



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: You are listening to the Weight Loss for Busy Physicians podcast with Katrina Ubell, MD, Episode 197.

Welcome to Weight Loss for Busy Physicians, the podcast where busy doctors like you get the practical solutions and support you need to permanently lose the weight, so you can feel better and have the life you want. If you're looking to overcome your stress eating and exhaustion, and move into freedom around food, you're in the right place.

Well, hey there, my friend. Welcome back to the podcast. I'm so glad to have you here today with me. I have such a great episode for you today. I'm super, super excited about it.

But before we get into that, I wanted to see how you're doing, because Halloween is coming up. It's just next week. So how are you doing? Have you eaten all of the Halloween candy, and you've already had to go back to buy more? What is happening? Are you just trying to use willpower? Have you not bought any yet? Are you not into candy?

I know Halloween is the start of holiday overeating for so many people, and so it's so important for us to think about it, to think about how we want to approach not only just Halloween, but the holidays that are coming up. If you're in Canada or the U.S., we have Thanksgiving coming. We have other fall and wintertime holidays that often encourage us to eat lots and lots of food.

I wanted to let you know that next week, actually, just a couple days before Halloween, I'm going to be hosting a free training where we're going to talk about how to lose weight for the last time. I think that this is so the perfect time to talk about this because we're nearing the new year, and it's time to start thinking about, what are you going to actually do with the residual, the remnants, the results of how the year 2020 has gone for you? Are we going to turn over a new leaf for 2021? Is that how you're going to approach this?

Are we going to allow the pandemic to just continue on bleeding through our lives until it seems to peter out or go away and then you're going to get yourself back together? I, of course, would argue that you should not wait, because it only gets worse and your habits are only more ingrained. We all think that when that time comes we'll be more than happy to lose the weight, except we won't be. It'll be even worse. But I just want to encourage you to consider that the changeover in the year, it's very great in the sense of the momentum that comes from a fresh year, a fresh start.

So I want to talk to you about how to lose the weight for the last time, also give you the opportunity to place your deposit on my next Weight Loss for Doctors Only group, which will start in January. And of course I'll answer all your questions about how to handle Halloween, however it may look for you this year. It's a little different in our neighborhood, but at least at this point, there's still going to be some trick-or-treating.

I should tell you, actually, the reason it looks different is usually what ends up happening is, in our neighborhood, there's three streets that pass out candy and then it rotates, so we only pass out candy once every four years. Whatever candy my kids bring home is the candy I have to deal with, except once every four years when we have to buy and we pass out candy to 1,000 kids. It's crazy. It's super fun, though.

Well, this year, they don't want everyone jam-packed onto these specific streets, so they're saying it's just going to be general Halloween. If you want to pass out, then you're

responsible for buying your own candy and do your own thing, and then just keep everybody more dispersed and separated. I've been thinking, "Okay, got to buy some candy. Don't know how much I'm going to need." Because I know how much I need when we're on the route to actually hand it out to tons and tons of kids, but it's a little different. And it may be different for you too.

I have some actually very specific ways that I like to approach Halloween that I would be more than willing to share with you on that training. It is next Wednesday, October 28th. It is at 8:30 p.m. Eastern Time, 5:30 p.m. Pacific. I would love to have you join me. We're going to talk about what it actually takes, what has to actually happen so you can lose weight and not just one of these times where you drop the pounds and then gain it right back again, actually lose it and keep it off. You can register for that so you can get all the information to join me by going to katrinaubellmd.com/loseweight, L-O-S-E, W-E-I-G-H-T. Again, katrinaubellmd.com/loseweight.

Okay, so those of you who are longtime listeners may recall that last year at the end of the year, so almost a year ago, I had a weight loss success story with Summer Merritt. She is one of my amazing clients. Her story is incredible. I want to encourage you if you want to hear the first part of her story and her weight loss success and how she stopped bingeing, just incredible results, go back to Episode 149, and you're going to be able to hear her whole story. Today's episode is an update on that.

I always find it so interesting when you get to find out, whatever happened to that person? Did she keep her weight off? How did she deal with COVID? What's going on with her? Is she still walking the talk? So I invited Summer on to discuss, how has the last year been for her? What are all the changes? How has coaching helped her? It's incredible. It's so interesting. I can't wait for you to listen. She's going to give you a really nice update as to what's been going on for her in her life, some major changes, and just so many things that are possible because of the coaching that she engages in within our program.

All my clients are my faves, but she's really one of my faves. She's just so lovely. I can't wait for you to hear this conversation with me and Summer Merritt all about what's been going on for her for the last year and how she's maintained her weight loss throughout COVID. Amazing. All right, enjoy, and I will talk to you next week.

Hey, Summer. Thank you so much for coming back on the podcast.

Summer Merritt: Thanks for having me back.

