

Sneak Peek at YWM2016:

An Interview with Dawn Jackson Blatner, RDN

by Elizabeth Engasser

With all of the different weight-loss options out there, how do you know which one is best for you? Everyone has their own lifestyles and goals for their weight and health, but are the plans some people choose for themselves really more effective than others?

This is what ABC's "My Diet is Better Than Yours" wanted to find out — and the winning team of the show, Jasmin Queen and Dawn Jackson Blatner, RDN, CSSD, LDN, learned first-hand what it takes to stay on-track with your goals.

The duo will be sharing for the first time together about their journey on the show at the 5th Annual *Your Weight Matters* National Convention in Washington, DC, and they'll also share some motivational tips that you can use on your own journey with weight!

The OAC sat down with Ms. Blatner to chat about her time on the show, what she and Jasmin will be speaking about at YWM2016 and why she is so passionate about the work she does for her clients:

OAC: There were a variety of different weight-loss plans introduced to the contestants over the course of the show. Why do you feel your plan was so successful for Jasmin?

Dawn: I was praying the whole time that if the world needed a plan that was no gimmicks, no fads and was literally just the realistic way that you need to lose weight in a way that was fun and sustainable, then let me do well on the show. I prayed that if this was what the world needed to hear, then I would do well on the show.

The main reason why I think my plan helps people lose weight is because there's an element of fun that is missing in a lot of other plans out there... A lot of other plans are very punishing and sort of negative and nasty — and I took it from the opposite angle. I said: "We're going to love ourselves, and we're going to be the team who giggles the most." That's how you stick with stuff. People miss a lot of fun.

As we get to be adults we have less and less fun in our days, and putting that back — especially when it comes to weight-loss — I think that was special and what was in my secret sauce in the end.

OAC: One of the elements to Jasmin's plan was that family was incredibly important to her. How did family being such an integral part of her plan keep her motivated?

Dawn: You cannot do this — you cannot become someone different — in isolation. To lose weight, you literally have to become someone different. Someone who believes you're worth it. Someone who believes that you need to prioritize yourself. Someone who believes that at the end of the day, self-care is numero uno!

You have to become someone different, and if you don't have your spouse or your children and everybody else on board,



there's no way it will be sustainable. That doesn't mean you have to have them all sign an official contract to get them on board... a lot of it is attitude and leading with example and being enthusiastic, and them wanting to jump on your train instead of forcing them on your train.

OAC: It was inspiring to see Jasmin keep herself so motivated on the show. What challenges did your team face throughout the journey?

Dawn: A lot of the time, we were always looking at each other thinking, "We have no drama." All of the other teams would have all of this drama, but we led with respect, and we never compared. The very first time I met her, I had her sign a contract that I signed as well that said we would only speak nice things about our bodies — body love — and that we would never compare ourselves because comparisons are the killer of joy, and that we would use the scale numbers as scientific measurement but we wouldn't let it reflect negatively on ourselves. We really tried to set the tone early on about how we wanted to make this a respectable and fun project.

The only challenge we really ended up facing was about her old clothes. We got in a huge fight (that was not on air) at a

boutique. She thought I was setting her up to be embarrassed at this boutique because she wouldn't fit into the clothes. What viewers did get to see on television however was us getting into a real argument about her wanting to keep all of her extra size clothes. She no longer fit into them, they were too big, and she didn't want to give them away — she said she wanted to keep them.

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I told her: "If you keep those clothes, it is only saying one thing, and it's saying it loud and clear — 'I do not believe that I will be a success.' If you need to keep clothes that are oversized, that is a huge red flag that you do not believe in yourself, you do not believe in me and you do not believe in this plan." So I was not going to leave (her home) without that box of clothes being donated. It wasn't so much about the clothes; it was about the message it sends about believing in yourself.

OAC: You're so passionate about everything that you do with your plan and working with your clients. What is it that makes you motivated in your work?

