

Transcript for The Who's Dat Phat Girl Podcast - With Brooke Hoover
SEASON 2 EPISODE #8- POWER OVER WILLPOWER

Hey y'all, I'm Brooke Hoover. A Louisiana native, actor, writer and comedian. I've lost 100 pounds through diet and exercise or shall I say "lifestyle changes". My twenty year and counting health journey has taught me that just like taking a diet pill for weight loss, body positivity doesn't magically happen overnight. I'm working on re-gaining my self esteem and re-kindling my love affair with Cajun and Southern comfort food in a healthier way all the while juggling eating as clean as I can, re-establishing myself in the entertainment industry which, as we know, is historically fat phobic all the while showing my inner phat girl some love - that's phat with a PH - pretty hot and tempting. Let me tell y'all a tale or two...

While I'm writing this episode, I'm listening to that song by Gary Puckett and the Union Gap...Lady Willpower...it's now or never give your love to me and I'll shower...

Anyways. I never knew that song was called Lady Willpower. I just thought it was Willpower and Gary Puckett and the Union Gap were paying homage to the mystical being that is WILLPOWER.

I've been told by some people, especially when they find out that I lost 100 pounds, "Oh my gosh, you must have SO much Willpower." And when peeps say that, it's like the person who HAS the willpower has the POWER essentially. And, not having willpower is a LOSS of power. Like, there's SHAME if you do NOT have willpower.

Y'all, I don't know if I have willpower. I don't know if I have power. At all times. Both of those things ebb and flow. I feel that POWER is something you can generate every day be it with mental or physical strength training, affirmations, looking yourself in the mirror and saying, I am here and I am surviving. THAT is power. You can generate it when you feel like you've lost it. But, willpower I argue isn't always something that's under our control. Willpower is usually something we put a negative spin on whereas Power is a more positive entity.

Willpower is something I think that's not necessarily always in our hands - it's often tempted and triggered by foods - by chemical substances - aka sugar and prepackaged foods that are addicting. There is so much truth in that Lay's potato chip slogan, "You can't eat just one."

So, when people tell me I must have lost weight because I have willpower like I'm some Godlike being or Saint, I quickly and I try to nicely crush that right away by saying, "No. I could eat a whole doberge cake and then eat another doberge cake especially if the first doberge cake was only chocolate cause then the second doberge cake would have to be lemon so I could have both flavors or vice versa. I just try to completely avoid foods that have chemicals that trigger my willpower response. And I try not to feed into beating myself up when I have moments of lack

of willpower. Because that makes me feel like I have NO power.” Whew. Or I say something like that. Maybe not quite as enlightened.

We all know I’m not a doctor and I don’t yet play one on TV, but I can say this. I would like to hope that we wouldn’t tell someone who is addicted to alcohol or drugs “Oh you just don’t have willpower.” Because we know it isn’t quite that simple. Addiction is MUCH more complicated than that. We have all told ourselves that willpower and mainly when it comes to FOOD and “BAD FOOD” is a switch that we can easily turn on or off.

But, food is also an addiction. And, it’s not just my opinion or what I feel or what I have experienced. There have been plenty of stories and articles on WILLPOWER itself. And, as I keep talking about WILLPOWER I am thinking more and more about that part in Bruce Almighty when Jim Carey gets the powers and that song “I’ve Got the Power” starts blasting away. Y’all know?

Okay, I’ll break down some articles I read and researched when I knew I wanted to tell a lot of tales about Willpower.

First off, there’s an article in *Medium*. The main draw from that article is that willpower waxes and wanes. (AMEN *Medium*) and we can’t rely on something that isn’t reliable!!! *Medium* says don’t rely on willpower, rely on a system. So, that’s something I have put into place when I was changing my health story (and consequently losing weight.) My system started off with certain rules and added more rules and adapted other rules. My system was this: limit white anything - white bread, white rice, white pasta, white potatoes. Yes, this was partially to lose weight but it was mainly because my Polycystic Ovary Syndrome symptoms of irregular periods, facial hair and uncontrolled cholesterol levels were tearing me UP. And, I’ve avoided these kinds of foods for nearly two decades. Except for white potatoes. It’s the 1/8 Irish in me that I can’t and won’t stop eating white potatoes. But, they’re not a food that has a chemical that’s going to make me want to keep eating and eating, unless they’re French fries. So, here’s my SYSTEM for that. I only allow myself to be exposed to French fries once a week (if possible) and if it’s a French fry day then I try to balance the other meals of the day with vegetables and/or healthy grains and lean protein. Because, I LOVE my French fries. I’m terrified of ketchup. That’s a whole other story. So, my system to avoid French fries COULD instead be order French fries. Feel guilty. Punish myself. Squirt ketchup all over the French fries. Get grossed out by the massacre scene. Waste a perfectly good plate of French fries. No. My system that I’ve adapted is balance. And, don’t share a plate of French fries with Harry (my boyfriend) because I’ll keep eating and eating and he assumes it’s because I’m starving (which I’m usually not) and the salt is getting to my taste buds and my brain and making me want more. I’m not starving. But, he stops eating / sharing the French fries with me so that I can finish them and I’m like NO, keep eating with me. It’s a whole thing.

