

## **Interview With Lisa Etwell**

**John Barban:** Welcome to the Venus Index podcast. I'm John Barban and with me today is my sister, Lisa Etwell, and we are going to just be interviewing her about her weight loss journey and what she has gone through and some of the ups and downs and what you might expect if you're going through something the same as her. So let's just start right at the beginning of your weight loss journey. Well, how much have you lost so far?

**Lisa Etwell:** I'm coming on to 50 pounds.

**John Barban:** Okay, so that's awesome, and there are going to be a lot of people who are going to get some inspiration from this story, and how long did that take and when did you start?

**Lisa Etwell:** Well, I started very passively, I guess, you could say, in December 2009 by just reading your website, your blog, because I was just curious about what you were writing about and that kind of thing and given that our lives have lead to very different paths, I found this way interesting just to kind of keep tabs into what you were doing and what you were writing about. So when I started reading what you were doing and in what you were talking about in December, I didn't really have any active intention to aggressively lose weight. It has been something that has plagued me in my entire life. I've maxed out at 5'2 and went into Grade 9 wearing a size 12 or 14, so this is something that has always been in my mind. So I don't have an actual conscious memory of ever being small other than short.

So when I was starting to read the blog, I was just more curious and interested in hearing what was being said. And then, I guess, actively like really pursuing change on a daily meal by meal basis was about March 2010. When I started putting pen to paper making notes on how much I weighed on a daily and weekly basis, and I believe from December to March, those four months or three months of basically just committing to learning and reading about what you were talking about. You can't hear the message that many times and not have it sink in, so that's kind of what got me going. I wouldn't say I happened to do it "accidentally," because it's something that has plagued my thoughts for many, many years. But let say, all my excuses had run out. I'm not having any more children and my family is complete that way.

So all my excuses personally had run out, and there just really wasn't any other reason to not attempt to do this, and I guess the biggest thing that stuck in my head was you can't wish this stuff away. The definition of insanity as you once stated was doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results, and that pretty much just resonated to my core going, "Well, I can't just keep doing the same thing I'm doing everyday and not expecting something to change." So I started changing things. I started changing what I ate and then stuff started falling off of me.

**John Barban:** Okay, so that's perfect. So what did you change?

**Lisa Etwell:** What did I change? Straight volume of food, like literally volume of food, I have not grocery shopped differently per se, like I don't only shop the whole food section or only shop organic or only shop this or whatever. In our home, I have four people that live here, two young children, and my kids are 4 and 5 years old now and my husband and I and

so the four of us living here, I mean, I don't just flip our diet upside or anything like that. We shop the same general food products. I just consumed less of them. I dialed into my food needs and I started with some fasting. But to me fasting, it was just carving out large volumes of calories during my day that I didn't want and it was a test to see if I could do it. I was afraid of both the feeling. I was afraid of being hungry per se or whatever, and I kind of had to snap out of my food addiction, my food coma, that I was living in for the last 30 years.

It felt uncomfortable only because for me it was not a place that I was used to being, which is in a calorie-deficit mode. But once I got through that kind of change and experiencing feelings that I hadn't felt before, I was like actually burning true fat and needing food for the proper purposes, and because I'm hungry enough, because I needed my next fix, and readjusting my body and dialing into my body's needs, I guess like true needs, not what I think I need kind of thing. So I didn't buy any different food, I just ate less of the food that I was already consuming and started to identify and dial into the foods that I have a little bit of a feeding frenzy around or I guess I don't think you could call them hot button foods, those foods I personally need to stay away from until I reach those goals that I've set for myself and then call it what it is.

When I have my pasta, it's one of my trigger foods, and so knowing and going into it, not that I'm expecting to consume the entire bowl from beginning to end, but knowing what it does for me, how I feel when I eat it and accepting it, loving it, appreciating it for what it is, and then moving on from it and then maybe having it again in a month or so.

**John Barban:** Yes, it's a general awareness that, "Okay, if I'm going to have that..."

**Lisa Etwell:** It's just being consciously food aware for the first time.

**John Barban:** Okay, so speak about that, over the past seven to eight months have been a new experience with yourself and food.

**Lisa Etwell:** Yeah, absolutely. It's a new relationship between me and food. It's being aware, accountable, and I guess aware or conscious, awake and being on the same side of food and not always seeing food being on the other side of the fence as a taboo less of a thing that plagues me as my nemesis, my enemy, my whatever, like it's neither. It can't be those things because it's just food. It's just a bowl of pasta. It's not got eyes coming at me. It's not a negative thing. It's not a positive thing. It's just food, whereas before it used to be many different things that it shouldn't have been, whether as friend or a lover or it was my enemy. It had traits that it shouldn't have.

**John Barban:** Yeah.

**Lisa Etwell:** So now it is what it is. It is enjoyable. It is social, but it is calories and I'm such an amazing budgeter for the rest of my life when I just had to wrap around my head that I hadn't accounted for the responsibility of food and how it played its role in my life, and I hadn't accounted for what its purposes were, what it does to my body, what it supposed to be doing in my body, and not taking away what it can be, which is enjoyable and all that kind of stuff, but not letting it only be that, like it

has to be those other things too, which is calories and sustenance and energy and all that kind of thing. So making it what it actually is, and not turning into something that it is not.

