

## The Living Better Podcast

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Hey, this is Jason Williams, AKA Coach Jay, and today we'll be doing a very special interview with the most important person in my life, my wife, Tina. Tina is a cross-fit and an Olympic lifting coach, a graphic designer, a project manager, and mother of a four-year-old. She's going to tell us a story today about how she gained a ton of weight post-pregnancy and exactly how she lost it and some strategies that you can use to do the same. We're here with Tina today to talk a little bit about what it was like for her before she had our daughter, going through that process and then what life was like after she had our daughter. So Tina is my wife. She is a coach at Cross-fit Hale and she's been doing cross-fit now for something like seven years, seven or eight years?

Tina: Yes.

Jason: She is a full-time coach. Her specialty is Olympic lifting, but she has a great story so we're going to hear a little bit about it today.

Tina: Yeah.

Jason: So welcome.

Tina: Thank you.

Jay: Tina, tell us a little bit about what life was like before you got pregnant?

Tina: Before I got pregnant, let's see, we were living in London. I was working full-time in sort of a production-creative services roles. We traveled a lot, and we were really taking advantage of life in London at that time.

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In terms of health and fitness, we were mostly doing cross-fit. Within a certain amount of time we opened up a gym in London, but for me personally I was pretty wrapped up in work and sort of an active social life. So I wasn't too focused on going to the gym as often as I should have. It was my fitness program and I enjoyed it. I didn't do anything else, but I also wasn't showing up as consistently as I thought I should have.

Jason: Would you say that you were athletic before you got pregnant?

Tina: I was. I've always had athletic potential. I never really found the right outlet for me. I enjoyed working out. I enjoyed training. You and I used to do sort of the classic gym, traditional gym-type workouts which I actually really liked, and that was what gave me an introduction into weights and the barbell, interval training and that sort of thing. So I did have a little bit of fitness background, and I enjoyed it.

Jason: But you weren't like a college, professional or anything like that? You just were kind of an enthusiast?

Tina: So in school I sort of played sports because I had to in PE, but like I said, I always had some sort of athletic potential, and I was good at stuff if I tried. I didn't want to play team sports. That's what it came down to. Had I found something else like Olympic weightlifting as a young person, I would have been incredible, but I found cross-fit as an adult and that was sort of my answer.

Jason: Right.

Jason: Specific to fitness, what happened when you got pregnant?

Tina: I just got pregnant lo and behold one day.

Jason: It wasn't an accident.

Tina: No. No surprises but I did get pregnant and we did have a gym. I did have access to a cross-fit gym, and I went every once in awhile. I knew ladies are often told when they're pregnant that you should stay in shape. You should stay physically active. These

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are all the rules that you should abide by if you're pregnant and you're physically active and what to look out for. So I was aware of all those things. I would work out every now and then, and we would do park workouts and things that were less intense. What it came down to was that I was really tired all the time. I was tired going up five steps, and so it was really difficult to summon up the enthusiasm to go do a cross-fit workout while I was pregnant. So I would do it sporadically but always in the back of my mind. I didn't give myself a hard time about it. I thought I could always do it afterward.

Jason: Right. Okay. So you had the baby. What happened afterward—I know this was your first. You don't have to go through details of the delivery or anything, but what was life like after you had the little one?

Jason: Right.

Tina: So I was fortunate enough that I had an easy pregnancy, no complications during delivery, all very standard stuff. So my recovery time was probably average. So if anyone's thinking like how did it take you to bounce back, it's average. I found the biggest struggle was adjusting to life having a baby and being on this 24-hour waking and sleeping cycle. It was no longer awake during the day, sleep at night. It's just all day long. So I was nursing her and going back to sleep or I would nurse her and we'd go out for a walk. Or I'd try to get her to sleep. We'd all fall asleep at the same time. It was a different cycle, very up and down, and there was an adjustment period. Like I said, I didn't give myself a hard time about not working out while I was pregnant. I didn't give myself a hard time after the baby was born. I had this plan while I was pregnant that I was going to go into the gym two weeks. I was going to give myself two weeks to sort of get comfortable, get settled. I would do the easiest workout I could do at the gym.

Jason: You mean two weeks after the baby was born.

Tina: Two weeks after she was born. I don't know where I got that number from. That actually happened. I went to the gym. At that time the gym was closed during daytime hours. So I remember pushing her in her stroller, going to the gym and my plan was that I would nurse her to sleep, have her sleep in the stroller, and then I would do Kettle bell swings or I would row or something like that, something really basic just to get my foot in the door again. It didn't work out that way. I found that I would nurse her and I would try to put her down, and then she'd wake up and start crying. So the I would nurse her again. I really couldn't free my body of this baby so that I could go do something else.

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Jason: So how long did it take before you were able to actually do a workout?

Tina: That day or just in general?

Jason: I mean, it didn't work when you were there two weeks later, but how long did it take you before you got back?

Tina: It took maybe two months for whatever reason worked out a little bit better. I had that two-week goal, took my foot off the gas, was back at home. I would take her for walks, and I decided that was enough. So I sort of let my nutrition go off the rails at the time.

Jason: What do you mean?

Tina: Lots of sweets, lots of pastries and ice cream and sugary coffees and stuff like that.

Jason: Right.

Tina: Lots of sugar. If you think that someone needs a lot of sugar, just think I ate a ton more than whatever you can imagine.

Jason: Why?

Tina: It was all day long. It was stress relief, and it was easy. We lived in an area where I could take a walk to a bakery and the time that it took me to walk there buy myself two doughnuts and a sugary drink and then walk back home, that was the exact amount of time that it would be that she was asleep in the stroller and I could do nothing.

Jason: You'd be looking forward to nap time.

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Tina: We're going to work our way to the first nap so we can head out the door and plus, people could come visit and they would ask if they could bring anything.

Jason: Cakes and doughnuts please.

Tina: Yes. Make it easier for me. So my nutrition went off the rails. I did eventually get back in the gym, and I have a photo of this, of me back in the gym about two months after Evie was born and I think you must have been holding her during the workout or something. It was much easier two months out, and that was sort of my first real workout feeling kind of back to normal but still feeling really heavy.

Jason: Right. Right. So you were able to kind of work out.

Tina: Yes.

Jason: You had a bunch of sugar. You went to do the workout. It's all good. You're going to be back in shape now.

Tina: I felt awesome. I was wearing my same workout clothes. I was wearing the same pants that I wore before I was pregnant. I was wearing the same shirt. It fits. I must be looking good, and then someone, maybe you took a picture of me in that particular workout—I think it might have been pull-ups or something—and there's a picture of me comparing hand calluses with someone else.

Jason: I remember actually everyone telling you like hey, you look great. It's good to be back.

Tina: That's what people tell you after you have a baby. You look amazing. Oh, you look so beautiful and the baby's so beautiful, and you believe it. I would always recommend that you should always tell a lady who just had a baby that she looks amazing. That's all you want to hear. You believe it because you feel amazing and you're so happy in an ideal situation.

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However, I saw this picture of myself wearing my old workout clothes and just because I was able to put the clothes on doesn't mean that it looked the way it did before I was pregnant or before I had a baby and so it was a big wake-up call. If anything if I was under the impression I looked amazing and I looked the same and I'm wearing my old clothes, it doesn't mean that they fit the same way. You can just see my midsection through the shirt. It was different. It wasn't me even though I was feeling pretty good.

Jason: Right. Right. So you felt like things were in worse shape after you had her than you were before.

Tina: I definitely gained more weight after she was born. I had a doctor's appointment—you do these follow-up appointments. It was either right after she was born or soon after she was born, I weighed one weight, I don't know, some amount—they weighed us in kilos at the time—and then I had another follow-up appointment some number of months later, and I weighed more. The doctor was like they must have gotten something wrong on this initial appointment because this doesn't make any sense.