Katrina Ubell: I am really excited to give everybody a bit of an update. When this airs, it'll be 11 months after your other episode aired, so we're right at about the one-year mark. I thought it would be so fun to have you come back on and give an update, because sometimes it's easy to have people come on and they tell you, "This is great. This is how my life was transformed," and then we're like, "Yeah, but were they able to keep that up? Does this stuff stick? What actually happens as you continue on with this work?" I would love it if you would just briefly give everybody just a little taste of what you do. Of course, anybody who really wants to know the first round of information can go listen to that episode, but just give everybody a little idea of who you are.

Summer Merritt: Sure. I am a family physician in West Texas, and I own a practice. It's a small concierge practice, and so I'm kind of like an old-timey doctor, where I see people in an office and I see them in the hospital and I see them in their homes, and I manage a staff of myself, my husband is our business manager, and then we have a nurse practitioner now and a nurse. And I'm married and I have two kids.

Katrina Ubell: Awesome. Great. Okay. So we're going to dig into all the things, all the transitions. You, last year and then this year too, have really put a lot of effort into your relationships. That is something that, as you've continued on with coaching, have really dug into. I would just say, from my perspective, it's been a bit of a marathon in the sense that it's not like you got coached twice and you're like, "Oh my gosh, everything is magically

better." You definitely have had some struggles, some things that you've worked on, roadblocks, coming back again, really getting stuck, working through all of that. I would love if you would share with the audience just what that transformation has looked like.

Summer Merritt: Sure. When I first worked with you in August of '17, I thought that this was going to be just a quick six-month fix all my problems in half a year, which sounds completely normal, to fix every single thing that would happen in 40 years, and that I would just move on along. But as I saw how transformational it really was with weight loss, but then also with my relationships and my business, my career, and things like that, that I just kept trying to apply the same methods that you teach to different aspects of my life. I would work on one relationship and think, "Okay, well, I can apply that to every single relationship." Well, they are all a little bit different. I would have different thoughts about different people, so I would have to work on those thoughts that would get me to a lot of very similar feelings, and then have to just figure out how to process all of those while I think, underlying, still figure out more about me-

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. If you're willing to share, whatever part of this you're willing to share, you recently were telling me about an episode where you were with your family, and something that would've typically completely set you off and it would've been World War III, big fight, you really had this perspective in the moment and were able to basically calm yourself down, keep it in check. I love those moments where we're like, "Oh my gosh, this is working, all this hard work." Would you be willing to share about that?

Summer Merritt: I was with family members, and as conversations tend to do in 2020, it devolved into politics and things about election and things about racial inequality, and somebody made a comment that I guess I felt a lot of shame about because that person said something that was racist. I really wanted to argue and dig my heels in and tell them that they were wrong, but then in that moment, because we worked a lot on my urge to be right... As you said, an urge is an urge is an urge. We worked at

the beginning on urge to binge, but then my urge to be right is a reoccurring urge that I have. I realized that it didn't matter what I said to that person; they already believed what they were going to believe. I could say something ugly. I could say something kind. I could just keep going round and round and round, and we could blow up and have a huge fight. But that person, just like me, had the urge to be right.

In that moment when I had that light bulb go off that said, "Oh, they want to be right just as bad as you want to be right," all of that balled-up anger and shame and everything that was bubbling to the surface, I could just let it go, because I knew that their thoughts were really controlling them in that moment. I had to think, "Do I love this person? Yes. Do I have compassion for them that they think completely wrong? Yes." But I could have compassion for them and then just let it go. It normally would've devolved into something where people would be yelling and slamming doors and leaving and maybe not talking for weeks on end, and it just really pivoted into just changing the conversation into something else. The person just kept trying to poke back at it, but it just was fine.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. You were just able to let it go. I seriously have chills hearing that story again. That's so much growth, when you realize, "We actually both want the same thing. We want that amazing feeling of being right," so there's some commonality there, even though principally what you're discussing you don't share. But that humanity, that human need to be right, it's like, "Yep, that person has it just like I do," and you're able to just avoid the whole blowup. It's not like you have the whole blowup and then someone is not racist afterward. It's not like anything changes.

Summer Merritt: Right. I wasn't conceding that they were right. It was just agreeing to not continue the conversation, and then not to let my emotions get out of check, so then that way it doesn't cause a rift that is not repairable.

Katrina Ubell: Right. That's so good. I love that.

Okay, so in terms of your work, you're a practice owner, and you are the doctor in the practice. There's been a lot of changes. I don't know what doctor hasn't had massive changes. We'll keep COVID as a separate topic, but just in terms of your practice, there's been so many new hires, growing the practice, changing EMR, employee-employer relationships. Talk about that and how coaching has really influenced that.

Summer Merritt: Sure. I think we can start with the EMR because that one is easy. I started my practice in 2011, and I got an EMR because it was cheap and because I'm really thrifty. I hated it the whole time, and it was really clunky and not portable. It did the job when I was there, but I always wanted to change.

But the thought of changing to a different one just felt too overwhelming, and I would spin in indecision. It would just go on and on, and I just kicked the can until the next year, next year, until I finally just said, "You know what, I'm giving myself a deadline. I'm going to choose another EMR. I'm going to research this." I gave myself time. I put on the schedule to research it. I talked to three of the reps. I narrowed it down really quick. I made the decision, and that was it.