**John Barban:** You touched on a couple of good things there. So I like that point. You kind of put it into perspective and not let it be so powerful and not let it be so many other things. And again, it's not like the food changed. That's still the same food.

**Lisa Etwell:** No, not at all.

**John Barban:** It's what you project and kind of how you feel about it and kind of how you allow it to get away from yourself, and we all do that...

**Lisa Etwell:** What role it plays in my life?

**John Barban:** Sure. Well, I think people who struggle with food tend to give food more importance than it deserves, and we have to kind of pull it back and place it where it belongs.

**Lisa Etwell:** Sure.

**John Barban:** And like you said, it doesn't mean you don't enjoy it, and actually, it's seems like it's almost a power struggle and you got to get it back in on your side.

**Lisa Etwell:** You need to drop the rope, You can only be in a power struggle if you are pulling, and if you drop the rope you no longer are playing a tug of war game here because if you're in a tug of war, something is negative and something is positive and you're on these opposite sides. Like I said food is on the other side of the fence, and I would then be thinking it was my enemy, and I was over here and how come you're attacking me etc.

So for me, clearly it plays a very big role in our lives. It's what keeps us going and that kind of thing, and I have two small children that I feed. I'm the main and only food preparer in our home and grocery shopper in our home, so I have all of the power and I felt until recently that I had none of the power. I have not really given myself credit where credit was due where I can do this. This is something that's well within my means and I can still enjoy it, and to not treat it as an enemy. I mean, not to treat it as a friend either, but treat it like what it is. Give it its absolute proper place in the world.

**John Barban:** Sure. And then you spoke earlier, you just said something about feeling what a deficit was like and actually feeling that that's a new feeling. Can you speak about that because a few people that have gone through our contest have actually mentioned getting used to the feeling of burning fat, and they start labeling it, and they are like, "Oh, now I know. I know that feeling. I recognize it. I'm in a deficit today, and I'm burning."

**Lisa Etwell:** Yeah, for me it was something that I was afraid of. It's something that I was scared of and I thought it would be uncomfortable and painful. I'll get the shakes. I'd be miserable, angry and I just couldn't endure it like that. It was impossible. It was a Mount Everest for me and

once I started doing it and realizing that I'm not so special that I can't do this. I can absolutely do this if I gave a good effort that it requires. When I got to that feeling, I guess it was just being a little less intimidated by feeling hungry, and because it really wasn't hungry that I was feeling for me. I was just feeling not full, and I guess I never really equated the two as being different, like there's full busting to the seams food coma kind of thing and then there's just not feeling hungry all the time, and feeling not hungry which is to me that feeling of burning through fat and calories where I'm okay to not feel full, and now I prefer the feeling of not feeling full.

Not that I prefer to live my life in a food deficit forever because that's unrealistic, unsustainable and unnecessary, but I do prefer to not feel full to not feel like I'm busting at the seams and to appreciate that when I spend more than my budget allow for on one day and that the next day is going to be an under day, and that feeling of not being full or being hungry or being going through the fat burning process or the calorie burning process is a comfortable feeling. I know that my body is doing what it's supposed to be doing, and that's because I overfed yesterday, so under feeding today is exactly where I need to be to feel right again for me.

**John Barban:** And it's almost a feeling you can relate to and seek out at some point.

**Lisa Etwell:** It's comfortable, and I know that my body needs it because back to my point a few minutes ago of budgeting. I budget our family's social time and I budget our family's weekly activities and that kind of thing, and my husband and I together do our financial budget. And it was the one budget that I was ignoring, which is the calories that I was

consuming and I was just kind of like drawing down, drawing down, drawing down on this huge calorie line of credit, I would say, and I was spending way more than I needed and not appreciating the debt that I was incurring which goes along with some of the other things that you guys have said before.

**John Barban:** That's a great way of looking at it. If you eat too much now and then just tell yourself, "Oh, I'll work it off later." That's like running up a huge credit card bill that you can only just barely make the interest payments on, and then you never get rid of the principal.

**Lisa Etwell:** Sure, my spare tire all around my tummy was my debt, my debt that I needed to pay back and then my spare tire had turned into two tree trunk legs or whatever with all these parts of me that we're just expanding and this is literally a physical manifestation of a debt that needed to be paid. That could be measured and seen and felt and that it was like equal to the weight of a huge financial debt, instead it was a huge weight debt that needed to be paid, and I never appreciated that. I'm so accountable and responsible in other parts of my life, yet I chose to not be accountable and responsible in this particular part of my life, and that if I walk the talk, if I speak it in others ways, and I'm trying to teach my children to be responsible for their actions and that kind of thing, this was one major action that I was doing on a daily basis that I was not taking responsibility for or accounting for.

**John Barban:** So it's almost a bit of contradiction that didn't fit into how you are elsewhere.



**Lisa Etwell:** Absolutely. Like I said how I got started was reading your blog and reading what you were doing and the stuff that you guys are doing together as your team, but on top of that, what drove me to start reading was when my children come up to me and say you look like that and I look like this. And at the age that they are now, they aspire to be like their parents because we are the main role model, and if my children are going to aspire to be like myself who is somebody who is not being accountable for their actions and not responsible for their body shape or whatever like how I'm treating it, if I'm treating it well or not well, and yet I'm talking to them consistently, "Eat your growing food. When you're hungry finish it, like you can stop eating when you're not hungry anymore."

