Ep #65: Weight Loss Made Possible

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With Your Host

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Strong as a Working Mom, a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

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You are listening to the *Strong as a Working Mom* podcast, Episode #65. If you are quick to say “I can't” when it comes to exercise, eating, or any change for that matter, let me help you flip the script.

Welcome to the *Strong as a Working Mom* podcast. If you're balancing career, family, wellness, and some days sanity, you are in the right place. This is where high-achieving, busy, working moms get the tools they need to eat, move, and think. I'm your host, physician, personal trainer, and Certified Life Coach, Carrie Holland. Let's do this.

Hey, how are you? What's new, what's good? So, what's good here, we are going to talk about a concept that I've evolved over time, that has opened up doors for myself and for many of my clients. The concept is thinking in terms of possibility. I do this a lot with my clients, and I can assure you, this is not about being fuzzy and thinking rainbows and cotton candy. That's not how I operate. That's not how my clients operate.

So, instead, thinking in terms of possibility is like changing your filter. It's changing how you see yourself. It's changing how you see your world. It's changing how you view what's actually possible. Here's where this comes from.

Often, when you want to change something, it starts out seeming like a huge mountain to scale. It can feel like an enormous task to create any change in your life, like your relationship, your career, your body, or even your mindset. Those are big changes, and they do not just happen overnight.

You may be in a space, for example, where you've been in your career for years, and you've been on a very well spelled out path. So for me, when I set out to become a doctor, that is a very well spelled out pathway. You go to med school, you do a residency, maybe you do a fellowship, and then you start practicing medicine. In an ideal world, that's your career. Going to medical school trained you for one thing, to be a doctor.

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It may not, at first glance anyway, seem at all possible to shake that up. It may feel completely impossible to do anything different than what you currently do for work. Or maybe you're in a relationship that feels stale. I talked about it last week. Maybe you and your partner have gotten to a space in your life where you feel more like coexistent babysitters than you do partners.

But when you think about changing it, it feels like moving a mountain. Starting that conversation “Can we talk?” and even imagining anything different in your relationship seems impossible because of your work, your schedules, your routine, your kids. It may be that your family rhythm feels so rigid that it feels impossible to change it.

Or for many of you, it's your physical body. Maybe the combination of career, family, and less time for yourself means that taking care of your body in the form of exercise and nutrition has largely gone out the window.

While that does not feel good, and you would love to be able to eat healthier foods and start exercising again, for too many of you, it feels like an uphill battle to just get started. So, what do you do? Nothing, and you don't get started. In turn, nothing changes.

But here's where it gets interesting. It does not have to go that way. You are not stuck. If there is something that you truly, deeply want, whether it's related to your career, relationships, wellness, whatever it is, it's possible. Okay, so I know, at first go, this sounds a little self-helpey. Right? I get it.

On a side note, my kids are totally onto me with all of this self-help stuff. So, whenever I try to offer anything to them, if they're dealing with a problem, or if I'm talking through something with them, if I offer them advice, they will ask point blank, “Hey, did you read that in the self-help book?” Quite often, the answer is in fact, yes. Yes, I did read that in a self-help book. And so what?

But the point here is that, yes, what you want is possible. Whatever that is, a better career and improved relationship, a stronger, healthier body, it is all

possible for you. It starts by how you think. That's why I called it thinking in terms of possibility.

When you think in terms of possibility, you are literally shifting the filter through which you look at your life. You're shifting the filter you use to collect data about your life, and you're doing this to help yourself, to benefit yourself. When you think in terms of possibility, the idea is to compel you to take new and different action from what you'd normally take, and in turn, create new and different results for yourself.

So, let me take a step back here for just one second. I know I say this term a lot, the term “creating your results.” If that sounds a little weird to you, or if it sounds a little coachy to you, or if you don't know what that means, I got you. But I want to encourage you to start thinking this way. Let me explain what I mean by this.

