out in depth, and we will link to that in the show notes,

but to kind of pull some of this together, what summary of some of those ideas would you like to leave people or is there anything that we didn't get to that you'd particularly like to bring up?

GAB FUNDARO:

Well, I would say, that really the impetus for us developing this framework and the spectrum of intentional eating was to help, and this is why we titled it so, to help bridge the gaps between these ideologies in industry, and even between coach and client. We found that quite often there are coaches talking to each other, and then there are clients talking to each other, and not a lot of coach to client communication outside of the working relationship. So I think that's really useful. And then also to bridging sort of the anti-diet versus pro-intentional weight loss camps, there's a great deal of rhetoric within each of those groups and a lot of kind of shaming across the way mutually, so there are these sort of trope sayings, diets don't work versus, like, it's just about calories in, calories out, eat less, move more, and they just lack context to the point of being kind of useless. And when we're arguing based on inaccurate assumptions, even if it's a logical argument, it's not a useful one, it's not going to be productive.

And so, we thought why not just occupy this space and say, we don't label coaches as unethical, if they coach weight neutral or weight focused. That the best approach is the one that is the best for that individual client. And for some people, that's going to be intuitive eating; for other people, it might be plate planning; for other people, it might be counting macros. And that the only way that we can have productive conversations is through shared meaning and understanding of many of these terms that we're using colloquially and also of the data behind each group's claims. So we can look at meta analyses comparing weight focus versus weight neutral approaches, we can look at the implications of frequent weighing and what weight loss maintainers, what the types of behaviors that they engage in, and find what are

the best practices, how can we best guide our clients to their desired destination in a way that is safe and respecting of their autonomy; and, in the case of athletes, is also supportive of their longevity in the sport, because that I think, is sometimes overlooked especially when we're talking about like physique athletes. That's kind of what I want to leave people with, that this is, you know, we're not trying to be dogmatic, we're not saying that it's like the best way or anything like that. It's just something that we've operationalized taking what we hope to be best practices and changing them over time, and then continually putting out content to keep people informed of the nuances to these arguments.

DANNY LENNON:

And I think, conceptually, it's really useful to keep that word that you have at the center of that framework of informed, because I think this is what it really gets to of, as you said, it's not to dismiss any particular group or any approach. And, in fact, in different circumstances, they can all be useful in different ways, but it's making sure that if you are going to use any of those, that you're doing it in an informative manner, and you're aware of the evidence in relation to any of these different approaches, as opposed to using it just because you think you should.

GAB FUNDARO:

Exactly, yeah. Yeah, I've said, dieting is like a contact sport. There's going to be inherent risk. We just want to make sure that people can give informed consent; and that if they choose a non-diet weight neutral approach, that they're giving informed consent. And that I think is the root of an ethical practice that, I would find it, I think, unethical for a person to promote intuitive eating as a way to lose weight, because that's not really its application; it'd be like a physical therapist saying this is, you know, we're going to get you ready for a powerlifting meet just like do these physical therapy motions for the next eight weeks until meet day. That person's not able to make an informed choice. So as long as we are ourselves very informed, so we have to be sure that if we're going to be making statements

that we've read the books, that we've read the literature, and that we can still have our beliefs about maybe what we think is best, but that's best for us. And what's best for our clients is that they can make an informed decision based on the evidence at hand.

DANNY LENNON:

Gab, where can people find you on social media and the internet and anywhere else you'd like to send their attention?

GAB FUNDARO:

vitaminphd on Instagram and Facebook, vitaminphdnutrition.com and also btgcomprehensivecoaching.com. We also have a Comprehensive Coaching Facebook community that you can learn more about on our website. So please feel free to shoot me a DM. You can contact us and me via email on our websites as well.

DANNY LENNON:

That brings us to the final question of the podcast which you've got before, but I think if you're anything like me, my answer changes probably daily, so I'm going to give it to you again. And it's simply: if you could advise people to do one thing each day that would have a positive impact on any area of their life, what might that one thing be?

GAB FUNDARO:

If you notice that you're experiencing foreboding joy, and you're worried about the end of a happy moment, try to practice gratitude for it instead.

DANNY LENNON:

A profound and beautiful way to finish. Gab, thank you so much for this conversation. I've really enjoyed this, and I've really enjoyed reading through your work related to these topics too. So thank you for coming and doing this.

GAB FUNDARO:

Oh, thank you so much for having me.