Jason: You shouldn't weigh more than you did after you gave birth.

Tina: I looked at her and said there's nothing wrong. I know exactly why. Those were my literal words, I know exactly why I weigh more.

Jason: Two doughnut a day diet.

Tina: It was lots of things.

Jason: So that picture was like a wake-up call telling you that you've got to do something.

Tina: Yes. Again, after delivery you feel physically—it varies I think woman-to-woman but I think there is a certain amount where you just start to feel normal again. You don't feel back to normal. That takes a long time, but you start to feel a little bit more normal, then the fact that you're still able to put your clothes on. You kind of think you must be doing okay.

Jason: And everyone is telling you you're looking great. I was looking great. I'm not going to give myself a hard time about it, but my goal while I was pregnant and before was that I wasn't going to go down that path post-pregnancy. The life style that we live and the environment that we were in, it wasn't something that I wanted to let go of. I didn't want to just put on weight and leave it.

Jason: Right. So that was the wake-up call so what did that make you do?

Tina: Two things. I instantly decided to clean up my nutrition. I knew the culprit. We've gone through enough cycles in our fitness history to know what causes weight gain and what doesn't. I knew it was purely nutrition, and that I could work out until the cows come home but if I didn't clean up my nutrition, then it wasn't going to happen. So getting to the gym, I still felt a little bit self-conscious not necessarily because of my appearance but because I was one of the only people who had a baby and bringing the baby into the gym kind of meant that I felt like people—not that they were being insincere—but I couldn't just get a workout.

Jason: It's a little bit different in London. I mean, a lot of folks are younger. They don't have families.

Tina: Yeah, Yeah. It's not like here at all. Here everyone has a family, and it was just my own personal thing. I was just really self-conscious. Again, I didn't give myself a hard time about not making it to the gym, but I did clean up my nutrition. Then I went on a thirty-day completely clean, no cheats.

Jason: What does that mean to be completely clean?

Tina: No refined sugars. The only sugars allowed were fruits and sweet potatoes, no grains, definitely no grains so that means no bread, no crackers, definitely no pastries or cakes or anything like that. No dairy. I went off dairy. I think I only had full fat cream or butter at the time. Sugar and grains are the biggest culprits.

Tina: So what was your goal when you started that?

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Tina: The Nutrition. I didn't have a weight goal, but I did want to drop all that weight. I knew I put on a lot of weight after [inaudible 0:14:49.6]

Jason: How much weight would you say—what would you say that you weighed at the time?

Tina: I would say that I maybe weighed 165 or something—and I'm just guessing because again I was in kilos and I wasn't converting them. I weighed maybe about 165 about two months after she was born.

Jason: Before then what was your normal weight?

Tina: 140 to 145.

Jason: Right. Okay.

Tina: So I did this 30-day thing. I knew that I was probably at my heaviest without any real reason. No baby excuse any longer. I knew that was my heaviest, and so I went thirty days cutting out sugar and grains, etc. I had lost at least twenty pounds. I lost it. It sounds like it was fast, but I gained it as fast as that. That's just how superficial it was. It was a lot of sugar. It was a lot of grains. It was a lot of unhealthy stuff, and as soon as I cut that out, a few days would go by, and I'd see changes. A few more days would go by and I'd see changes.

Jason: So you changed your diet. You dropped some of that weight. At what point did you decide that you wanted to get back to the gym and start training regularly again?

Tina: So I think it was about maybe seven to eight months after she was born.

Jason: That was a long time.

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Tina: It was a long time, but there were some other things going on so I did the nutrition change at about two to three months post-delivery. We traveled overseas, and we were back in the US for close to a month. Then we were back in the UK. There were other things going on, and so by the time we worked out a sleep schedule and babysitting timing and all these things, I was looking at the eight-month mark.

Jason: Right. Okay. So you started back at the gym. How did you do it because it sounds like it had been almost a year or longer since you were there consistently. How did you approach that?

Tina: I think I might have taken one or two classes just to dip my toe in and then we decided that I should just do fundamentals. There were a few other reasons why it made sense to do the fundamentals program. The main thing was here's a consistent schedule that I could follow and that you and I could work out between us in terms of babysitting and then I could also get re-introduced to people at the gym that I had never met as well as a re-introduction movements without the pressure of doing what I did before.

Jason: Okay. So you did fundamentals. This was like a two-week program or something?

Tina: I think it was two weeks so six sessions.

Jason: Okay. Before you started back at the gym, what was your biggest fear?

Tina: My biggest fear really was that I would just—it's really more of a self-conscious thing that I would just stick out, that I would feel overweight or that I would feel slow or that no one else was like me. That's something that I probably without thinking it as clearly was probably what I ended up thinking.

Jason: Right.

Tina: They're all young. They're all fed, and they don't have anywhere to go afterwards. It was just self-conscious stuff like that.

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Jason: So when you showed up was that the case?

Tina: No, no. Everyone was really, really nice, and the fact that I was there was more than enough. I felt comfortable just because I was there. It was sort of time for myself. I had the hour, give or take a few minutes. That was very liberating because I knew then that I could just concentrate on that thing.

Jason: Right.

Tina: Everyone was really very nice. A lot of people didn't know me. They didn't know that you were one of the owners of the gym and that I was married to you and so I was able to just be a member and just get to know people.

Jason: It had to help that you were working out with other beginners as well.

Tina: Yes. It did help that there were other beginners. I did feel pretty comfortable with the movements just because of my background, but also, like I said, had a lot of insecurities and self-consciousness about where I was, having had a baby and rolling out of my apartment having not gone outside all day long, and I'm just showing up at this place.

Jason: You say you were comfortable with the movements but you weren't that comfortable. We talked about this before, you're telling me that you weren't sure what a snatch was and that kind of thing?

Tina: Yeah, yeah, there were plenty of things that even before I was pregnant, I'd do these cross-fit workouts and I would do what was written on the board. I would do what the coach said to do, but I wasn't invested in learning what stuff was or how to do it better or how to live up to my potential. Before the baby was born I wasn't interested in that although afterwards when I got back into the gym, I started to pay more attention to that.

Jason: Right. Okay. So how did the gym or the environment or the trainers kind of help you feel more comfortable along the way?

Tina: So they knew me, or they got to know me. They got to know this is-- they saw what it looked like when I worked out. They knew better than I did how well I could do in the gym, but they also knew that I was coming from sleepless nights, that it might have been a struggle to get in the door at a certain time. They understood the background, and they just made sure to show me stuff. They didn't treat me any differently which was helpful because I didn't want that. They just showed me stuff and if I got it right, then great, and if I got it wrong, then they were like what are you doing and they would show me how to do it. So it was very helpful, and they were very patient. I loved it. It was very comfortable.

Jason: So what obstacles did you face? You're going to the gym. You're kind of getting back into it. What was sort of the toughest part for you?

Tina: The toughest part I think, it's hard to say because I actually had a pretty good support at work to make it happen. It was tough to leave the baby at home and still feel okay. Once I was at the gym, I would forget about it, and I would pay attention and enjoy myself. I would take advantage of the opportunity. Then I would often feel like I have to rush home. So while people were going out or they're hanging out afterwards, I often felt like okay, well, I've got to go. I've got the baby waiting at home. She may or may not be awake. This is just more than going to the gym, but it's a little bit different when you're a new parent and you're realizing that you don't have the same certain personal freedom that you used to.

Jason: Right. Okay. What did other people think? Did anyone have any comments about you doing something like cross-fit so close to having a little one?