You are creating your results every day. So, think about this. Every result you have in your life, it's something you created, really. So remember, and go back to your order of operations; your thoughts create your feelings, your feelings drive your actions, and your actions produce your results; thoughts, feelings, actions, results in that order.

If you accept this, then you will accept that all of the results you have in your life, ultimately begin with your thoughts. You get to choose them; you get to choose your thoughts always. If you're thinking, “Well, no, that's not true. I have this horrible job. I'm stuck because I have all these loans to pay, and I can't just quit. I don't have time to look for anything else. I can't even cut back a little.”

Or, this what comes up all the time, “My life and my schedule are so busy and so full, I have so many responsibilities at work and at home, there is just no way for me to squeeze in exercise. Even though I really want to, and I know it will make me feel better.”

No, it is not your work. It's not your student loan balance. It is not your role as a partner or parent. It's not your schedule that is creating the result you

have. Remember, those are all neutral circumstances, right? Instead, it's how you're thinking *about* your life that is creating the results you've got, it's your thoughts. So, instead of thinking in terms of impossibility, and thinking about all the ways in which change is not possible, let's switch that up.

Instead, I want to help you use your very powerful thoughts to start thinking in terms of possibility. That will open you up to an entirely different world of outcomes for yourself. So, let me give you an example. Let's just start simple. Let's talk about eating out. This comes up all the time. I want to give you some ideas to try the next time you go out to eat. I'm going to use two different client examples to illustrate exactly this.

So, I've got one client who has struggled to lose weight. She's made a lot of changes to her habits and her routine, but eating out is still a challenge for her. Even this week, during our session, she shared very matter-of-factly, all of the healthy food on the menu is boring. Alright, so let's pull that apart a little bit.

Imagine you're at a restaurant, you're trying to lose weight, and you're trying to make better choices. You're trying to eat healthy. You pull out the menu and you tell yourself, "All of the healthy food is boring." So, if you've ever thought that, as my client did this week, ask yourself one of my most favorite questions: How does it feel to think that way? How does it feel when you think that the healthy food on the menu is boring?

When I asked this exact question to my client, the feeling she came up with was defeated. That makes sense. It makes total sense that you would feel defeated if you decided to believe that anything healthy on the menu is boring.

Then here's the next thing to think about. So, imagine you're at that restaurant, you're perusing the menu, you've decided that anything healthy on the menu is boring, and you feel defeated. Then what do you do? What happens?

Again, when I asked my question of this to the client, she described that when she felt defeated, she went into a downward spiral of thinking, “This is impossible. I'm never going to be able to stick to my plan. There is no way I can lose weight. So, I might as well just get whatever I want.” There it is, that “might as well” thinking.

Of all the self-defeating ways to start a thought “might as well,” in my opinion, is the worst. It is resigning. It is giving in to your circumstances. It's taking your authority out of your hands entirely. In addition to the downward spiral and spinning and “might as well” thinking, my client ordered something on the menu she wasn't proud of.

She ate more food, and she had more alcohol than she intended. She did not get creative or ask if she could make adjustments to the dishes. She didn't look at the appetizers to see if she could combine them and make that into a meal. She did not think in terms of possibility.

Instead, she was stuck in impossibility and ultimately resigned to a burger and fries, and then let that be the start of a stumble that led to dessert and drinks and feeling icky about her food choices after all was said and done.

What was the end result she created here? She proved herself right. By thinking all of the healthy food on the menu is boring, she let that be her filter. She made a decision about the healthy food on the menu. She decided it was all boring. Then she dismissed all of those options, and instead chose foods she later regretted eating. Do you see that?

The point here is that she created her result with her thinking. She took her thought “the healthy food on this menu is boring,” used that as her filter while she looked at the menu, she looked for evidence to back it up, and she found it. She let herself stay stuck by thinking in impossibility. By staying stuck in impossibility she didn't get any closer to her goals in that moment.

So, now let me give you an example of another client, who also went out to dinner this week. She's also trying to lose weight, and she approached her

dinner out a little differently. She decided, as she was looking at the menu, “I can find something on the menu that works for me.” There's her thought “I can find something that works.”