We try to change the language in our home so we're not saying stop when you're full. We say stop when you're not hungry anymore. I know you don't need to eat everything on your plate. You know your body best, so you decide when you are finished eating. My responsibility as their parent is to provide the choices they're responsible for putting as much as they need in their bodies. And far be it for me to decide how much they need because I have no idea what today is like for them, if it's a growing day or not. So we we're saying these things and yet they we're looking at our plates and seeing the piles and looking at our bodies and seeing different things that were not on their bodies, i.e., the fat around our tummies and that kind of stuff. It was hard to explain to our child that how come you have that and I have this and the answer is because I eat too much. I mean it's not simpler than that. And then they're not trying to point it out for maliciousness so much that they are pointing it out of just sheer curiosity.

**John Barban:** And then they have just pure linear reasoning. They just look and then they say, why?

**Lisa Etwell:** Yeah. They're just curious, straight out curious.

**John Barban:** And earlier you said something. It's sounded like it was the fear of the unknown, but when you started and you got into it, was it just being out of your comfort zone? Did you know how to place it here?

**Lisa Etwell:** Oh no. It's the fear that I was going to be the only person on the planet who couldn't lose weight.

**John Barban:** Interesting.

**Lisa Etwell:** So like if I tried to lose weight and it didn't work for me, I was committed to this body forever. So if it's too hard, I'm going to fail. It's something I've never been good at in the past or I've never succeeded at in the past or I've been this way my whole life, how it is possible at 38 years old that I'm going to be able to change now. It's like I've never been able to change before. It's not like I'm trying to get back to my "pre-kids" weight because my pre-kids weight was never pretty in the first place. And it's not like I'm trying to get my high school weight, and again, I was never the skinny girl. I wasn't enormous but I was never thin. I was never normal in my head. So I was afraid that trying and failing would mean that this would be it, and at least if you never tried, you can't fail.

**John Barban:** You can't fail. So the attempting, and attempting not only do you get, like you said not even back to a weight you've been before but even lighter. And if it doesn't work, you were afraid that was proof that you

couldn't do it. So going years and years without even trying, as odd as that sounds, leaves the window in your mind open that it's still possible because you haven't tried and failed yet.

**Lisa Etwell:** Correct, it sounds completely and utterly ridiculous. I get that.

**John Barban:** But it makes sense though.

**Lisa Etwell:** But it's just a huge fear.

**John Barban:** Like you can't miss the shot that you don't take so you can't say I've missed it.

**Lisa Etwell:** That's right. It's unrealistic for me to want to be 5'5, or 5'7 or 5'9 or, any of these in my head, higher or whatever with better heights for me one day.

**John Barban:** And all the way up to 5'5.

**Lisa Etwell:** All the way up to the 5'5, yes. But I am 5'2 or 5'1-1/2, I don't know if I'm shrinking or whatever, but anyway somewhere in there and it's not a goal that I aspire to be but to be lighter. It almost feels like it's getting that difficult, well, not anymore, but at the time or over the course of my entire life pretty much, the goal to want to be lighter felt as unattainable as a goal to want to be taller.

**John Barban:** Right.

**Lisa Etwell:** This is how I was made. I got this lot in life, you got yours with how you got the gene to be six feet tall and I got the gene to be 5'1, I don't know, but that was just who you became and who I became and that was the end of that.

**John Barban:** All right, and so that leads me into the next question, and the girls have talked about the sabotage point, and you weren't even trying, so you may have even...

**Lisa Etwell:** I pre-sabotaged myself. It didn't even get to a sabotage point.

**John Barban:** Sure, but even a more lofty goal. You were trying to get to a point that you don't have a recollection of, whereas some people are like, "Oh, I just want to get where I was when I was 22." You're shooting for something you haven't necessarily ever seen, which must seem even bigger, and I know you went on and talked about a relative sabotage point, and I don't know if that was the word, but I know that it's in the vernacular with the people listening so we can use that. I call it the 'just good enough point' and I have even hit it and other people I've worked with where the changes happened significantly, and all of the sudden, there's a point where the next round of changes aren't even visible through clothes anymore. They are kind of more under your clothes, and that's at least the one that happened to me. And then I think you and I have already talked a little about getting to a point where it's a social thing where you've gone socially from maybe being visibly bigger to being visibly 'normal', and that's a very comfortable place to be because the spotlight isn't on you anymore, at least in your head

no one's looking at you and thinking; "Oh, you are the big one around the table." Now, you just blend right in with the crowd. And then the question becomes; do you want to go pass that and become someone who sticks out again but for being the visibly best in shape around the table. So can you talk about that?

**Lisa Etwell:** Okay, so the weight loss for me I guess started like February or March 2010, and it was an incredible experience because it was coming off fairly quickly like I was shocked at the momentum that it picked up at the front end. It was like two, three and up to four pounds a week coming off. Now, granted or whatever that was made up of water, inflammation, fat and that kind of thing, but it was nice. And then with all of this being said, I wasn't really opting out of any family events or camping events and that kind of stuff like social events. So it was happening, life was living and going on and taking the food and everything was great.