Then I didn't think, okay, I'm going to go back and think, "Oh, I should've stayed with the other one" or "No, I made the wrong decision. We should've picked this other one instead." I picked it, and I picked the day to start the transition. It was painful, don't get me wrong. I knew that moving all... Because we had to move all the data over. It wasn't like a big dump from one program to the other, and so a lot of it was hand-entered data. It was a giant pain, but it's been 100% worth it.

I just throughout that process had to tell myself, "This is going to be worth it. It's going to be painful, but it's going to be worth it." I just had to say that over and over again, and that was helpful. I absolutely love it now. Now I can send in prescriptions, even triplicate prescriptions, in the state of Texas over my phone. It's amazing. It's really portable. Because before, I'd have to go back to my office, get a triplicate pad, sign

it, figure out how to meet the patient. That part has been great. Then I-

Katrina Ubell: It gives you that freedom. Freedom is a big part of owning your own practice anyway, right? That's kind of the point. This is really in line with what you're trying to create anyway.

Summer Merritt: Before coaching, I just thought it was an insurmountable task to change EMRs, like, "Oh, that's just too hard. I'm just not going to do it." Then I just thought, "No time is going to get easier. I might as well just rip off the band-aid and do it," so that helped. But I don't think I'd ever have had the, I don't know what the word is, gumption to just do something on purpose that was going to be hard.

Katrina Ubell: Right. Exactly.

Summer Merritt: I guess with my practice, I had always, before coaching, just in my head thought that my career would look one way and that my life would look one way, and that I have a successful business, but that that's just how it was going to be always. I was very just restricted mindset and not really thinking in a growth mindset, that this is good enough. This is fine. I'll keep it really small. I'll just have one nurse, so there will never be any conflict."

Katrina Ubell: Oh, right. Then you don't have to manage people if you've just got the one nurse. Oh, yeah.

Summer Merritt: For eight years, I just had one employee, just because I didn't want to have to mess with in-office fighting or drama or anything like that, or hiring somebody new, and what if they don't fit? It was a little bit on a whim this spring that I said, "You know what..."

Well, I guess back up. Right when I started coaching, I approached my nurse and said, "Okay, I need more help. I think you'd be really great going to nurse practitioner school. I'll pay for it if you go." She's almost finished now. She graduated in August, hasn't taken her boards yet. So this spring, I knew that, before COVID, knew that I was going to need somebody else to

help with receptionist, phlebotomist, that kind of thing, if I was going to transition her into being more taking care of patients. So I had her help me hire someone else, another nurse that she had worked with at the hospital. I picked two nurses out of the hospital. Don't feel bad about it at all.

I hired her and just said, "You know what, she's going to be great." I didn't interview a whole bunch of people. I thought, "They get along really well. I know her work ethic. I know she's a hard worker. She hasn't done primary care before. She's only done same-day surgery and labor and delivery, but she's teachable, trainable. We'll make it work." I just went into it thinking, "This is going to work, period, and we're going to make it work."

Then, of course, like two weeks later, we had COVID. Then I'm thinking, "Holy crap, what did I do? Now we have another employee. What's going to happen?" Because all my patients are retainer based, and the oil market crashed. The economy crashed. Are our patients going to leave? Are they going to go somewhere else? What's going to happen? I just had to... Of course, I ran around with my hair on fire for a few weeks. I'm not going to try-

Katrina Ubell: Right. It's not like you're a robot.

Summer Merritt: But then I was like, "Okay, we're going to make this work. We have value, period." You've said that over and over again, that as female physicians, we have inherent value in our education, so how can we give that value to our patients? I just dug my heels in and thought, because I didn't have her sign a contract, I could very easily just say, "You know what, times are tough. Go on back to the hospital." But I was like, nope, we're going to make this work.

I added value to my practice by doing a patient email every week, which I hadn't done before, keeping them updated about COVID, about the science of it, about the journal studies, trying to translate everything to people. Then I added a weekly Zoom call for my patients if they wanted to ask questions, because I

thought that's a good way for me to see people face-to-face, kind of, and for them to be able to ask questions. But then I also was sneakily thinking, if they have a time in which they can ask questions, perhaps they won't bombard me with questions outside of those times. I just kept trying to do that to add value to the practice.

Then I asked her, "What else could you do? What's interesting to you that you could add practice?" She goes, "What about giving people IV therapy? I'm really good about putting in IVs. What about when people are dehydrated or if we could keep people out of the hospital?" I was like, "Boom. Sounds good. Make out the list. Figure out what you need to get from the medical supplier. You're in charge of that."

Katrina Ubell: Amazing.

Summer Merritt: Then just getting the nurse practitioner, "What are you interested in? How are you going to bring value?" I have tried to work with them as a team and have them be in charge of how they're adding value, so they don't feel like they're just a weight being pulled behind the practice, so that they have a stake in the game and that they're doing something, not only to take care of patients, but they're interested in, but they can add value. I incentivize that and monetize that, so then that way they're motivated to do that.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. It's like you're giving them some ownership, not actual ownership, but ownership in the parts that they contribute to. Then this is the best part. You don't have to think about that stuff. It's not like you have to come up with all the ideas or you have to manage everything. You're just overseeing it, which is brilliant.

