

We all kind of know that eating well and moving our bodies are conducive with losing and maintaining a healthy weight but what about mindset? Many of you may know the book called Mindset by Researcher Carol Dweck. In it she discusses how mindset is so integral to growth and success in academics, in business and in athleticism. Essentially those who believe in a growth mindset- in their potential to grow, evolve, improve and change are much more likely to succeed than those people who have a fixed mindset- the belief that they were born a certain way and have fixed traits. How often do you focus on a fixed trait? I hear it all the time. For example, people who negotiate themselves out of the opportunity to try or learn something new by saying things like,

Oh I'm not a runner or

I never have been able to lose weight *or*

My entire family is overweight, diabetic or whatever.

Well, it turns out that mindset matters here too. In fact, we have much more agency than we think. There is a field of science called epigenetics which has proven that what we are exposed to and the habits that we keep actually change the way our genes are expressed. But more of that in another episode. But mindset does matter when it comes to health outcomes and healthy behaviors as well. In fact in one study that tested people's exercise capacity those who were told they have a gene that makes them "poor exercisers," had a drop in their functional capacity ie their ability to exercise. People who were told they had an athletic gene that was related to higher exercise capacity performed better. For example, their lung volume was increased!

That means merely the belief that you had an athletic gene improved your physiology!

Mindset also matters when it comes to maintaining healthy behaviors.

One example is positive Self-acceptance. And this data shows that if we have a mindset that is self-accepting - meaning that we are able to accept ourselves for who we are, as we are - we are much more likely to go on and make positive and healthy behavior changes, as opposed to, if we start out with a negative self-acceptance or a self-deprecating self-talk, which does not empower us. In fact, positive self-acceptance, even if you want to improve, even if you may not like where you are in this moment, the ability to accept that with a positive outlook makes you much more likely to go on and make change.

Another example is Dietary Setbacks. So dietary setbacks are, for example, a time in which your diet is not optimal. Maybe you went on vacation and indulged and gained 10 pounds, or maybe you had a decadent meal. How we relate to these dietary setbacks determines if and when we are able to get back on the wagon. It turns out that it's not the dietary setback itself that is a problem, but how we relate to this dietary setback.

In one study, they asked people to rate their dietary setbacks on a scale from 1-10, 1 being nothing of concern, and 10 being extremely concerning or upsetting. What they found was that the people who rated their setbacks zero to one, meaning they did not regard it with much concern, are much more likely to go on to positive healthy behaviors such as healthy eating and regular exercise. And as a result, we're much more likely to continue losing weight, as compared to those individuals who perceive their dietary setback in a negative way. Those individuals in fact, were not able to continue their positive behaviors, and were more likely to go on to gain weight. So again, perception of our dietary setbacks is also really important in our ability to adhere to and maintain healthy behaviors.

And finally mindset matters in regards to our belief about the effect of positive behaviors.

In one study, they took a group of people who worked in a hotel setting in terms of physical labor, cleaning or moving boxes, and divided these individuals into two groups. One group was told that their labor was actually physical activity, they were educated to understand that labor is something that was positive for their body. The other group was not educated in terms of what their labor or work was doing for them. Both groups were followed over the course of weeks and months, and physiologic parameters such as blood pressure, visceral fat, or belly fat, and weight were measured. They found that the group of people who were instructed that their labor was actually exercise were much more likely to have reductions in blood pressure, they had reductions in visceral fat, as well as reductions in their weight. Those hotel workers who were not educated on the benefits of their activity, did not reap those benefits.

Again, demonstrating the power of our mindset, not only in the ability to adhere to positive habit changes, but in this case, the positive mindset, in fact, change the way their bodies responded to that very same exercise.

As if just the knowing had an impact on physiologic parameters.

So, Whether we are talking exercise performance, academics, goal setting or habit breaking- believe you can and you will. That's it for today. And remember if you loved this episode please like, subscribe and share.

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And finally, if you want to learn more of the science intermixed with 15 years of patient and personal stories check out my new book now on amazon, *Hungry for More, Stories and Science to Inspire Weight Loss from the Inside Out.*