

Elizabeth: Hello, my sweet friends. Welcome back to the Primal Potential Podcast. I am Elizabeth Benton and I owe you guys an update. I do. Many episodes ago I shared with you that I had given myself a challenge, a brand new to me challenge not only to take my first ever hot yoga class but to take 45 of them in 45 days. If you missed the intro to that challenge and why I decided to do it, what I was looking for, why yoga, why now, definitely check out episodes 235, 239 and 247 because I give a lot of the backstory and I talk about the things I learned along the way. Things that I really didn't expect to learn that really don't have, they have a lot to do with yoga but I think they have more to do with life and fat loss and mindset than they do with yoga.

Definitely, if you haven't yet, listen to episodes 235, 239, and 247 first because otherwise I'm not sure that this one will make as much sense to you as it could or as it should. Either way, 45 days has gone by and that's why I say I owe you guys an update. I completed 40 classes in 45 days. It might actually be 41 but either way, not 45 and you know what? I still think I crushed it and I'm still proud and I still see it as mission accomplished. Some of you might be thinking, "No, you set out to do 45 and 45 and you didn't so you actually didn't do it." Yeah, I didn't do 45 classes in 45 days. I could have. I still see it as a win.

Towards the end I thought, "You know what? If you want to hit 45 and 45 then you can take two classes a couple of days here and there before I leave for Nashville," because I was heading out for Ascend towards the end of the challenge and I consciously decided not to. The reason I decided not to is because I thought that it was very important for me to see the victory in doing 40 or 41 in 45 days versus getting hung up on precision and perfection. Right? Because I don't want or need to be perfect and I used to think that anything short of the expectation I set was failure and that was not an effective or productive way for me to live because when I thought of things that way, when I thought here's the expectation and anything short of that is a mistake, a misstep, a failure then I would throw in the towel and beat myself up and say, "What's the point? Screw it. I missed it."

Now, as I think I get older but also as I take on challenges like this, I see that there are more than one way to win. Right? There's more than one way to be successful. There's more than one way to achieve a goal and oftentimes guys, success or winning or achievement doesn't look like we thought it might look and that doesn't make it wrong. It doesn't make it less valuable. It doesn't make it less of a victory just because it looks a little bit different. Here's the other thing, I think that 99 times out of a 100 our progress, our success, our achievement will look different. If we have this expectation that the only way to win, the only way to achieve, the only way to count it as a victory is if it looks exactly like we thought it would then we'll never win and we'll always feel like we're not good enough and we'll always feel like we didn't do enough and that's just not real life.

As I approached day 45 and I thought, "All right, I can double down and take a couple of extra classes, do two a day or three a day before I leave for Nashville or I can use this as a lesson to say what are the ways that I won? How did it look different than what I thought? How was it even better than what I thought?" I think that being not only okay with a few less than 45 and 45 days but being really freaking excited and proud of myself and counting it as much of a victory as I would if I had done 45 or 46 or 47, that is a greater lesson for me. That is a bigger achievement for me because it's not about the yoga classes, it's also about my mindset and my progress and this is translatable into other areas of my life where I might say, "Hey, this is my goal over the next 30 days and you know what? If it looks a little bit different than the expectation I had, welcome to real life."

Celebrate what you did right instead of searching for how it was different or where you think you went wrong or what you could have or should have done differently. Look for the wins. I don't want or need to be perfect and my past pursuit of perfection was not really an advantage to me at all but actually left me feeling disappointed and defeated when I should have been celebrating true wins in my life but at the time because they didn't meet my expectations they just weren't good enough. When I bring my best effort that is good for me. When I seek ways to win, when I seek lessons in my choices whether they were great choices or not so great choices, that is good enough for me. The only options in my life are not perfect or failure. I have way more choices than that.

It's not either I do it exactly as I set out to or I've failed and it's not good enough and I drop the ball. No, there's a huge spectrum in between, right? There's a huge spectrum between mission accomplished and failure. I want to share with you today my overview on the 45 days and my first experience with yoga. I had taken a couple, I had bought in my past lives yoga DVDs or whatever stuff. This was the first time that I ever did Bikram yoga. It's the first time I ever did hot yoga. These classes were 90 minutes so it was really my first experience with yoga and I want to share what physical benefits I noticed and what mental and emotional benefits I noticed.