Summer Merritt: It's still tricky, because I still have a hard time with, I guess, not micromanaging, but sometimes thinking that my ideas are better than other people's.

Katrina Ubell: That's that whole urge to be right, right?

Summer Merritt: Yeah. I'm sure-

Katrina Ubell: I always say that I just fall in love with my ideas. I really fall hard for my ideas.

Summer Merritt: I know. I can't help it that I'm just efficient. I really have to pull myself back and let them have ownership of that and have them have continued say in ways to make things better. I think that could go for any practice, really. We do that sometimes, where we just say, "Okay, what's working well? What's not working? How can we fix it?" It's not like a sit-down, "Let's have a long meeting and hash out everything and make it really horrible," but just a really quick, on-the-fly, "Is this working? Should we find a different supplier for this?" and then see what they think.

Katrina Ubell: Then as far as if you could imagine that all happening, and even COVID happening and all that stuff, if you didn't have coaching involved, what do you think the contrast would've been?

Summer Merritt: Oh, I probably would've never... I also built a building, so I probably would've stayed in my own little, small place with one nurse and just said, "This is just fine."

Katrina Ubell: And not really pushed yourself to grow or to even think about what you could create.

Summer Merritt: Yeah, I didn't even think about it. I just thought, "This is good enough. Why tip the scale? Why mess it up? Something else might be worse." I never even just opened my brain to think, with the curiosity that you encourage us to have, use that curiosity to say, "Well, why can't I do something different? It doesn't have to be better, but why can't it just be different? Maybe it would be a whole lot better," and just-

Katrina Ubell: Well, I think, too, that we think that figuring it out like, "This is going to be great, and then we'll just coast and follow this model forever..." First of all, there's nothing wrong with that, if that's what you want to do. But what I do think is that for a lot of people, there's this stagnation that develops.

I think that that's great if you have something else in your life that is a massive passion. Let's say you're an Ironman athlete or something. That's the first thing that comes to mind. Or you're like, "Listen, I just really want steady income, and I want this to just run seamlessly in the background almost, because the big challenge in my life is this thing that's in my personal life that I'm working on." That's totally great. But if you don't have something like that or don't want to pursue something like that in your life, I think we as humans, it's like we really do best when we push ourselves in some way, shape, or form.

That can look like so many different things, but at least it's not boring. Even if you're like, "Maybe it's not better, but it's different," it's at least going to be using your brain, keeping you engaged. It's never going to get boring, and you might actually make it better. You probably will, to be honest. You probably will.

Just being open to that idea is just a testament to coaching, just questioning it. Just as much as anybody else, my beliefs are just like, "Well, this is just what's possible. There just isn't anything else possible." Then a coach or whoever questions that, and I'm just like, "Wait, what? What are you telling me right now? That's not true? Oh my gosh, my brain is blowing up." I just love that.

This, it's a weight loss group ultimately, or weight maintenance at a certain point, and that's always underlying, but this is the real meat of life. It's like you're doing all of this and not gaining 50 pounds in the process, or binging your face off in order to deal and cope, which would have been how it would've been before.

Summer Merritt: Yeah, and to follow up on that, I'm still not at my goal weight, but I'm okay with that. I've lost 70 pounds, but I maintained through all of these... When we talked at first about what's gone on in the last year, I was like, "Meh, nothing," and then thinking, "Oh, there's actually a whole lot of stuff that's changed." For sure, with the stress of changing offices, adding

employees, employees interacting, it's just a different flow than it used to be, plus COVID, plus remote learning for kids.

I would've definitely resorted to food a ton, but I just told myself, "There's a lot of stuff going on. I'm going to give myself compassion, and I'm just going to maintain." Of course, there's been lots of urges when emotions run high and I've had lots of junky thoughts, that junk food would fix this in the moment. In the moment, it tastes delicious, but I just have to think, "No, that's not really what I want. That would just be adding misery on top of already a tough year for everybody in the country." Mine is nowhere near as tough as it could be, but that has really been helpful, just knowing that I can maintain my weight and that doesn't have to be another added source of stress.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Honestly, I think maintaining your weight during this year is like losing 50 pounds in a normal year. Literally, that is a massive accomplishment. I just want to make sure it's not minimized. That's really, really huge, especially when you're someone who has used food in the past to help you to cope, to help you to deal with things. To not go back to that is amazing.

Let's talk a little bit more about COVID. There's so much that we could say, but in particular, you started taking a bit of a leadership role within your community when you were noticing that the other people who seemed to have leadership roles were not really taking it seriously or weren't preparing or things like that. That was definitely something you got coaching help on. You want to touch on that a little bit?