Let's take that and run with it. Imagine this is you, you're at dinner, and instead of thinking everything healthy on the menu is boring, you practice thinking and believing “I can find something on the menu that works for me.” Now, let's do what we did before, connect your thought with your feelings. How does it feel to think that way? How does it feel to practice thinking, “I can find something on the menu that works,” while you're out to eat?

For my client, she landed on focused; focused versus defeated in our previous example. Then take the next step. Imagine that you're at the restaurant, you're trying to make healthier choices, and you feel focused by thinking, “I can find something that works.” What happens? Well, for my client, she was able to remember her weight loss goal and what she's trying to accomplish.

She held firm in her commitment to herself by choosing a meal that worked with her plan. She skipped dessert, she skipped the wine, and she came home from dinner feeling proud of the decisions she made. Those were all of the actions she took from a place of feeling focused.

What is the result this created for her? Just like in the first example, she proved herself right. She proved to herself that she could find something on the menu that worked for her. Do you see that? This is why I love the thought model so, so much. It is such a nice and clean way of making the connection between your thoughts and your results. Do you see that?

When you think “I can find something on the menu that works,” and you actually believe it, you go and find evidence to prove it true. Just like when you think “everything healthy on this menu is boring,” you find the evidence to prove that thought true, and end up ordering a burger and fries instead. Your thoughts are the filter for how you approach your world, and you get to decide what kind of filter you want to put out there.

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It makes total sense that you would feel defeated when you think “everything healthy on this menu is boring,” it makes absolute sense. It would make sense that if you feel defeated, you would take action in the form of choosing something that's not in alignment with your plan, and you prove yourself right.

But on the flip side, what if you decided to believe something else? What if, like my other client, you decided to believe that you could find something on the menu that works. Again, it makes sense that you would feel focused if you actively practice thinking “I can find something that works.” From there, you take action by choosing a meal that fits with your plan. Once again, you prove yourself right. Either way you proved yourself correct. Do you see that?

We have the same circumstance; being out to dinner. But we have two very different thoughts; “everything healthy on the menu is boring” or “I can find something on the menu that works for me.” One thought is thinking in terms of possibility, while the other is thinking in terms of impossibility.

So, when you're thinking in terms of impossibility, as you can imagine, you're essentially slamming the door shut on any opportunity for change. This is not simply looking at the glass as half empty, it is much more than that. It's looking at, and looking for, all the reasons that something is not possible.

Thinking in impossibility is not even entertaining the idea, not even considering the prospect, of a different outcome. It's making a decision ahead of time that change is not possible. And when you make that decision, it does not serve you. That decision usually does not move you forward at all. In fact, when you think in terms of impossibility, it generally leaves you totally stuck.

Why does this happen? What keeps you stuck in impossibility? If living in impossibility doesn't help you, then why you do it? It's your story. It's your same, comfortable, self-defeating, well-worn story that is keeping you stuck in impossibility.

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When you tell me, “I can't say no to tacos when my husband brings them home,” which one of my clients said to me earlier this week, when you declare that you can't say no to tacos, you've just slammed the door to a different outcome. Do you see that?

I've said this before, but I really love listening to your words and listening to the way that you talk about yourself and your experiences, because your words give me so much insight into your beliefs about yourself. So, when you tell me, I can't say no to tacos or chocolate or cookies or shopping or Netflix, whatever it is for you, you've told me what you believe about yourself.

You created an impossibility with your own limiting beliefs about yourself. You've decided ahead of time that when faced with a taco, well, of course, you're going to have one because you don't say no. And in the process, you've made an alternative outcome for yourself impossible. You've declared that because you're someone who doesn't say no to tacos when presented with one, there's no question. You're going to have it and you reinforce your story.

Remember, this isn't about the tacos, right? It's never about the tacos. Instead, what happens is that you hold on to your negative beliefs about yourself with such a tight grip, even if that belief is not true fact, that you lose sight of all the opportunities and possibilities in front of you. You see only one outcome. It's like having blinders on, you are closing the door on change, you are having the taco.