Then share with you what I'm going to do moving forward, how I think this has a role in my life if at all, when, where, how much, in what ways because I learned a lot from this and I just want to share that experience with you. Primarily, the benefits I experienced were mental and emotional but that doesn't mean there weren't physical benefits, there were in fact there was significant physical benefits. I will tell you right now you guys know that I'm not much of a yogi in general. I'm much more of a weightlifter. I like lifting weights. I like lifting weights fast. I like tough intense short but hard workouts and I'm proud of being a strong girl, right? I like that. It gives me a feeling of accomplishment.

I'm not a runner but I like to feel strong so I do a lot of weight lifting. I'll tell you what, what surprised me about this yoga challenge is it made me stronger, no doubt. I think in large part because so much of these yoga postures are about really contracting your muscles and concentrating your physical energy and really being aware of are my legs tight? Is my butt tight? Is my core tight and contracted? That exercise for basically 90 minutes a day no doubt it made me physically stronger no doubt. The other thing that I did that I needed badly, it improved my balance dramatically, dramatically. I used to laugh at myself anytime I would try and do single leg lifts at the gym even without weight, right?

If I just try to do a single leg deadlift so all my weight on one leg, the other leg goes up behind me, I would be teeter-tottering all over the dang place. Even if I went down to tie my shoe and I propped one foot up on my other knee, I would feel more comfortable resting my hand on something for balance. Balance was not an area of strength for me and I have to say I'm pleasantly surprised by how quickly my balance improved and I noticed that in everything. I noticed that when I'm walking in heels, I noticed that when I'm tying my shoes. I noticed that I find myself if I'm just walking around my house or I'm waiting in line somewhere I'll stand on one foot, not like in an obvious way where everybody notices what I'm doing but just to test my balance and it has improved dramatically in less than two months which is pretty cool.

Another thing I noticed is that I have significantly better posture. Significantly better posture because so much about yoga is the way you align your body so having your hips over your knees, having your chest over your hips, keeping your core tight, keeping your shoulders drawn back but because I work in front of a computer I do tend to round my back, I do tend to round my shoulders that leads to a lot of tightness in my neck, in my back and my posture is way better. You know when your posture is better, you look leaner because you're not slumped over. I'll notice how much it makes a difference in how I look just by the way I'm standing. Another great thing that I didn't expect is I have dramatically less knee pain than I did when I started yoga.

Here's the short story of my knee pain. I have very, very, very, flat feet which means my shinbone track on the diagonal because my feet are flat so if you're feet aren't flat it changes the way your shinbones run and connect to your ankle, to your knee. I've had knee pain on and off. When I was at my heaviest, not quite my heaviest but almost, within 50 pounds of my heaviest I started working out with a trainer who had me doing a lot of lunges and a lot of jumping and carrying well over 300 pounds. That was really tough on my knees and so what I had noticed over the past couple years is some days when I lift, my knee hurts badly like sharp pain in my knee but then other days it's totally fine.

I hadn't really noticed any rhyme or reason to it. What's been fascinating to me since I started yoga probably after just about a week or two I noticed when lifting that the knee pain basically never showed up. It was one of those things that some days when I would squat or deadlift I would notice pain usually in my right knee but sometimes in my left and that's basically gone. I still have it every once in a while but after just 45 days, not even, of yoga, it made a huge difference and I think a lot of it has to do with my alignment. A lot of it has to do with my posture, with the way that I'm holding my weight because if you don't have good alignment, if you are shifting to one side or the other or your back is rounded it just changes where the pressure falls on your body, on your knees, on your feet, on your hips.

Improving my alignment I really believe has a lot to do with that knee pain in fact one thing I noticed when I'm driving, in the past I used to sit on my left side so my weight on my left butt cheek primarily and not much weight at all on my right side and so when you do that, you strengthen some areas more than others. You don't carry your weight as evenly so when you're lifting or when you're running, you don't have an even distribution of weight. Improving my alignment I catch myself now, thanks to yoga, when I'm sitting in my car I'll square my hips and I'll pull my chest back so that I am aligned so that I'm not leaning forward or backward, not leaning to the left or to the right and that has had a huge improvement on my knee pain which is fascinating to me. I'm really, really grateful for that. Obviously and I did expect this, I'm more flexible.

I didn't expect the improvements in flexibility to come as fast as they did and I think a lot of that has to do with the fact that I was basically practicing everyday for 90 minutes. If I had been going once a week I don't think I would have seen the improvements as quickly in fact I'm pretty sure of that pretty obvious. I've noticed this in the way I carry myself. I've noticed improvements in my strength in the gym. I've noticed improvements in my knee pain. All in all, the physical benefits have been pretty substantial. Like I said a few minutes ago, more notable than that are the mental and emotional changes, improvements and lessons that are direct results of this yoga challenge.