Summer Merritt: Sure. It took everybody a little bit by surprise, COVID did. I have a friend actually from my very first coaching group who's an infectious disease doctor with the CDC, and so she and I had been texting, and she's in Seattle, "Watch out. This is coming." I have another friend in Seattle, other friends in New York. I was talking to friends in the small town where I am, "Are you following the news? Are you watching this?" The physicians were, yes, definitely watching it, but it seemed like everybody else was just kind of oblivious like, "That's not going to happen

here. It's going to stay in China, or it's going to stay in big cities. It's not going to be a problem here."

To be perfectly honest, at the beginning, I was scared. It was definitely a lot driven by fear of this could be really horrible. This could be awful. What are we going to do? We're not prepared. The hospital is definitely not prepared. There's no stocks of PPE. My fellow community physicians don't have anything. Just since I had been talking with people other places, I had totally stocked my office in February, and so I was good. I had bunny suits, the whole thing.

Katrina Ubell: The whole nine, yeah.

Summer Merritt: I got physicians together. When you're in a private practice, even though I'm on some hospital executive committee boards, you don't really have necessarily a lot of interaction with other physicians being by yourself. A few of us started texting each other, and then it got to be bigger and bigger, where it was email, and it was, "Okay, well, we need to be a voice. We need to be a unified medical voice in our community, telling our community this could potentially come here."

It started with like six physicians, and it ended up being almost 600 healthcare workers. Between two cities, physicians, nurse practitioners, PAs, RTs, everything, we came together and we formed a coalition called Protect Our Frontline. We put out ads in papers, and we did a social media campaign just telling people to... This is when people weren't staying at home, and so it was more of a stay-at-home campaign at that point, because this was late March, early April. We went to city council meetings, put articles in newspapers, went on the news, just were telling people to beware.

Katrina Ubell: You got pushback, though. It's not like in the community necessarily everyone welcomed this. There were definitely people who were like-

Summer Merritt: Oh, no. Lots of people had lots of thoughts.

Katrina Ubell: ... "Little lady, go back to your place."

Summer Merritt: Yeah, very much so. I love Texas, and being from Texas, people are very fiercely independent and don't like people telling them what to do. I would say that for 99% of problems, that that attitude is great, but for a viral pandemic, individualism and not being told what to do don't go together very well. The local politicians, they just had a really big problem, and they just wanted me to be quiet and go away, just because they just thought it was fake. I think that all of us have probably experienced that throughout the pandemic. It was still, though, that same urge, where I really felt like, "These were scientific facts. I'm right. All of these other medical professionals agree with me. We're right." I had to fight that urge really badly. They wanted to be louder and say, "No, we just need to go on living our lives and doing everything like normal." That was tricky, and so I did get a lot of coaching on that.

I laugh because on one of our coaching calls I talked about how I was fueled by rage for about three weeks, and I got a lot of stuff done. I got one of my patients who's really well-connected to donate tons of PPE. I got PPE to every community physician who wanted it. I got PPE for the hospital. But it was a bad feeling, and so I had to get coached through that, that probably rage was... One, it made me feel bad, and then it wore me out. I was physically and emotionally exhausted, but that rage felt better than the fear I was feeling underneath thinking, "What if something bad happens to my family? What about all my patients? How can I protect all these people?"

Katrina Ubell: Right, and talking about you can still be doing all those same things fueled by different emotions. It doesn't have to be rage. Sometimes we think, "Look what I'm getting done. See? Rage must be the way to get things done." That's fine, but you start to realize you can only keep that up for so long. Of course, it was becoming more and more apparent that this wasn't going to be just this quick blip or this spurt, and then it was going to be done. It was just like, no, we're in it for the long haul here, so let's figure out a way to do this in a consistent and sustainable kind of a way.

Summer Merritt: Right. It was hair on fire, running around, fueled by rage for about three weeks, and then I just wanted to lay in bed and cry and sleep. I'm sure everybody had moments like that.

Katrina Ubell: Yes.

Summer Merritt: When I realized that I had to ratchet it back and that it was going to be more marathon pacing, my husband is very fit, a triathlete, and I told him, I was like, "I feel like I'm running a marathon through molasses, and I hate running and I hate molasses." I would have to intersperse little bits of humor throughout that. That was definitely helpful.

I don't know why I was so outspoken. For sure, me at 25, I don't know if I would've done that. Me at 30, I don't know that I would've done that. But I looked around and nobody else was saying or doing anything. It wasn't a "Who better than me?" It was a "Well, I can do this. Why not? Nobody else is speaking up, why can't I go do this?"

Then, too, I also had to fight a lot with people-pleasing, because I think before I would've been afraid what people would think if they didn't agree with me, or if I was saying something that they didn't want to hear or saying something that wasn't popular, that I would've really worried that, "Oh, the mayor doesn't like me. He's made it very apparent he doesn't like me." It would've crumbled me on the inside thinking that I said something that ticked somebody off. But I think that all the work that we've done, I realize that, "You know what, I like me. I'm doing this for the right reasons. I have good intentions. I have the support of all these other physicians. Who cares what he thinks?"