And then this summer came, there was far more social events. I mean, now, I kind of have a bigger and clearer picture when there is like high eating seasons in my life and low eating season and summer times to be one of those high eating times because of how many back to back events we have, and yet the numbers were still coming down and like when I started this process at around 178 or 180lbs or around there and when I hit around 140, between 139 and 140, that was like by August, and so those were some serious numbers coming down in a fairly short period of time. And here I am today in February and I'm at 130.5lbs, I think, so as I say I'm not quite at 50 pounds but I'm getting close. And that last 10 pounds was over like five months, which is almost equal the amount of time that it took me to get off the first 40. And that sabotage point kind of happened when I could see that very little effort was required on my part because I had gotten used to

the feeling of being in a deficit. I appreciated light eating day versus heavier eating days or days that I would eat at maintenance or when above because of whatever event was going or whatever within in my life at that time.

Those last ten pounds are kind of like I could pretty much enjoy everything around me and not gain weight because I was balancing it appropriately and accounting for the calories appropriately. But I was not trying that much harder to go into a deficit for more days that I wasn't in a deficit because I would add a very comfortable pant weight or pant look or clothes look. I felt clothes happy. I don't feel bikini happy per se, but I definitely felt clothes happy and I had made peace with myself in that, "Hey, like I've hit those main target where I'm within my BMI, healthy range, or I was coming and approaching it pretty close. I think I had to be at 136 in order to be in my healthy BMI range.

So once I hit that, I was like, "Well, I'm there. I'm at the places where I know that I make good examples to my children. I'm eating those things that I want to be eating and keep me within a healthy body weight based on those parameters out there that say if you keep within these ranges you have less risk for future diseases and that kind of thing. And to me going any lighter was a point of like, "I'm pretty cool with this. If I never lose another pound, I would be happy, and I am. For now, it's whether I want to go further.

**John Barban:** Right and you've since gone further?

**Lisa Etwell:** I have since gone further and I've noticed a shift in the balance of effort required for results. Before, it felt like to me that the amount and

effort required to get the results was, the balance was not as much effort required for the impact or the results. Now, it feels like there is far greater effort required for far smaller impact of result and like there's been a shift in the balance.

**John Barban:** Right and that's a really consistent thing we've been noticing; there is that break point and that last little bit, same thing happened to me with that last little bit, if the pattern that you're following is more or less the same, the ability to take fat out should be relatively similar. There's a lot less water. There's a lot less inflammation. It's because fat cells themselves secrete inflammatory factors, so at the beginning we do have these massive change like we feel different, water starting to go, inflammation itself is coming down. There are all of these things, and we see it happening quickly, clothes start fitting different fast. There is so much feedback. You can almost see it day by day like it's happening so fast...

**Lisa Etwell:** I felt like I can ride the high. That was such an amazing motivator. I got to live in deficit far more days in a row than I was not living in a deficit or I was living at like a net zero, let say, like just living at maintenance or whatever, it was just easy to ride off of that feedback, that wave of momentum. And that's what's happening to me because I was getting it all and the scale was talking to me every single morning, "Great job. Good for you."

**John Barban:** Yeah, you have a direct cause and effect. You're like, "Oh, yesterday's work produced this result today." And now, towards the end, it becomes, "Oh well." With the last five day's results, you have to wait to actually really see it because it's coming slower now because now that

you're in the normal body fat range, all those inflammation markers are down, everything is down, there is none of that excess water and any of that to get rid of. But really there is just a few pounds of fat that burns slow, and the thing is people don't realize that has always been burning slow. It's all of the extra water and inflammation that was being gotten rid of at the beginning, and that's where all that extra sort of momentum was and I think that's why everyone struggles at the very end because the social psychological feedback, a lot of it drops away because now you look good in clothes.

**Lisa Etwell:** It was the added level of social feedback that's telling you don't go any further. You've done so much. Stop. If you go further you're going waste away. If you go further, you're at risk of turning into an eating disorder kid. You're going too far, "oh, don't you think that's enough?" And then like, "Wait a minute. Half of you were great supporters before, and now all a sudden, you're saying to stop?" Like literally verbal feedback saying "don't do anymore. You're fine the way you are".

**John Barban:** Oh yeah.

**Lisa Etwell:** I know I'm fine the way I am. I was fine 50 pounds heavier. Not medically, let say, like I probably had far greater risks in front of me, but I was still a great person and I am still who I am 50 pounds heavier, 40 pounds lighter or whatever, but all of these are on social feedback with some peers and family and whatever saying, "Really? Don't you think you're taking it too far, or don't you, whatever." And honestly now, there are conflicting messages coming from everywhere.



**John Barban:** And how recently has that happened that people who were like, “Oh, that’s enough,” because obviously they’re assessing you fully clothed thinking, “Well, where else are you going with this?”

**Lisa Etwell:** Exactly, you’ve already wasted away to nothing. Really, do you think that I have wasted away to nothing? I’m 130lbs, I don’t think that is ‘nothing’.

**John Barban:** Right, exactly...

**Lisa Etwell:** Inside, it’s an inappropriate kind of assessment of what I’ve got here. I don’t want to have to lift my shirt off and pinch some fats to show them that there’s still stuff here, but...