But, there’s a whole cycle for willpower. And, y’all tell me if yours is similar. We will

continue to use French fries or pommes frites as an example because clearly they're my kryptonite.

So, go to a restaurant. And with French fries, I'm usually NOT craving them (like I do chocolate or doberge cake) until I actually see them right in front of me. I order something sensible like grilled chicken with some vegetable side. However, HAWWY asks me if he gets fries with his if I'll share. I think MANY of my peeps can relate to this when their friend or partner or family member or frenemy does this, right?

The food arrives at the table. You tell yourself you'll just have one. You reach for the other person's plate. It's not YOUR plate so it doesn't really count right? - OKAY BUT LET'S HOLD THE PHONE HERE. I must mention, I'm avoiding French fries not because I'm an obsessive calorie counter (no, I don't really condone that - more on calorie counting in another episode) but because I don't condone the type of oils used to fry anything, nor do I condone a lot of added salt and that's because high cholesterol and high blood pressure run in my family so I'm trying to live my best life without meds and therefore CHOOSE to be extra diligent with food as my medicine. But, today I have NOW made the CHOICE to have some French fries. But, once I eat one or two, the taste buds are triggered. The salt. The gates are unleashed. And, it's NOT because I'm a shitty crappy person with no self-control or lack of WILLPOWER. It's because salty and sweet foods are addictive and quite simply because that shit is good - if it's a good fry. I'm more of a roper doper kind of soft and limp fry person than a hard fry person. Fries we're talking about here, y'all! Okay! Y'all get my point.

But, I have worked to STOP the cycle of beating myself up at that. I don't then eat and say, "Oh my gosh I shouldn't have done that." I just say, "Okay, for dinner it's a salad and salmon." Or, if I'm eating fries at dinner (which as we know, I don't really eat dinner dinner) then I make sure what I eat the next morning will be a healthier balance. Because if I am knocking myself out over eating the French fries - 90 percent of the French fries - saying I don't have willpower, then I am giving myself NO power at all.

There's another article from the blog *Too Much on Her Plate* and they say to pay attention to when and why you overeat and it's most likely NOT because you're "weak" or "lazy" or all the other things we tell ourselves and imply to our psyche when we say we have "no willpower." I've noticed sometimes when I eat just to be eating and not even when I'm tempted by one particular food it's because I am overwhelmed, annoyed, stressed, sad or hungry for something I'm not getting emotionally in that moment. Over the past several months as I've been sitting on planning this podcast and launching up again, I've felt it's only right to start really noticing that stuff.

There's another article in *Vox* that equates Willpower to a restraint. And, I SO relate to that. Because, I'm definitely my mother AND my father's daughter so if you tell me I can't have or can't do something, I am going to REBEL and try to do it (or in this

case, EAT it.) Another secret that isn't so secret anymore is that labeling anything OFF limits when you are working on a lifestyle change is a major NO-NO. Because, it's like Adam and Eve in the garden with that damn snake and that apple. But, apples aren't a food we gorge on, word? Apple pie, maybe. Apple cider donuts in the fall, maybe. Hashtag Basic! There's certain foods we beast on because they are MADE that way. Apples, broccoli, lemons, spinach, those aren't them. Y'all feeling me?

Another media outlet that has an interesting article on willpower is *Psychology Today* and in a nutshell, they say that exerting willpower when faced with temptation is simply exhausting. And, I couldn't agree more. Which is why they say to avoid the temptation altogether. And, that's what I've talked about before. But sometimes it's not POSSIBLE. How is it not possible? Three words: Craft Food Services. If you aren't in the TV/Film biz I'll give you a baby definition of Craft Food Services, aka Crafty - it's the area - the table - or if you're lucky the truck with ALL the feeds. The variety of foods - mostly pre-packaged, if you're lucky healthy fresh options, if you're not lucky prepackaged crappy options (that don't even tempt me) and if you're lucky AND unlucky at the same time, the Kirkland chocolate covered almonds. I was on set a couple of weeks ago and a cop was rolling over to crafty (CLASSIC) and we both reached for the Kirkland chocolate covered almonds. I get a cup and put like fifteen in it. Yes, fifteen because I'm looking at the added sugar content because I've been awake at 5am every day that particular week and know too much more added sugar will NOT be good for my Polycystic Ovary Syndrome and my anxiety. The police officer goes "Man, I could eat the whole container. How can you only eat that many?" And, I say to him, "You haven't seen what's in my car." I don't know if that's the best response to a cop. But, I was trying to make a joke. And trying to make him not feel bad about what he's implying as his LACK of WILLPOWER and hence his weakness. Maybe I should have had a conversation with the officer about diet culture. And, asked him to listen to this here podcast. I could have Nassau County's finest as one of our fellow listeners y'all.