Katrina Ubell: And maybe are you screwing it up sometimes? Maybe could you have said something a little better? Maybe. Also, who cares? It's not like we have to believe that we're never making a mistake. It's like, yeah, maybe there would've been a better way to collaborate with the mayor, but that's not how it went down. Meanwhile, off we go.

What is so important, you totally touched on this, is that self-regard, that relationship with yourself, actually caring about yourself enough, liking yourself enough, respecting yourself enough to just say, "You know what, this is what I'm going to do. I'm going to do it just full speed ahead. I'm not going to stop just because someone has an opinion of me." You know what I like sometimes thinking? "That guy, that mayor can't think anything worse of you than you've already thought about yourself at some point in your life.

Summer Merritt: No.

Katrina Ubell: So it's like, "You're going to be okay."

Summer Merritt: Until I sat down and processed this, you talk a lot about having your own back, and that never really clicked for me until this, because I looked and I thought, "You know what, even if the other physicians weren't with me, I would still do this, because I feel like it's the right thing to do, even if people don't agree." Yeah, I screwed it up totally. I went to the city council meeting and I spoke, and then I ended up freaking crying at the city council meeting. Then I'm trying to beat myself up like, "Why'd you cry? You acted like a big baby." I'm like, "Who cares? Whatever. People cry. There's lots of emotions. Whatever."

Katrina Ubell: It means you care, right? If you didn't care, you wouldn't have cried. Yeah, 100%. Oh my gosh, so good.

Summer Merritt: Yeah. It was a funny situation. What ended up being really funny then is that I think people did listen, especially when stuff was really bad in New York and Detroit and Chicago in April and May, and then of course it spread across the Sun Belt, as it did this summer. Our case counts were really high in July and August, and our hospital was almost out of PCR tests. We had 10 tests left.

Someone from inside the hospital called me and said, "Well, we know you're connected. Do you think you can somehow get a hold of the governor and get us more tests?" Because that's the only way, is you have to go through the governor's office,

through the Strike Force, to be able to get more testing kits. I don't know why, but I just said, "Sure. Of course. I'll figure it out."

Then I call a couple patients who know a couple people. This is like Saturday morning at 9:00. I'm still in my pajamas, haven't had any coffee, nothing. Then the next thing I know, I'm on the phone with the governor, and he's saying, "Okay, sure. I'll figure out a way to get you tests."

Katrina Ubell: Amazing. That's so good.

Summer Merritt: I don't think that I would've ever had that nerve to do something like that without being too scared of what someone was going to think about me.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. This is all this... It's not like you are like, "I'm going to..." This is what I love. When we work together, because you're in masters, you're in the continuation program, when we decided to work together, you can't even begin to imagine that this is what's going to be coming up for you. Life happens, and then coaching helps to support you in that. All this work that you were doing on yourself, even the last couple of years, was preparing you to be able to show up in this pandemic in this way, to be that person who's like, "Absolutely, we'll get you more tests. I'm going to use my network and all my resources to make sure that it happens." That's just so cool, just knowing, "There's a reason why, two years ago, we were coaching on whatever it was." This just is the result of all of that. I love it.

Summer Merritt: Three years ago, I totally thought that I'm going to be in for six months and fix all the problems; I'll be out. But then every time that it comes up for renewal, I think, "Well, I could probably use more coaching to help with X, Y, and Z, because I know X, Y, and Z is coming up." Honestly, I can't imagine not having had coaching the last six months. Even if I just pop in and out with what I feel like are bigger issues and I work through those, and I get the little private coaching with the coaches that are one-on-one and then I hammer through all of

that, then I just feel energized to be able to, okay, I can push forward now.

I felt like a failure at the beginning that I "kept needing" coaching, but like we talked about on the last podcast, why wouldn't I need coaching? My life is still happening. I'm still growing. If I'm trying to better myself month after month after month, why not keep having people help me figure things out so that I don't get stuck and I'm not stagnant, and that I can continue to have my own back?

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. I always think of it sometimes as like, "I just got coached, and now my head is back on straight again." You know what I mean? It's just like, "Okay, I've got some clarity. I know what I need to do. I'm not stuck in the mire anymore or convincing myself I'm confused or I don't have enough information, or this is really hard and it's not solvable."

It doesn't even take that much coaching, honestly. It's usually like one or two questions that the coach asks me, and then I'm just like, "Okay, I get it." That is something that, ongoing, why wouldn't you want that help? I know I need it so much. I just think it's like fuel. It just accelerates everything for you, because you still could've done all of this stuff and just had a much worse experience of doing it.

Summer Merritt: Yeah, exactly. Because it's like when I would feel like my head was about to blow off just from being fueled by rage, I would check in with Lynn or check in with you, and then everything feels like it's realigned again, like, "Okay, now I can keep moving forward." Then when I feel like I'm just frayed and can't process anything else and I just need someone to bounce an idea off of, it's so different talking to a coach through something like that versus talking to a friend versus talking to a family member, because they have in their head something that they think that you should do, whereas with coaching-

Katrina Ubell: They have an opinion. Right.