**John Barban:** Right, isn’t it interesting that everyone else has got an opinion and they will voice it too. I’m shocked that people will do this. It’s not like when you were 180 pounds, anyone would walk up and say, “Well, I think you’ve got 40 or 50 to get rid of.” Socially, no one does that.

**Lisa Etwell:** That’s taboo.

**John Barban:** Yeah, but then you’re at 130 and based on our calculations, and whether or not you ever want to take it that far, but about ten more pounds would put you very close to your ideal VI. And even if that’s not you’re goal and then the way you and I have spoken about it, that’s more like ‘bikini ready’ versus ‘clothes ready’. And what’s wrong with that as a goal, but socially, people feel completely justified in telling you that’s an

unrealistic goal and it's weird cuz you'll never know who the people are who are going to give you the pushback and I've said to everybody and I'm sure I said to you, it's not about you, but it's about them. They're becoming self-conscious with their own body watching you continually change and they can't place it. They don't really know what to do with it. So to make it easy for them to interact with you, their default assumption is just to tell you to stop.

**Lisa Etwell:** Sure, and I believe that honestly, if anybody truly thought that somebody was in danger of going down the slippery slope on the path of inappropriate behavior of not respecting food and not wanting to eat food and all that kind of stuff and eating disorder or whatever, then okay, fine. But there's zero evidence that I'm taking it that far, and there is only really one person who has known me my entire life outside of yourself who would see that and say something and be justified in saying that, and that's our mother. To say, "Do you know what? This is really out of your normal habit and that kind of stuff." And that's out of a genuine place of caring and seeing something that has emotionally gone wrong here and that you're taking this down entirely this other path. But outside of that and somebody who have your core best interest at heart and not comparing your success or their failures or anything like that, I really just don't see how it's appropriate to turn around and tell somebody to stop.

**John Barban:** It isn't, but I know where it's rooted. No one loses weight unless they're actively trying to. The only other times you ever see a human lose weight like visibly see it happen is when they're sick or when they're dying or when they're starving to death. So I think...

**Lisa Etwell:** Because these are all negative things?

**John Barban:** They are all negative things and I think it's a very simple evolutionary explanation that we've got it hard wired into us to recognize rapid weight loss as disease and death. And not that anyone thinks you are dying. It's just in general, they don't recognize why it's happening. They aren't thinking, "Oh okay, you are consciously trying to lose weight." And people can be on board when they see you go from what's seems to be visibly overweight to visibly normal. But when you're normal and you continue going, that's when people start to be like, "Okay, so maybe there's something wrong."

Again, it's not like we're walking around in bathing suits because if every girl is in a bikini and every guy is just in his shorts, people would be like, "Oh, I can see how you want to tighten up your midsection. I can see how you want to tighten up your legs a bit." That way, people would be like, "Oh, I get it. You've got a couple of pounds that you'd like to get rid of and that's fine." But since we are in clothes, you can't see that.

**Lisa Etwell:** It was a humbling experience because after having heard as much feedback as I did hear about, "Really, you want to go further and "blah, blah, blah," I did exactly what you said, funny enough, and I was standing there in a bathing suit and we were getting the kids ready to go to a swimming pool thing. I was with my husband and like okay, so I've heard a lot of people say that there's nowhere else for me to go with this, and that I personally think I could go another ten, fifteen pounds, and John and I talked about it and we both agree that, "Yeah sure, that's realistic and it's not something that's unhealthy or out of your range or whatever."

So I stood there and I said, “So what do you think? Where do you think the next 15 pounds could come off of?” And he was very honest and brutal with his assessment, not in a negative way. He was my husband and he loves me very much. And he said, “Yeah, I could see those could come off.” He was pointing to different parts of my body and I’m like, “Exactly that’s what I see too”. So I’m not the only person who sees this. It’s not like I’ve got a distorted sense of how my body has turned out.

I also see this is substantially different than it’s used to be, which is in my bottom and my upper body has changed significantly. My arms have changed, like everywhere has changed. My face has changed. Everything has changed, but it doesn’t take a rocket scientist or doctor or whatever, a plastic surgeon to go and find the little bits and pieces that, “Yeah, I could see where ten pounds more could come off is.”

**John Barban:** So you have that little...

**Lisa Etwell:** Reality check, like okay.

**John Barban:** Yeah, you’re like I’m not...

**Lisa Etwell:** Give me your honest feedback and tell me how I look?

**John Barban:** Sure, yeah, you’re like, “I’m not crazy. Can you be honest with me, just give me a real answer...

**Lisa Etwell:** Tell me what you see.

**John Barban:** Yeah.

**Lisa Etwell:** And he did and he was like, "Yeah, sure".

**John Barban:** I mean again that's tough for guys. That's putting a guy on the spot...

**Lisa Etwell:** Yeah, sure, especially your husband.

**John Barban:** Yeah, exactly.

**Lisa Etwell:** There's a lot of incentive for wanting him to do that.

**John Barban:** I have had a couple of people I work with do the same thing and I've actually judged a fitness competition, and it's weird, because it's basically the same thing, you've got a group of girls on stage and they're all in a bikini and we're all assessing them and afterwards all the girls, it doesn't matter where they place, I mean, besides the winner, but even she came down. They all came down and asked for tips on what to improve. It's weird because I'd be saying things like, "Okay, so you are a figure model. Obviously, you are in a good enough shape to be on this stage, but we're still assessing where you could make an improvement here and make an improvement there." And I'm like, "All right." And they asked for brutal honesty, so we are like, "Well, the only reason she beat you is because of

this and that.” And she’s like, “Yeah, I knew that. I knew I was maybe another four weeks away from that.” And it’s weird because I’ve heard girls mention that, “Oh my gosh, that’s terrible.” And it’s just being so objective and objectifying girls and being so focused on their body, but I’m like, “I don’t know man. All the girls that I ever met who were fitness competitors were very comfortable with their body and they saw it the same way as you were doing with Mark. They saw it through a very clear lens. They’re like, “Yeah, now I get it, like I know what I’m doing...”

**Lisa Etwell:** Oh no, he was pointing out exactly the stuff I saw. That’s totally okay...

**John Barban:** That’s what I’m saying, but you almost acted, and I’m just trying to make the analogy as a judge for fitness competitors it was the exact same thing. They were like, “I’m pretty sure I needed to lose one more pound here, can you just verify that that’s how I could’ve placed higher.” And I’m like, “Yeah, that’s exactly it.”

**Lisa Etwell:** Sure.

**John Barban:** But it’s not. I don’t think it’s an unhealthy thing. It’s a complete awareness of your body, and it’s not like you are unhappy and any of them were unhappy. It’s just at this point it’s an improvement to be made. This is the only place you can do it, and that’s it. It’s just being much more objective and trying to, as much as we can, remove the emotion from the whole situation and then just be like, “Oh, that’s just the body as it looks.”

**Lisa Etwell:** And on top of all that, appreciating the body for what it is like, and this is going to sound kind of like hokey and New Age or whatever, but I'll be happy when the scales says 150. I'll be happy when the scale is 140. And screw it I'm happy now. The body is the way it is. It is a gift and it's been given to me to take care of and I'm taking back that 'when if statement' kind of thing. So I'll be happy when if these things happens and no longer does that scale say to me, "You're allowed to be happy today because you're in your 130s or 140s again. If you ever go that way, then you are destined to be miserable for the rest of your life kind of thing."

I've taken that back for me because people are like, "Aren't you happy where your body is right now?" I'm like, "Absolutely." And I was at 140 and I was happy at 150 because I was becoming aware. I'm becoming friends with my body again, friends with my food and routine or whatever, food relationship, and I was choosing for a need to be happy with me as a whole and now kind of working with my new hokey friends, my food and my body and work together to put it into a place where it will do the things that it needs to do for me which is live a nice, long, happy, healthy life to watch my children do all the wonderful things that they are going to do someday and live out a happy long life with my husband and my family.

**John Barban:** And that's interesting you say that. So it's almost sounds like a contradiction. You have to become happy with your body at almost any size before you can really have the base to be able to change it to a new size.

**Lisa Etwell:** I will say to you absolutely yes. You need it to have the emotional energy to move forward, so if you are going to be your own worst enemy and then what's the point of doing all of this.

**John Barban:** Exactly, and that's one thing, you are right. You have to accept wherever you are right now if you want to change, and that's okay and that's just where you needed to be right now and that's fine. And if you loathe that or hate that or spite that, that's not healthy. You can't start in that state. You can be motivated to want to change out of there but at the same time you can't hate yourself for being there. That's just where you needed to be at that moment.

**Lisa Etwell:** It's hard to help an enemy. You are here to help a friend.

**John Barban:** Yeah.

**Lisa Etwell:** Be friends with your body and work together.

**John Barban:** Okay. So well, we are covering a lot of stuff, so where you are at right now? Oh, you did mention something about your health measurements. Do you want to share anything about your overall health parameters right now?

**Lisa Etwell:** Well, I have a physical done in early January, and every single solitary number or measurement. I mean I had an EKG, which I haven't had the results for that yet, but he ticked off every single box on that requisition and I have follow up results this Monday this week and every single one came in normal ranges.



**John Barban:** Based on what the medical profession has at their disposal, everything is in its healthy normal range?

**Lisa Etwell:** Absolutely, every last number that they could measure, and that they did on me has come back and I solicited my doctor's feedback and said, "Is there anything I could change or anything I should do better? Even though I'm in my normal BMI range, is there anything on there that tweaks your interest?" And he's like, "No, not a single thing." He is like, "These are fantastic numbers. Whatever you're doing, keep it up." And he asked me point blank because he did a double take. He did my BMI from last year, he did my BMI from this year and last year I was considered obese for my gender, height and age, and this year my number came out as normal, and he sees me year over year and he's like, "So you've lost a lot of weight, what have you done?" And I told him pointblank, "I have eaten less." And he's like, "you have not worked out. You didn't follow a specific diet plan?" I said, "Well, if you consider anything goes diet a plan, sure, yeah, I followed a plan. I ate less food." He's like, "Did you back off any specific products and saturated fat, blah, blah, blah." I said, "No, I pretty much participated in everything that was going on in our world and that was cake and hamburgers and whatever. I just ate less and not necessarily opted in as many times as I would have had in the past or as much volume." And he's like, "Okay." And I said, "Is there any feedback for you?" He's like, "Whatever you are doing, keep it up." And that was it. That was his bottom line result, like he's a very pragmatic doctor. He's like, "If this work, do it."

**John Barban:** Well, he's got zero evidence to suggest doing anything else.

**Lisa Etwell:** Yeah.

**John Barban:** If it's not broken, don't fix it.

**Lisa Etwell:** Because you see, he has seen me go through two pregnancies, go in and out of them. I mean, I entered into both of my pregnancy at 180 pounds and then went up to 212 the day I delivered, 212 pounds at 5'1-1/2 or 5'2. And everything about my body hurt, like there wasn't a part of me that did not scream out in pain. It's funny how you can just put on the ear mask and just not listen, but yeah, and my kids were back to back, just a year apart to the day. So I did that twice, two years in a row and I went up to 212 pounds.

**John Barban:** Well, you've come a long way...

**Lisa Etwell:** And 2011 has an overall one year plan for me to get to the VI numbers just to see if I like it there, to see that I can do it because I work out regularly and I have had such great success with my efforts in 2010, but why not have another goal for 2011. But it's not to make me happier or less happier, it's not to prove a point for anybody really other than myself. And for me, it's personally to have a goal because without a goal, for my personal health and how I run my life, I'm a competitive human being. I'm very competitive and to have that carrot or whatever end goal in sight helps me stay on track because it has an end. And without it, I fear that I'm not comfortable enough to not have some sort of goal yet. I probably am and I just haven't tested the theory. I guess I have them because I have not really even been losing a whole lot since August. I lost ten pounds since August...

**John Barban:** That's a lot for saying that you don't have goal and you still lost ten more.

**Lisa Etwell:** Okay, sure. I mean I'm trying to put in perspective compared to the front end of my 2010...

**John Barban:** Oh, understood, and I like the fact that you are aware enough to recognize you're not sure if you can yet pull a goal away and just maintain because some people may not recognize that, "Oh, I still need goals and maybe in a year or two, I can actually pull the goals or make the goal, make the new goal with just maintenance."

**Lisa Etwell:** Sure, I kind of feel like I already did that subconsciously because I'm floating around the same number, but then I do see that I do want to take it further and it's for personal reasons and for personal achievements and goal setting. The next thing on my bucket list (I have created a little bucket list with things I want to get done in my life), and one of them is to run a 10K...100% of the reason to want to run the 10K, not because I like running, it's because I hate running. The one mile run I think we have to do in school...I would have rather been left at the prom standing with a Slurpee dumped on my head than be asked to run a mile in front of people because that's how big of a Mount Everest it is for me. It is unattainable. It feels like I can't do it. I'm just not a runner and never had been and it was because I was heavy all my life, and I want to not have that as the last memory of running in my head. So on my bucket list is the 10K run...

**John Barban:** Is that this year?

**Lisa Etwell:** Before I'm 40, so not this May, by next May. So I'm assuming in my head the way I'm kind of working off the math is you have trained up enough to either get it completed by the end of this running season because I won't run in the cold because I don't like.

**John Barban:** Oh, yeah, yeah.

**Lisa Etwell:** So I either get it completed by September or somehow I've got to get it done by May 5, 2012, so my list gets done...

**John Barban:** Oh I can help. You can get it done this year. I can help you put a program together to do just that.

**Lisa Etwell:** Sure, thanks. So that's one of my goals and I'm going to suspect that I will continue weight training and this running program that I'm going to throw into my face and the weight is going to be a part of it. So it's kind of like of a holistic goal. It's not just a number on a scale goal, but it's at that next level.

**John Barban:** Yes, so now you're combining a body weight, a body shape and performance goal.

**Lisa Etwell:** And a performance goal, yeah, absolutely.

**John Barban:** Yeah, now you feel capable of adding in more challenges...

**Lisa Etwell:** I would never ever in a million years have considered actually putting a due date on that run when I was 180lbs.

**John Barban:** It doesn't make sense at that point. You have different things to overcome at that point. At that point, it will actually be kind of biting off quite a bit on more than you can chew. It will be like, "Well, I want to do this and that." And actually, I tell people that. I'm like, "Try not to adopt too many things at once because it might be too difficult to try to tackle them all."

**Lisa Etwell:** And I fear that I would feel the same way I did when I was in high school which was ready to choke up and panting out of breath because I just physically was not in a place or space to do this like my body is just not a good place to do this. I'm not saying that people who are 50 pounds or 40 pounds overweight shouldn't run. Do what you like and that's fine by me. But it's not some place that made me feel comfortable wanting to run like that. Every time I took a step or a run or jump or whatever, every part of my body would come up and then all those pieces would come back down again, and I could actually physically feel things jiggling up and down. And it hurt. It's not that I just didn't like the look of it because it looks awful. It physically didn't feel good...

**John Barban:** And that's one of the reasons I tell people "It's okay to start losing weight just with diet and then at some point you could pick up exercise along the way." It doesn't mean don't do exercise, it just means if it's not comfortable, and for some people it won't be, and it's not necessary and it also that's a bit of a reality check because it removes the excuse of

well, I can't work out from the reasons why people can't lose weight. So it's kind of all wrapped into one.