Tina: I don't think the people who knew me well made any comments like that. There was an instance where I went into the gym and I met a new person, and I told her—we were doing the 400-meter run and we were just making conversation—and I told her I have an eight-month-old at home, and she's like What? What are you doing here? She was like it's so good that you're working out. It all seemed very nice. Again, everyone's always very nice. At the end of class we were putting away our weights, and I was picking up—I don't know what the plate was—maybe the equivalent of 25 pounds or something—and she was like oh wait, let me get that for you. She actually said like you have a baby as if I shouldn't be doing anything. Of course, she didn't know. It was all very nice. The intention was good. It's just interesting what people think ladies with babies are capable of or should or shouldn't be doing.

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Jason: Right. So you went through this process where you kind of started with your nutrition, then you started training again. You're starting to feel a little better. What was the exact moment when you knew that all the hard work was paying off?

Tina: When did I know? I think that the wake-up call happened to be during what we call the twelve days of cross-fit which is benchmark workouts or named workouts, [inaudible 0:23:54.2] leading up to the Christmas party.

Jason: So basically tough workouts.

Tina: Yes. So consecutive tough workouts, and it was really the first time that I had done anything like that and that I had tried to--that I had shown up consistently enough to not be intimidated by that, and then I tried to do them as close to prescribed as possible or doing as close to the recommended weights and options as possible. I did really well. I think I did better than I thought I would have. I actually enjoyed it a lot, and it was a good challenge. It was fun to see what I was capable of. If I had been motivated by weight loss before, doing that little event was the turning point of me turning it into more of a sport and learning what I was able to do.

Jason: When you say you were able to do more, were you able to lift more weight? Were you able to do pull-ups? What was it?

Tina: I was able to lift more weight than I would have thought I was able to do. I was able to move faster than I thought I was able to do. It's so easy to sort of like skip your way through a workout, but when you know that you are going for a certain time or something like that, then alongside of that I'm working out with people who are also doing this challenge or this event. They're really getting into it too. So I picked up on that. It's not competition in that way. It's more community and picking up on others' energy and using that to help motivate me.

Jason: So what's your life like now?

Tina: Life now is great. So now I'm a coach which I would have never thought I'd have the confidence to do or have the skill to do, and I've just been committed. Once I put the foot on the gas to get back in the gym, I never really took it off. While I've taken sort of recovery and that sort of thing, I've always been motivated by the fact that now that I am

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a parent, time is limited and the time for me now to be athletic as possible is now. The more time I let pass, the older I get, and I want to make sure that I'm using the time that I have as productively as I can.

Jason: Would you say you're in better shape now than you've ever been?

Tina: Absolutely. More so than when I was a youth. I think I stopped being physically active around the age of ten which is weird but that's for another story. I'm in much better shape now than I ever was in my school years or even in my early 20's when I was working out at the gym doing sort of classic training, just so much more.

Jason: So last question. Someone in the same situation as you, maybe have recently had a little one or they're pregnant with a little one, maybe someone who's recently had a little one, and they're kind of going through the same thing that you were going through, eating the doughnuts and stuff like that, what would you say to them?

Tina: I would say be honest with yourself and decide what you want. Be very clear and honest about what you want, not what you think anyone else thinks you should be doing. I think mothers get a big pass, a really giant pass post-pregnancy or if you have multiple kids, that you can let your health kind of slip away, but you really have to ask yourself is that okay with you or is it not. I knew that it wasn't okay with me and so I was very clear that even when I was sort of off the rails on nutrition, that I was going to get back into it and that it was only temporary.

Jason: Right.

Tina: So figure out what you want, set a goal and then tackle one thing. If it's weight loss, worry about weight loss. If it's because you want to get stronger, don't worry about weight loss and go get stronger. So one thing at a time.

Jason: Right. Excellent! Well, thank you very much.

Tina: You're welcome.

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Jason:                   Have a great day.

Tina:                    You too.

Jason:                   Thank you for listening to the Living Better podcast. For more info or notes about the show, head on over to [crossfithale.com/podcasts](http://crossfithale.com/podcasts). See you next time.