Anyways. The point is, even those who seem to be the toughest of the tough still have this negative voice when they fell they don't have willpower.

But, yet, we continue to do it. We will always continue to eat. We will always continue to be tempted. We will always continue to give into temptation. We shouldn't have to keep continuing beating ourselves up for it.

I say, the best way to talk to that negative voice is say : I shouldn't do this because it's been deemed "BAD" for me versus how will this make me feel physically if I keep eating it? How will it make me feel over the next few long grueling days? How do I want to feel tomorrow? How do I want to feel ten years from now? Oh screw it give me three more Kirkland chocolate covered almonds. But save me some celery sticks for later.

Y'all, with willpower it's not just with food but also with mental distractions. I know

y'all feel me on this. In *Psychology Today* they also mention phones and devices pinging. We are PROGRAMMED to answer those pings. And, willpower comes into play with that. But, I argue in some cases, in some job fields or with family or friend emergencies, we NEED to check that phone ping, but there's less beating ourselves up or even acknowledgment that we have no willpower when it comes to checking out phone notifications like robots than there is with beating ourselves up for eating three cups of trail mix in one sitting.

Don't they say doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results is the definition of insanity? Well, then my question, y'all is, why do we keep eating and eating and then beating and beating ourselves up and expect to have a healthy happy life when we're subconsciously or maybe consciously having such rotten conversations with ourselves?

A couple of these articles discuss a survey conducted of 159 students at McGill University in Canada which showed that willpower isn't a muscle that gets better the more you resist temptation. I can agree with that because that's why I've yo-yoed so much when I first approached diet and exercise from a MUST do it because I SHOULD be SKINNY and BE PERFECT angle. It's only when we approach our WHY - wanting to feel healthy, not wanting to poop in our pants or feel like crap the next day, that we can TRY to muster up "willpower" or rather just treating ourselves nicely.

When we DO beat and we keep beating ourselves up for having no willpower, how is that going to help us get better the next time? It won't. We'll just keep doing the same thing over and over again.

In one of the articles, they say that people who are better at self control actually like eating healthy and exercising. Well, I like eating healthy and exercising too. I DO. I have MADE myself like these things. I have a whole episode called I LIKE TO MOVE IT MOVE IT where I talk about exercising as being a privilege, not a punishment. But, while I like eating healthy and exercising, I ALSO like my FRENCH FRIES (hold the ketchup). And, that's OKAY. My negative voice isn't going to yell at my nonexistent willpower because "that's what we're supposed to do".

It's all about changing the perspective of what we view as "bad" so instead of "oh my gosh I can't stop eating these fries. I have no willpower." Let's retrain it to be "okay, let's dump the proverbial ketchup on these fries right now. I've had enough - especially if I want to sleep well, have enough energy to exercise and have a good poop later." THAT is where the power lies. I don't know where willpower lies or sleeps or stays dormant because I often feel willpower is dormant and comes up once in a blue moon. And we're wasting our times trying to muster up something that doesn't always or doesn't hardly ever want to cooperate. Let's work on this : finding balance with the food we're taking in and stopping the negative talk about lacking willpower because THAT y'all is where our POWER is. And POWER will always win over WILLPOWER.

Thanks so much for listening, y'all. It is my hope to inspire, uplift and entertain you with this Who's Dat Phat Girl podcast. So, if you're HUNGRY for more, you can book me to speak or perform my solo show that inspired this podcast Phat Girl Costumes written by yours truly and directed by my best bud Brian Lady at your virtual or in person event. Please visit Brookehoover.com/fluffybuttproductions or email me at contactbrookehoover@gmail.com for more information. And, let's follow each other on instagram - I'm @Br00keH00ver and those O's are not the letter O but they're ZEROS. Not because I want to be a size 0 but because I guess I'm just so clever with my late 90s Yahoo! self

And, if you like this podcast, please give me a five star rating and write a review on Apple Podcasts and, please, most importantly, share with your friends, family and other people you may know who are as phat as we are - that's phat with a PH.

©2022 Brooke Hoover Who's Dat Phat Girl!