Summer Merritt: Right. You care about your clients and the people that you're coaching, but you're not tied to their outcome-

Katrina Ubell: Exactly. I want for you whatever you want to do, so I'm going to help you to figure that out. I don't know what you should do. Yeah, exactly.

Summer Merritt: Right. I just feel like you unscramble my thoughts and help me just to get all of it sorted, so then I can proceed down my own path, not a path anybody else wants for me, not the path you want for me, but just this path that I didn't even know existed before.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. That's so cool. I love it.

Okay, then there's one other big thing that's happened this year. You just decided to start a little side business, because why not?

Summer Merritt: Well, I had a little bit of free time.

About five years ago, I was getting on a plane with my family, and I had just read this article, I think it was in Newsweek, about how gross airplanes were, and how they only cleaned airplanes every 90 days and how much bacteria was on the seatbelt and on the tray and on the tray latch and on the bathroom. I'm not usually that much of a germophobe, but I had a little baby then, and so it was just freaking me out. So I bought all this stuff and I was cleaning off the entire row, and I thought, "I wish somebody would make something where all these cleaning products were already together and it was just easy." So I thought, "Why can't I do that?"

I had this idea that it was going to be this travel kit, not so much with PPE, but just a travel kit for a family for flying, with hand sanitizer and wipes and things like that. I applied for a patent. It was 2015. Life got busy. I just dropped it. It was kind of where I would just wallow in indecision. I couldn't figure out a name, so I didn't apply for a trademark, because I couldn't figure out a name. I just let it all expire, and I forgot about it.

Then, of course, we have a viral pandemic, which would've been really great if I would've had that before, but I didn't, which was fine, because I still had the idea. I thought, "People aren't

wanting to come into the office right now. I've got a little bit of downtime. Let me go ahead and proceed and go forward." I launched a product earlier this month called The Doctor Bag. But what's good is I waited, because I had an even better idea this time. I thought, "Why don't I find a bag, the actual properties of the bag are antimicrobial, and so I can take that bag different places and it's not going to hold on to bacteria or viruses, and then I can keep PPE in that little bag?" That's kind of what happened. I just went and...

It's hilarious because my son is 11, and he's very astute. He reads the Wall Street Journal and asks Alexa about stocks, and so this is stressing him out big time because there's all these shipments of Purell coming to our house and all these shipments of masks and all these shipments of bags. He looked at me, he goes, "If this doesn't work out, am I going to be able to go to college still?" I'm like, "I think you'll be fine." He goes, "Actually, I figured it out. If you can't sell these bags with the things, I checked on eBay and you can sell all the individual items." Major vote of confidence there. It's just I don't-

Katrina Ubell: Oh my gosh. You're like, "Listen, that's not a very growth mindset kind of a vibe."

Summer Merritt: No, it's not at all. I said, "We can't think like that." I thought, "This is a good idea. Why wouldn't other people want something like this?" I wanted it. Maybe other people would want this too. This has just been a whole different wheelhouse of very uncomfortable cold calling people who own other companies to see if they'll let me include their products in my bag. I have to just coach myself through it all the time like, "I don't know what I'm doing. Why am I doing this?" I just say, "I do hard things all the time. I can figure this out too."

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, absolutely. If someone wants to check that out, where can they go to find out more about it?

Summer Merritt: They can go to thedoctorbag.com, or they can go on social media to [thedoctor.bag](https://www.facebook.com/thedoctor.bag) on Facebook or Instagram. I just had a really good conversation yesterday with one of the

suppliers of one of the products, and I think that we're going to combine together for a big holiday kit. I'm really excited about that.

Katrina Ubell: If you want in on the ground floor before they're all sold out and you can't find any, and Max's dreams will all come true-

Summer Merritt: I know. It's been a total family project because I have my mom sewing in the labels.

Katrina Ubell: Oh, really?

Summer Merritt: Yeah. No, it's a total family project. We'll see what happens. It might be absolutely nothing. That's another thing that I had to think about on the beginning is "This might be a total failure, and that's okay."

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, and that's okay. Exactly. If you look at the statistics, yeah, most small businesses will fail. But if you look at it like, "This probably won't work out," for sure then that will be the result. You'll end up sabotaging it. We've even coached on that. I'm like, "100% this thing is going to work. It's going to blow up like crazy. It's going to be amazing." That's the number one thing we have to work on, is the belief in that success, and then you go out and create that success.

Summer Merritt: I have to keep saying it, because I had a lot of regret for not doing it before. So I thought, "Well, five years from now, I would have regret for still not doing it, so I might as well just do it." I'd rather have a failure and have tried than-

Katrina Ubell: Yes, have tried.

Summer Merritt: ... regretted not doing it at all.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. And you can just decide that, had you done it five years ago, it wouldn't have been as good. It's totally better now. There's probably new technologies and new ways of selling things that make it better. We can just decide the world wasn't ready for this five years ago, but it sure as heck is now. That's for sure, right?