One of the ones that I'm excited about especially I would say I needed it but also because of what it helps me to realize and the people I work with who need this as well and that is this yoga challenge made me more confident and more brave. Primarily because this is something I was afraid to do, I was afraid to go to yoga because I wasn't flexible, because I wasn't sure how I would compare physically to the other people in the room, how my capabilities like hey, we can go into a gym and I know I can hold my own when it comes to lifting, when it comes to pushing myself, when it comes to high intensity things but balance and flexibility? Yeah, not so much so there was an insecurity and nervousness and a fear factor there. I want to be more confident.

I shared at Ascend last weekend a lot of what I want for myself and the choices I make to create more of what I want. One of those things I shared that I want that's very, very real for me is I want to be more confident. I am vastly more confident than I was a few years ago but I know I have room for improvement there. Here's what yoga helped me to see in a real concrete way because sometimes we understand things in the abstract but not really living it out. While I want to be more confident, that confidence does not come from making a decision to be more confident. Confidence doesn't come from wanting to be more confident. It comes from doing things that scare me a little.

Doing things I'm afraid to do. It comes from proving to myself that I can do hard things and that doesn't mean talking myself into it, "Yeah, Elizabeth, you're capable." It means doing it. Right? Doing the hard things. I want to be more brave. I want to live a larger life. I want to have fewer walls around myself, fewer limitations perceived of your capabilities. These walls I built by fear or the things I tell myself I can't do, I don't want those there but I don't tear down those walls by thinking they shouldn't be there. I don't tear down those walls by talking myself up, those walls don't come down just because I don't want them there, because I tell myself I'm capable.

They come down when I tear them down and that is not a mental exercise. It comes from identifying the things that make me uncomfortable and then going and doing them. Proving to myself that when I do them, though they aren't comfortable, nothing bad happens, nothing scary happens, nothing bad happens when I do these hard or uncomfortable things. In fact, when I do these hard and uncomfortable things that I don't want to do that I could waste a lot of time talking myself out of when I do them, I create that confidence I seek. Too often, we think that confidence comes from a decision and that if we don't feel confident, that's why we aren't doing things or that's why we can't move forward and we've got it twisted.

Action first. Confidence stems from the actions you take from your determination to do the things that scare you, to do the things that make you uncomfortable. We can't wait and think that it will come. We can't talk ourselves into belief or confidence. It's a result of the actions we take, the actions we take that make us uncomfortable. It doesn't come from doing the easy things, taking the easy wins, the easy steps, right? When you do that, yeah you know you can do the easy things but you still have doubts about what's hard, what's challenging, what's uncomfortable and that confidence, that belief it comes from seeing those hard things and doing them, taking the risk, being okay, being on the comfortable because that's what tears down the walls you've built by fear. That's what instills confidence, the action you take when you're scared or uncomfortable.

Another powerful thing and I touched on this at the start related to why I'm okay with the fact that I was actually fewer than 45 classes in 45 days and that is what this lesson, this challenge taught me about, redefining all or nothing thinking because all or nothing thinking would tell me and you that I failed because I did not in fact complete 45 classes in 45 days. All or nothing is a liar. All or nothing suggest that if it's not exactly what you intended to be then it's not enough. Real life tells us that, "Hey, it's never going to be exactly what you intend it to be and that's beautiful. Right? Just like I shared in one of the previous lessons how some days I didn't want to go.

I didn't want to go to yoga at all, at all, I didn't want to get sweaty, I didn't want to move. I didn't want to stop working. I didn't want to change my clothes. What? I didn't want to give up the time. Even with that all or nothing would suggest that the only options are go to class or don't go to class but that is not true. That is not true in everything, whether it's yoga, whether it's food choices, whether it's finances. There is an option to say what is the spectrum? What are all of the choices between I'm not doing it and I am doing it? What are all of the options? One of the things I did because after this 45 days expired I left for Nashville and I was there for eight days I think, eight day, nine days for Ascend because I went out there early.