The underlying concept here is that when you're thinking in impossibility, you're using your past to predict your future. You're using your past experiences to determine what your future is going to be. Even if those experiences are negative, they're familiar, they're comfortable, and they are keeping you miserably comfortable.

Staying stuck in impossibility will keep you miserably comfortable. I've said that term “miserably comfortable” a number of times, and I'm going to hang on to it because I think it's an accurate representation of what it feels like. If

you've ever been there, it's a really yucky place to be. It's very tense, with a desire for something more, tempered by an even stronger desire to stay right where you are. It's resistance.

Why do you stay there? Why do you stay in a place of impossibility? Why do we get so stuck in our stories? “I can't say no to tacos, healthy food is boring. There's no way I could start exercising.” Why do we stay stuck in those stories that leave us living in impossibility?

Because we are very committed to our stories. Most of us are very decisive about who we are and what kind of people we are, it goes back to identity. If you've only ever known yourself as someone who does not get up early to exercise, then it makes sense that you keep sleeping through your alarm.

If you haven't given up the belief that you are incapable of morning exercise, it's going to be really hard to shift your routine and get out of bed at 5:30 in the morning and jump on your Peloton. Most of us like to hold on pretty tightly to our identities, and it's a huge threat to your brain to try to change things up and practice living into a new one.

That's where impossibility sets in. When your brain sees change, and an identity shift is most definitely a change, your brain's knee-jerk response is to offer you all the reasons that it's not possible. So, why do we hold on to our identities and the stories we believe about ourselves, even if they don't help us? That doesn't make sense.

If constantly thinking to yourself “I can't lose weight” doesn't help you, why do you hold on to that thought? Why do you keep an iron grip around a thought that doesn't help you? Because it does actually help you. I know, it sounds crazy but hear me out. You're getting something out of your belief “I can't lose weight.” You would not hold onto that belief if it didn't get you something. There is a benefit you get by sticking to that story. Otherwise, you wouldn't hold on to it.

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Even though it doesn't feel good to think “I can't lose weight,” holding on to that thought keeps you from having to say no to the doughnuts your friend brings over. It keeps you from having to buy stuff for sale at the grocery store. It helps you justify not eating the chicken and broccoli you brought from home, and having pizza with your coworkers instead. It gives you an answer for when you have to buy the next size up in clothes.

Holding on to that belief allows you to not have to try to change up your lifestyle, because you've already decided you know how it's going to end. It allows you to think in terms of impossibility. It's tricky. It's subtle, but it's real. And I've seen it over and over.

We get stuck in impossibility, when we let the benefit of our limiting beliefs keep us from trying new and different things. That is the catch-22 of thinking in terms of impossibility. It's often rooted in the miserable comfort of our limiting beliefs, and those are hard to release because of the familiarity and comfort that you get from them. It's fascinating and infuriating at the same time.

So, what is it for you? What is the limiting belief you've got about yourself that's keeping you stuck in impossibility? These are some that come up for my clients often: I don't cook at home. I can't eat vegetables. I am too busy. I don't have time. I can't lose weight. I've never kept the weight off before. I'm stuck in this job. I stink at relationships. Those are just some of the big ones.

If you find yourself thinking in impossibility, what do you do about it? What if you're listening to this and you identify with one or more of the thoughts I just shared? What if you see that you're holding on to a limiting belief that's keeping you stuck in impossibility? What if you see that it's getting you something, even if that something is keeping you miserably comfortable? Now what? What can you do?

You can start by committing to giving up your story. I know, just saying it sounds a little unnerving, right? But it's liberating. When you get 100% honest and admit to yourself that your long-held story “It's impossible for

you to change your schedule to exercise" is keeping you stuck in impossibility. And by holding on to it you get the miserable comfort of not having to try and change your schedule, then you can start to poke holes in it.