Summer Merritt: I'm hoping so. No, and I'm believing that it is. I really do believe that even if it fails, and it means that I lose money and it was a little bit of lost time, it's really been a good exercise in growth for me just figuring out how to do something different. I think that maybe other people in primary care feel that way sometimes, that sometimes it's the same. I've been doing this for 12 years. Sometimes it's the same old thing over and over and over again, and I just need something else for my brain to be interested in for a little bit. I don't run marathons and I don't have other hobbies, and we can't travel right now, so-

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Why not? Yeah.

Summer Merritt: Why not?

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, that's amazing. It's so fun. It's a very cute bag. It's really adorable.

Summer Merritt: Thank you.

Katrina Ubell: The Doctor Bag. Yeah, everyone should check it out for sure.

All right, Summer, what else? Do you have any other messages for anyone who's listening?

Summer Merritt: I can't think of anything else. I think that if they've ever, like I said last time, if they've ever contemplated coaching, to really get coaching. If they feel like coaching is a one-and-done, because I really thought that I was a failure if I kept getting coaching, but it's not. It's made me more successful and just feel better about myself and my experience of my own life. I'm making that happen, and I'm not just letting life happen to me. I'm opening up new avenues that I want to explore. I've decided that my new thought is that I don't know what my life is going to look like in five years, and I like that.

Katrina Ubell: Right. Isn't it so cool? Yeah, to think you can't even begin to dream about what you could have in five years, that's the kind of life that you want to be living, where you're like, "It's going to be so good my brain can't even begin to comprehend it

right now." That's where I'm at. I'm like, "I don't know. It's going to be amazing, though, for sure."

Summer Merritt: For sure. I think before, because I felt so bad about myself all the time and so unsure, that I wanted the comfort of thinking about the future, that "Okay, I know where I'm going to be living. I know the house I'm going to be living in. I know what my practice is going to look like." That was just comforting to me to think that's what it'll be like five years from now, 10 years from now. But now I've taken that away, and I have thought, "You know what, I don't want to know what it's going to look like. I want it to be unknown," because, I think, that anticipation of something bigger or better than I've imagined. Even if it is the same exact practice in the same exact town, it's still going to be better, just because of the way I'm anticipating it.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Just to put a little coach spin on what you just said, what you were doing before is you felt so uncertain of yourself that you were looking for certainty in your external world. You want to know that life will look this way and I'll live in this house and this'll be my practice. Now what you've traded that for is certainty in yourself, that you know that you can create something amazing, and then allowing for the uncertainty in your life in your external circumstances. That's so cool seeing that switch, just going, "I can handle whatever comes my way because I've got me." What has 2020 proven to you? 100% that, over and over and over again.

Summer Merritt: That's something else that has been helpful in coaching in 2020, is the uncertainty and feeling okay with feeling uncertainty. I don't have to have all the answers right now. Nobody has all the answers. Dr. Fauci, bless his heart, doesn't have all the answers.

Katrina Ubell: Bless his heart. Yes.

Summer Merritt: I love him beyond compare, but if he doesn't have the answers, of course it's okay for me not to have the answers and it's okay for me to feel uncertain. One mantra that I've gone

back to over and over and over again that's been so helpful is
"Of course I feel weird. This is 2020, and it's weird."

Katrina Ubell: Yes. Right. It's just like this is the theme for this year. Why would it be any different, right? Yeah.

Summer Merritt: Right. It's not just me. Everybody is feeling a little bit weird. Of course I'm going to feel weird.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, totally.

Summer Merritt: Yeah, and just giving myself compassion for not knowing. For all of us who are overachievers and control-minded individuals, giving over to the uncertainty is really hard.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, totally. But it's totally possible, right?

Summer Merritt: Yes.

Katrina Ubell: That's what we were talking about here. Yeah, that's so good. I love it.

Summer Merritt: It makes people really annoyed because everyone says, "I just want 2020 to be over with. Can we just go ahead and have Christmas?" I've said, "Well, why can't 2020 be amazing?" There can be so much innovation, so much creativity that come from this. Why can't we see that flip side of the coin? Yes, it's been horrible for lots of people, and I can't imagine people that have lost family members and things like that. But why can't we find little bits of good that will come out of this, and that will make us see how important health is and how important education is and how important our families are?

Katrina Ubell: We have to allow the good to come to us. I think we're so like, "This year sucks. Therefore, that is the lens through which I will see all of it. Nothing good has happened," when that's just not the case at all. There's so many amazing things that have happened. You just have to let your brain see it, and allow yourself to even experience the positive emotions.

I think in some ways it's almost very similar to the grief experience, where it's like, "Well, am I allowed to be happy with all the stuff that's going on? Am I allowed to pursue interests or passions that I have of my own? Am I allowed to actually lose weight when there's people dying of this virus? Is that selfish of me?" No. We still can live our lives doing the things that we want to do, so that we can show up as that best version of ourselves, and of course then, as doctors, help everyone around us in a really impactful way. Amazing.

Summer, thank you so much for coming on. Maybe we'll do another one in a year, another update.

Summer Merritt: I hope so.

Katrina Ubell: All right. Take care. Thank you.

Did you know that you can find a lot more help from me on my website? Go to katrinaubellmd.com and click on Free Resources.