I stayed a little bit afterwards and so I went from having this discipline of taking a hot yoga class every single day to being away from the studio, right? Away from the studio out of my normal environment in a different city and the options are not just I either don't go or I go. What can I do here? How can I practice yoga outside of class? How can I break this narrow definition that yoga happens in yoga class? Right? That good choices happen on a good day, that workouts happen in a gym, that self-discipline only happens in the face of temptation. No, no, no. That all or nothing thinking does not move us forward and it limits us. We rob ourselves of so much progress when we see it as, "For yoga to happen I have to be in a yoga class. For self-discipline to happen I have to face temptation.

For good choices to happen it has to be a good day." No, where else can I practice this? How can I take my yoga with me no matter where I am? How can I take my good choices with me no matter where I am? How can I take my fitness with me no matter where I am? How can I take my self-discipline with me no matter where I am? Right? My yoga can go with me no matter where I am. I don't have to be in a 90 minute yoga class, it's not a failure if I don't make it to the class. Every single day that I was in Nashville I took a few minutes to either do a couple of postures or go through all 26 or do some of the breathing exercises. How and where can I practice this?

Whatever it is, whether it's an attitude thing you're trying to practice, whether it's a fitness thing you're trying to practice, whether it's a dietary choice that you're

trying to practice, where and how can you practice? One of the lessons I shared in one of the earlier episodes where I talked to you about what I was learning from yoga was about the notion of not managing the room, not trying to be in control of everything and so I can ask myself where and how can I practice this? Where are the opportunities to practice this? I'll tell you right now that at Ascend there were bazillion opportunities including the video guys that I paid eating my lunch and then leaving and not telling me they were leaving and taking their equipment and deciding not to record the event. Right?

Then making excuses for it later. That's a whole another story. It's an opportunity for me to practice not managing the room, hey, they made their choices. I can't unmake them for them. I could sit here and fixate on it but it doesn't change anything, I'm not going to manage this room or any other room but what I do manage is my attitude. What I do manage are my choices, what I do manage is the smile on my face and the way I present myself in my own life. With any thing, if it's yoga, where and how can you practice? If you're standing in line you bet your butt that while you wait you can practice your posture, your alignment, or your breathing. You can shift your weight on to one leg and pick your foot up off the floor. If you're practicing self-discipline, where and how can you practice that?

It's not just in the face of temptation, maybe it's when your alarm goes off in the morning. Maybe it's in getting in that workout that you said you were going to do even though you don't have as much time as you thought you would. What can you do? That's a way you can practice self-discipline. Ask yourself, where can I practice here? If you don't get a flight you want, you have a delay, you have a cancellation, how can I practice the things I'm working on right now with my attitude, with my choices? My day didn't start out how I planned, okay, how can I practice what I'm working on right now? Whether that's good food choices, whether that's movement, whether that's attitude, whether it's discipline. Right?

I'm always in control of my choices and my outlook, where can I practice? Not every practice is a big practice. Not every minute of yoga has the formality of a class. Not every great choice is part of a great big perfect day. How and where can I practice? Another big take away for me as I reflect on the 45 day challenge and taking on yoga really for the first time in my life is about balance and hesitation. Balance and hesitation because I know for me I'm a thinker. I am a thinker and I think things through and I plan things out and I want to know how they will go and I don't like feeling not in control of myself, of my day, of my work, of the people in my life. I don't like feeling not in control.

There's a lot about yoga that really gave me a new perspective on balance, feeling in control because when we don't feel balanced we don't feel in control like physically if you lose your balance you don't feel in control of how your body is

moving, right? That doesn't feel good. One of the things that this yoga challenge taught me very powerfully is the more I hesitate the less balanced I feel. The more I hesitate, think, wait, stutter step, the harder it is both mentally and physically to do whatever it is I want to do. When you commit, when you go all in, when you bring more effort you feel more in control. Right? This is not about some big huge decision about how you'll live your life forever.

I'm not talking about commit to eating clean, commit to eating no processed foods, commit to whatever it is. I'm not talking about this big life commitment. Just go all in and bring your best effort. I'm talking about a moment. A moment. We tend to hesitate because we think we have to have this plan, this strategy, this overall motivation to make this big change and I don't think that's the way it is. I think it's literally like the moment of yoga posture in this moment how can I commit? How can I engage? How can I try more? How can I bring more effort? That makes it easier versus thinking about how to do it. Thinking about what you might miss or what you might fail or how you might stumble. Just going for it. Just doing it.