**Lisa Etwell:** This is the first time in my life where I'm putting maybe a little bit of exercise and food kind of together because now that I am lighter, I am attempting the loftier goals for myself. But I mistakenly at the beginning, and like well before December 2009, I had joined the gym in our local gym here, and I was working out and I fell in love with a group exercise class where we do weights and it's just speaks to me, "It's my thing, like I hate cardio. I don't like it and never will." And I thought, "Oh well, if John can do his thing, I'm going to do mine." I'm going to work out and I had to do it all the wrong way first, and I didn't lose a pound for that year.

So now I keep food and food management and all of that stuff in one silo in my head and weight training exercise, whatever, strength management, I guess if you want to call it in a different silo in my head and when I go to the gym, I don't think about the scale. I don't think about, "I'm doing this because last night, I binged on turkey or chips or something like that." The gym is for the sheer enjoyment of being at the gym to do what I like to do at the gym which is to do my weight training and the food management is the other 23 hours of the day because the gym is only one hour...

**John Barban:** Right, so psychologically you don't let the two cross over and influence the other.

**Lisa Etwell:** Right.

**John Barban:** Right.

**Lisa Etwell:** Because one doesn't really influence the other right now.

**John Barban:** That make sense and maybe when you are training for the run, then at some point you might enter even new territory where you are like, "Oh, on my running days I feel a little different about it." But that's again, that's another stage to explore when you get there.

**Lisa Etwell:** I have to mention one thing. There was one thing that the gym did do for me personally and I didn't I expect. The two mornings that I worked out, and because of the way our family dynamic is and the way that my time management is, I am able to get to the gym two mornings a week without having kids in tow. Those two days a week, mid-week, that I was going to the gym were the easiest days for me to go into a calorie deficit because whatever it is (a high), call it whatever you like that you get off of the gym, for me personally that I was able to run off of that for pretty much the lion's share of the day and when I hit my little mini-kind of peckish hour, in the afternoon or mid-afternoon, after the lunch hour period and before the dinner time period, when the kids come home and they are sniffing around the kitchen for a snack and that kind of stuff and it is where I hit my kind of like sweet spot, like it was like, "Oh, I really could go for a snack at three o'clock in the afternoon."

As long I could get through from three until our normal dinner time and we start earlier around here, that was some really interesting pairing of how the one time where my food and my working out did cross over as one helped the other, but I wasn't using it the other way around like looking at the gym to work off more food.

**John Barban:** Yeah, it's not like your building up a debt and then paying it off at the gym.

**Lisa Etwell:** No, I was actually using the gym to help me keep the food at bay because I felt so good and so energized coming out of the gym. The music is loud and there were just so many more things about it. It was social, with no kids, blah, blah, blah. I was doing something strictly for me for like two hours a week, three hours a week, and there was just so much more that I was getting out of it than just lifting the weights.

**John Barban:** It was structure. It was positive momentum. It was accountability it is a bunch of things.

**Lisa Etwell:** And whatever the actual hormone release, I don't know what it is that you call as a high.

**John Barban:** No, I understand. There are various things that change that actually make you feel good.

**Lisa Etwell:** Yeah, and I didn't feel like I needed to eat.

**John Barban:** Well, that's the typical response to the gym.

**Lisa Etwell:** So it works for me, but it wasn't in the opposite like "I was at the gym therefore I have license to eat anything and everything".



**John Barban:** Well, that's good. I mean, that's good that that's the way it works for you.

**Lisa Etwell:** But it wasn't what I had expected. I was surprised actually. So it was the way, and actually I had used the gym days as the days that I was going to pull back on some calories because it was the two days that I didn't have the kids with me that I could actually spend the lion's share of my day outside of the home. I tried at the beginning to structure myself because I didn't know whether this was going to be easy, hard, or impossible. So I said, "Okay, well, what's one way to stop eating? Well, let's get out of the kitchen." So I left the house. I tried to do every errand and chore on demand outside of the house, and because financially, I'm not one to go through a drive-through because I just wanted to go with a dollar benefit there. So yeah, it all worked itself out as I started, but I had to start in order to know how it was going to work out.

**John Barban:** Well, that's good.

**Lisa Etwell:** I kind of just have to figure it out for myself.

**John Barban:** Yeah, and that's the message here. Everyone's style is going to be different. In general, the same things sort of have to happen but they're going to be unique to how you fit them in to your life.

**Lisa Etwell:** And if it works, then do it.

**John Barban:** Oh yeah, exactly. And just because it worked for somebody else, it doesn't mean it's going to work for you, but whatever works for you, you'll recognize it and then that's where you continue on.

**Lisa Etwell:** It's good when it feels right. There is just a lot of effort required.

**John Barban:** Sure, and the message there is don't let other people sidetrack you. If they think they've got the right answer because no one actually has the exact right answer for you besides once you figured it out for yourself.

**Lisa Etwell:** Sure.

**John Barban:** Okay, well that was good. Thanks a lot for being on. I know a lot of people are going to really benefit from hearing your story.

**Lisa Etwell:** I'm happy, so any questions, let me know, but that's how I've done it and we'll see how 2011 works out.

**John Barban:** Okay. So we'll catch up a little bit later. So for Lisa Etwell, I'm John Barban and that's your Venus Index podcast.