You can start looking for alternative solutions. You can start thinking in terms of possibility. I love doing this with clients. So, let's run with the example of, it is impossible for me to change my schedule to exercise. So, when you do the work, and recognize that holding on to this belief is getting you nowhere other than on your couch in front of another Netflix series instead of at your Orange Theory class, then you can decide to retire it.

You can retire your story. You're giving up the story you've been telling yourself and everyone around you, in exchange for a new, better story with an even better ending. So, what started out as "It is impossible for me to change my schedule to exercise," now becomes, "I can find time in my day to exercise."

When you practice thinking and believing that thought, there it is, you're opening the window instead of slamming the door shut on any chance of exercise with a thought "it is impossible for me to exercise." Now, you're proactively and very intentionally practicing thinking and believing that you can find time in your day to exercise. There's your crack, and the window to possibility.

That's all we need to start. I just need you to believe, with one tiny piece of your soul, that something different is possible. That's all we need to start. Because from that little shred of belief, no matter how small that shred is, you take different action. That's the self-check here.

How do you know that you actually believe the thought you're telling yourself? How do you know you believe it? You take the action to prove it correct. How do you prove to yourself that you actually believe "it's possible to make time for exercise?" You make time for exercise, even if it's five minutes. That's all you need to start; you take action and arrange your schedule to make five minutes to exercise. Do you see that?

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Here's the take-home point, what you believe to be true becomes your reality, and that happens because you make it your reality. This is thinking in terms of possibility. This is deciding what you will believe, practicing it intentionally, and then going and taking action to prove it true.

Again, to be clear, this is more than thinking about rainbows and cotton candy. This is not about being unrealistic, or faking yourself out. I do not believe in being fake. What I do believe in, and what I encourage all of my clients and you to do, is being open to new thoughts. Being open to different beliefs about yourself. And when you do those things, that's when you're opening yourself up to possibility.

If you told me 25 years ago that I would resign from clinical medicine, that I would own my own business, that I would compete in bodybuilding and race in triathlons, and that I would be sitting here talking with you, 25 years ago, I would have laughed at every single one of those and told you, “That is impossible.” But every single one of those things became a reality.

So, somewhere in there, there was a shift. I shifted my thinking. I went from thinking, “It is impossible for me to learn how to swim so I can do a triathlon,” to “Maybe I can learn how to swim.” That was the crack and the window for every single one of the big changes in my life that I made. It started with a shift from impossibility to maybe, that's it.

What is it for you? What is it you've decided is impossible in your life? Why? What limiting belief about yourself is holding you stuck in impossibility? How are you benefiting from those beliefs? What are they getting you? Is it comfort? Is it safety? Is it insulation from rejection or failure? What is it? Are you ready to let those go? Are you ready to give up those beliefs and consider what might be possible for you?

It starts with “maybe.” It starts with thinking of what is possible for you. It starts with rejecting impossibility as an outcome. It starts with your thinking, always. If you need help with this, let's talk. I will not let you stay stuck in impossibility.

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When you coach with me, we think in terms of what is possible, then you practice believing it and you take action to prove your beliefs true. Whether it's your career, relationships, wellness, or all the above, your thoughts are the key to making change possible. I'll help you do it.

Check out my website. Go to www.CarrieHollandMD.com/contact and let's get started. All right, thank you again for hanging out with me, and I'll catch you again next week.

If you like what you've been hearing, please review the show. I would love to get your feedback and ideas. Your suggestions have inspired episodes and will help me make the show better for you. Share this podcast with a friend, text a show link, share a screenshot, or post a link to the show on your social media. Be sure to tag me @CarrieHollandMD on either Instagram or Facebook, so I can follow along and engage with you.

This is how we get the word out to other working moms who want to feel strong, inside and out. If you know someone who wants to feel better or eat and move differently but she is too tired or too busy, it is time to change things up. You know making that change starts with how you think, and that is what we do here on the *Strong as a Working Mom* podcast. I'll see you next week.

Thanks for listening to *Strong as a Working Mom*. If you want more information on how to eat, move, and think, so you can live in the body you want, with the mind to match, visit me at CarrieHollandMD.com.