Just bringing your attention and your best effort makes it easier. When you're tentative you're not engaged. If you're doing a yoga posture and you're like, "Oh, I don't know, I don't know. Should I? Shouldn't I? Can I go like this? Can I do this? Is it going to hurt? Am I going to get a cramp?" You're not engaged. You have less balance. You're not in the posture so you're not getting out of it what you could. When you're tentative you're not engaged. When you aren't engaged you are not stable. You don't feel strong. You don't feel in control. We can all relate to thinking, wondering if, what's going to happen, when we are tentative we're not engaged and when we're not engaged we don't feel stable, we're not making any progress and that's true in yoga but it's true in how we go through life it's true in the way we struggle with temptations or commitments, should I?

Shouldn't I? Maybe today maybe just one bite? When you're tentative you're not engaged, when you're not engaged you don't feel stable or in control, you're not making progress. One of the things that comes up a lot in my fat loss fast tracks and even in my inbox, even in responding to people who email and say, "I'm at this place where I really want to change but I don't know if I can or if I will. I don't trust myself. I fear trying something new when nothing has worked or I haven't worked up until this point." This underlying question of how do I trust myself? I'll be honest, when I started yoga I didn't trust my body, that's a lot of what made me nervous about going.

I didn't trust that I wouldn't fall. I didn't trust that I wouldn't look stupid. Right? I didn't trust that I wouldn't fail or get hurt. Reached back to grab my ankle and missed and fall over. Right? Lose my balance. Trusting my body did not come from a decision to trust my body. I didn't just decide, "It's time to trust." Then

boom, I miraculously trust myself. No. I couldn't expect to trust first and then act, I had to act first and then trust. I had to try and be okay failing and then keep trying and then the more I try the better I would get, the more I would improve and with that improvement came trust. With repeated practice came confidence and trust but it doesn't come from a decision.

Walking into the yoga studio didn't give me trust that I could do the work or nail a posture. Deciding to change doesn't give you the trust in that decision. Trying and trying again, falling down and getting back up to try again, slow progress, consistent progress, small improvements, those generate trust. That builds confidence through practice. Trust and confidence come from action not from a decision. If you want more trust, if you want more confidence, take more action. Get out of your head and start doing. That's one of the things that yoga taught me. The last thing I want to share with you about yoga in this 45 days is taught me that there is no wagon. No on the wagon, off the wagon. There is no wagon. Right? I went from basically going to yoga every single day to being off for nine days in Nashville.

Now I'm back, am I off the wagon? No. I was away for eight days with other priorities doing it in a different way. When we say we're off the wagon, we're just loading in dramatics and emotions to an objective reality of I was making different choices and now I can make different choices again. What matters for me in coming back after being away breaking a routine that I worked hard to establish, what matters is what I do next. If you take anything from this podcast, what matters is what you do next. What matters is what you do now, what will you do now? What will you do next today? The next time you're feeling down, what can I do now? What can I do next? You don't need some huge master plan. You don't need a perfect solution or detailed blueprint for the next 30 days.

You don't have to figure it all out. What matters is what can I do now and what will I do next? Yoga helped me be more present because in a moment of practice if I started thinking about some work that was waiting for me at home or what I was going to do about some future problem or something I hadn't figured out yet then I would miss something. I either missed giving my best effort, I'd miss a queue, I'd miss a transition, I'd miss an opportunity but I always missed my best effort. Yoga helped me stay in the moment, where am I now? What am I doing now? What's happening here? After that, what comes next? What is happening now? How can I bring more attention here? What is my best in this moment right here right now and then what? If I just fell over, what now? If I got distracted, what now?

If I make a choice I don't feel good about, what now? No drama, no negativity, no I blew it, no I'm off the wagon, no dramatics, no hysteria. Just what now and what next? Which is a great transition into what now and what next for me with yoga

now that this 45 days are over. I will absolutely keep going. I bought an unlimited class package for the studio and I think I'll go from going pretty much everyday to probably four, five times a week and I'll keep lifting as well. Even on the days I don't take a class, I will incorporate the breathing, the flexibility, the balance, some of the postures to just help me slow down.

Whether I'm standing in line, sitting on the couch, driving in my car, I will incorporate this to help me slow down, feel my body and remember these lessons of yoga doesn't have to happen in a class just like great choices don't have to be surrounded by other great choices. You can have a series of choices you feel bad about and then make a great choice. There's always a way to practice whatever it is that you're trying to make easier in your life. Thanks so much, guys, for letting me share this yoga experience with you. It's been a lot of fun for me and I look forward to telling you how it evolves as we move forward. I hope you guys have a great day and I will talk to you soon.