Dawn: It isn't always easy. At my core, I am a loving, excitable and energetic person, but I wake up just like a lot of people wake-up with self-doubt, a lot of fear, a lot of unworthiness and not feeling great 100 percent of the time. But I have learned to

say “Hah! I have a choice right now: I can keep this up and feel miserable with the thoughts that I have right now, or I can visualize a ladder and I think about myself climbing up on that ladder and trying to be more light and free and energetic.

Life is so much more fun when you’re coming from that place. Just choose to go up on that ladder, and be a little more light and free! My passion comes from a natural core, but it also comes from a moment of decision where if at any moment we are not happy with how things are going, we can change our attitude about it. Gratitude changes everything.

OAC: You will be returning to the Your Weight Matters National Convention this year, and we’re very excited to have you back! What is it about last year’s event that made you want to come back this year?

Dawn: It is the high that you get from being in a room of like-minded people. I speak across the country in front of all sorts of groups and sizes, and there is no group of people that I have ever been in that has more love, enthusiasm, kindness, welcoming-ness or warm-ness. It is just a group of people that wants to be there to learn and wants to do better in this world — for themselves, and others.

So do I want to be around that energy? Yes I do! I want spoonful after spoonful of that energy. It’s a group of people that motivates me, and I hope to motivate them right back.

OAC: You had a pretty motivating message that you presented to attendees last year; what is it that you hope to bring to YWM2016 with your talk?

Dawn: I have never had such a life-changing event as being on a reality show, and putting what I believe to the test with a magnifying glass looking at it and being judged by all of America... My partner, Jasmin Queen, and I, we won the show not because my plan is great and because she’s a hard worker — we won the show because of both of those things. Without my plan and without her hard work and enthusiasm and ability to change and wanting to change, we would not have had the magical outcome that we did. I decided I can’t be at YWM2016 without this woman — because we did it together!

I hope to be the voice for the plan and how it works, and then have attendees hear from Jasmin’s point of view about what is hard when you have a dietitian telling you these things, what goes through your mind? What is the self-talk that got her through some of these tough times? What is she doing to stay motivated — not just while the show was going on — but now? I think that by having it from both angles — the professional and the person listening to this advice— it really gives that whole picture of what it takes these days to lose weight, keep it off and do it in a very loving, kind, compassionate, exciting, motivating and energetic sort of way.

OAC: Let’s say we have an individual who’s on the fence about whether or not they want to come to YWM2016. What would you say to them to get them to join us in Washington, DC?

Dawn: Everyone’s time is precious. When I think about why I would spend my time (at the Convention), out of all the millions of places I could be, it really is that connection that is incredible. I haven’t seen it anywhere else. It’s this warm connection where you can go by yourself, and leave with way more friends than you came with. I am still connected with participants, and that connection is important.

The lessons that you learn aren’t from random gurus; it’s actually from scientific-based people who have information you can trust. It’s information that you can’t find anywhere else, from respected individuals that you can trust. At the same time, you get connections and friends out of this that care about the same thing. Sign me up, and sign me up twice!



Dawn and Jasmin before a fitness challenge on ABC’s “My Diet is Better Than Yours.”

“I decided I can’t be at YWM2016 without this woman — because we did it together!”

OAC Membership Application

Why Join the OAC? The OAC is a more than 52,000 member-strong 501(c)(3) National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to the individual affected by the disease of obesity and helping individuals along their journey toward better health through education, advocacy and support. Our core focuses are to raise awareness and improve access to the prevention and treatment of obesity, provide evidence-based education on obesity and its treatments, fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination, elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health and offer a community of support for the individual affected.

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The OAC is the **ONLY** non-profit organization whose sole focus is helping those affected by obesity. The OAC is a great place to turn if you are looking for a way to get involved and give back to the cause of obesity.

Why YOU Should Become an OAC Member

Quite simply, because the voice of those affected needs to be built! The OAC not only provides valuable public education on obesity, but we also conduct a variety of advocacy efforts. With advocacy, our voice must be strong. And, membership is what gives the OAC its strong voice.

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- Official welcome letter and membership card
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MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS