



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 number 229.

Welcome to the Weight Loss for Busy Physicians podcast. I'm your host, master certified life and weight loss coach, Katrina Ubell, MD. This is the podcast where busy doctors like you come to learn how to lose weight for the last time by harnessing the power of your mind. 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, and if you're new, I'm so glad you're here. Welcome. I have a great episode for you today. It's actually a really fun kind of twist on a success story and I know you're going to love it.

I have to tell you that things are, I think they're turning around a little. I feel like everybody's mood that I interact with has been enlightening. Yesterday, I actually went into a store and it said that masks were optional if you were vaccinated. I was like, "Oh my gosh, I feel like I'm naked. This is actually pretty fun." I actually don't mind wearing a mask, but when you're a glasses wearer, it does add an extra level of complexity to the mask wearing. So I thought, "I'm just going to try this out." I don't think I got close enough to anybody where it would probably even

be a real concern, but anyway, it's fun to see that things are opening back up again. I know my kids have some camps planned and just everybody's on it and doing it and it's just so fun, right? I'm just wanting to share in that. That's just really been a bright spot, lately, which is so great.

All right. So let me tell you about who my guest is today. My guest is Deb Butzbach. She is an oncologist and she was a client of mine several years ago. She'll tell you the whole story. It was really interesting. She reached out to me and said, "Hey, I'd really like to come on and share with you that losing weight was great but not the best part of working with you." She wanted to share some unexpected benefits of doing weight loss coaching and she'll tell you all about it, but I thought that was such a good idea. We focus a lot on the weight loss and we have, of course, talked on the podcast before about all the other things that change and how your whole life gets better. Not because you're thin, but because you're doing the work you need to do to get the weight, to come off and to stop overeating, but she really digs into it.

She had some significant issues with some relationships and she just found that that really made such a significant difference. Of course, what she says about what her husband said when she thought about signing up for masters is so fun. She's not the only one who's shared how much the partners and the husbands get into it when they're like, "Oh my gosh, this is making such a big difference for our whole life in general. Just keep doing it and do what you need to do." But what's also really cool is that she has now become a coach herself and she is coaching people who have completed their cancer treatment and are looking to change their whole viewpoint about life afterward, really addressing the fear and anxiety and, honestly, terror that a lot of people feel about possibly having a recurrence.

So I just thought it was such a great idea to have her come on and just let all of you know who may take care of patients who are struggling after cancer in whatever way, shape or form. I just thought this was really good information to get out there because I don't know of anybody else who's helping this kind of group in this way, and I just think her work is amazing and would be just so helpful to so many people. So you'll definitely want to listen toward the end when she tells you more about what she does with coaching. She's got a free Facebook group. She's got free help for people, paid help for people who want more additional help and so it's totally worth it to find out more about that. So I am excited to bring you my conversation with Deb Butzbach. Please enjoy and I'll talk to you next week. Deb. I'm so excited to have you on the podcast. Thanks for joining me.

Deb Butzbach: I am so happy to be here. So much fun. It's so nice to see your face.

Katrina Ubell: I know. We haven't seen each other in a long time. We haven't talked in a while and this is actually a really fun episode because as I was just telling you, I was thinking that I've had several other people coming on talking about their weight loss success and how weight loss coaching has helped them so much with their weight, and you came in going, "You know what? Yeah, I lost a bunch of weight and that was great, but there are so many other things that totally changed my life and were arguably more worthwhile or better," or just you're more excited about than losing the weight, which I think when people are overweight, they have a hard time believing that because they really are like, "No, but I'm really still pretty sure that if I were thinner, things would be better." But anyway, I would just love for you to share your story of coming into the program and your experience that you went through in losing weight and then, of course, all the other benefits.

Deb Butzbach: So I actually came in to the program, it was probably three or four years ago now. I was at about 195 pounds and I was right where everyone is where you're like, "I just don't know what to do. I've tried it all. I can't tolerate it. I'm sorry."

Katrina Ubell: How tall are you?

Deb Butzbach: I'm 5' 6".

Katrina Ubell: Okay, just it helps to know with weight so we have some idea.

Deb Butzbach: So I came in and at the same time, I was really just struggling with feeling burned out at work. I am an oncologist and I had a lot of awareness that my patients just needed more than I was giving them. I always felt uncomfortable and I always was stressed out when I had bad news to give. I didn't even realize that I was totally using food to get through my hard days at work. I had no recognition of this and I had gotten to a point where my husband and I were arguing a lot and I was having a lot of issues with one of my kids. I just was like, "Oh, if I could just get thin, at least I'd have one thing under control," and then-

Katrina Ubell: Can I just say, who hasn't had that thought, right? "Everything is burning down around me, but if I could just be skinny."

Deb Butzbach: It's so true because I was like, "Well, if I could just be thin, then at least I wouldn't hate how I looked when I looked in the mirror." I felt like as a physician, "If I can't figure it out, there's something wrong with me because I'm telling my cancer patients being overweight increases your risk of dying of your cancer, but here I am a fat doctor and it just felt so inauthentic counseling people on this." So I came into your program and I think like a lot of other people, I looked at it and I was like, "Wow, that's a lot of money." But I had actually known someone who went through your program ahead of me and I literally would sit in tumor

board with her and watch her just melt away and so I didn't have a whole lot of the drama that some people do. I was like, "I know this works. It's worth anything. I'll give her anything she wants. I'm all in." So I found out about the program. I listened to three of your podcasts and I signed up for your coaching group.

Katrina Ubell: Wow, but that just goes to show when you have a friend, when someone who's having those results, I think I'm much less skeptical. I'm like, "Yeah, whatever. Just, what's the link to sign up? Just tell me."

Deb Butzbach: I guess I'm going to do it and my husband was even more skeptical than I was and-

Katrina Ubell: He's a doctor, too, so just to put that out there.

Deb Butzbach: He is. He's a urologist and one of the things that is very clear in our relationship is he does not mind me being chunky. So that was something when he-

Katrina Ubell: He did not see it as a problem.

Deb Butzbach: Yeah. He didn't see this as a problem. So I went through the program and I lost weight. I lost 45 pounds, which got me to where I wanted to be, but what really, really changed was that I took ownership of the fact that his and my issues were the result of my brain drama. My burnout at work was the result of the things I was telling myself and my feeling of that I needed to eat to give someone bad news was the result of what I was telling myself. I remember at one point early on, you coached me, I have a son who has ADHD, anxiety and depression and we were having huge issues with him at that point. You coached me and I was like, "But he's yelling and he's hurting my head." You said, "But is he really? Is it really damaging you that much, or is that just more the story you're telling yourself about this interaction with your son?"

It just turned on a light in my head. I don't know. I don't know how to describe it more than that, but over the intervening six months, the first part of our coaching group, I still was really struggling with a lot of family issues. We got to the end of my first coaching program and I felt like I wasn't done yet. I just felt like there was more that I needed to do because, actually, I'll tell you something horrible. I'd actually been like, "Oh, I didn't realize all this other stuff was here. I don't need to work on the weight; I need to figure out all this other shit." So I actually didn't lose much in my first six months because I opened the Pandora's Box and was like, "Holy crap! Look at this mess that I have to deal with," and all of a sudden, maybe the weight is not really what my problem is.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Well, the food is what we ask to solve the problem. When we keep just trying to solve for food by trying different diets, we're totally confused, right? We're like, "Why is eating keto not solving the problem?" So we don't realize that there's all this other stuff behind there that is the real problem, that we're asking food to solve for us, exactly. So you take the food away and you're like, "Oh, look at what -

Deb Butzbach: Actually, I realized pretty early on, I was like, "Oh, I actually don't really care about the weight so much. I really would like to sort out the rest of this because my marriage is on the rocks. My kid isn't therapy, life is not going so great and maybe I can fix this." So I came to my husband and I said, "Hey, the next six months signup is starting. What do you think? I think I'd like to do another six months." He said, "Can I just tell you that was the best money we've ever spent in our entire marriage? You stay in the program as long as you want. I am all in." He's like, "Here's your check," and he literally sat down at the table, wrote me a check and I sent it in to you. But he was like, "Nothing has changed our marriage the way this has and 100%, you absolutely should stay in for another six months."

Katrina Ubell: Well, that is actually not that uncommon of an experience where the husbands at first, or the partners are just like, "I don't know. This seems ridiculous. Whatever. You just need to move more and eat less or whatever they say." Then, after six months they're like, "Give her anything she wants because this is the best thing that's ever happened to us. I don't know what this voodoo magic is, but -

Deb Butzbach: Whatever it is, keep doing it. At the end of our year together, at that point, I felt like I was ready to maybe try it on my own a little bit. I had watched something setting an impossible goal for the year because my husband and I were in a much better place, but my son and I were still really struggling. He had been in therapy for six or seven years and when I looked back at the photo albums in every picture, he had a smile, but he had a little worried frown between his eyes. I looked back and I was like, "My God, this child is in so much pain." So I set a goal for the year after you and I finished of having him be my favorite person on the planet.

Katrina Ubell: Oh, my gosh. I love it. That's so good.

Deb Butzbach: Because I was like, "If I loved him 100%," oh my God, I'm going to cry. But, "If I loved this child 100% unconditionally, what do you think that would do for him looking sad in pictures, because if I'm taking pictures and he's looking at me and not looking at me full of love, there's something wrong with how I'm parenting this child." So I set my intention for the year to just spend a year really working on loving him better than anyone else on the planet, which when you have four kids, is saying a lot, because to decide that I'm going to love him more than everyone else, that's saying something. That was why it was sort of my impossible goal was I didn't think it was possible to love him more. But I will tell you, that was two years ago. He is out of therapy, off of his anxiety meds, off of his depression meds, has transitioned into high school and got straight As for his first quarter ever in his life, in his freshman year at a private high school.

Katrina Ubell: Wow. That is amazing.

Deb Butzbach: What we do with our brains changes our lives.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, and arguably other people's lives too.

Deb Butzbach: And other people's lives. I'm not saying that it was entirely just me loving him more.

Katrina Ubell: Right. Right. We can't say that for sure coaching will result in that, but I bet your experience of being with him for that year was so much better than -

Deb Butzbach: Right, and I just decided that no matter what he did, I wasn't going to respond negatively. I was like, "I'm not going to yell at him. I'm not going to criticize him. I'm not going to punish him. I'm not going to get into these screaming matches." So when he would start to escalate with me, I'd be like, "I love you so much. I think you need a break. How about you just go take a half an hour in your room and come talk to me when you're ready?" Then I would walk away and it just that's what a parent who unconditionally loves their kid would do; whereas, what I was doing was trying to make him be someone who doesn't escalate fights and throw things. I'm not saying is going to work for everyone's kids, but really just getting control of my brain where I wasn't responding to everything he did, like actually being an adult. Holy crap.

Katrina Ubell: Right. Well, that's what's so interesting. We're like, "Hey teenager, why are you acting like a teenager? I'm the one acting like a teenager. You should be acting like the adult."

Deb Butzbach: But I think that it was one of those things where just taking some responsibility for what I was bringing into the situation just made such a difference.

Katrina Ubell: I have a question, though, because I think it would be really easy. You were saying that you realized that you were taking ownership of your role in the difficulty in the

marriage, the difficulty in various relationships, things like that. When you realized that, did you go through a phase of feeling disheartened by that or upset by that, or were you like, "This is the best news. Oh my gosh, so great because I can change it?" Because I think people can go both ways. I think some people are afraid, "I'm going to find out all the problems are me and I don't want to do that," so they're afraid to-

Deb Butzbach: I still don't believe that all the problems are me. I believe that there's two parts to every story. But what I realized is I don't have to get into it with someone else's junk. I don't have to fight when someone wants to fight and you know what? The experience is so much better when I'm not escalating whatever is going on. So like there are days where my son still will be like, he's just one of those kids. He's going to have some challenges in his life and there'll be days where he comes in and it's my fault that he lost, what was it last week? The plug to the boat that literally laid on the counter for three weeks with me saying, "Hey, you might want to put this someplace where you can find it when you need it."

He wanted to go out fishing and the boat plug is then gone and, of course, he's like, "This is my fault." In the past, that would have been like he yells at me and I yell back at him and I say, "Well, if you had just done what I told you when I told you to do it, this wouldn't have been a problem," and it would have just blown up from there. So I was like, "Hey, I'm so sorry that the plug's missing. I have no idea where it went. Here are the places where you might want to check. If you can't find it there, I would go down and look at the boat and see if you can figure out what model we need to replace it. Then I would encourage you to go on Amazon, find what we need, put it in the cart and let me know when you've got that all done," and I walked away.

Katrina Ubell: Yes.

Deb Butzbach: He's walking after me and I'm like, "I'm sorry, that's the extent-

Katrina Ubell: Wow. Well, you're letting him own the problem and you're giving him some solutions to help him problem solve it and then it's on him, which honestly is, in my opinion, one of the best tools that you can give a child is the ability to figure stuff for themselves, especially once they're a teenager. I parents similarly where I'm like, "Okay, so it sounds like you need to email someone at school. Do you know who you're going to email?" "Yes." I'm like, "I have no idea what's going on. I don't know who to call about anything. I don't get involved." I'm like, "This is part of you learning how to grow up and advocate for yourself."

Deb Butzbach: It does just really, first of all, it puts the ownership on them, which really does raise much more resilient children than us always solving their problems. It really tells him that, "Oh, screaming at someone else is not going to get me anything that I want." He's learned over the years that if he comes in and he says, "I lost blah, blah, blah. I know you told me to put it away and I can't find it." That'll recruit me into helping him look. But when he comes and starts yelling, I'm just like, "Woo-hoo. I'm out."

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. I won't engage in that.

Deb Butzbach: "Done."

Katrina Ubell: That's amazing. So as you're doing all that work, you lost all this weight too.

Deb Butzbach: So yeah, that just sort of just happened. I don't know. That happened along the way.

Katrina Ubell: But see, I'm not surprised that you say that, though because when you no longer are creating a life, all these scenarios in your life that are so intolerable that you need food to improve them and so the scenarios are better in your life because you're actually managing them. Then you're not eating the food and then you're not overeating

anymore and then your body goes to a normal weight for you. So again, I just want to reiterate once again, that is what you have to look at this stuff, changing your food and deciding if you're going to eat low carb or paleo or whatever. None of that is going to be the long-term solution.

Deb Butzbach: Although, I will say for me, I had to cut out the flour and sugar for a good degree because my body was not able to sense, "Am I hungry? Am I not hungry? What am I really wanting? Am I full? I'm very sensitive to flour and sugar and so I had to do that because during the pandemic, things got a little, I started eating because I wanted something fun and I ate fully being aware it. I was like, "Okay, I am going to not care if I gain 10 pounds during the pandemic, because I can't do any of the stuff I like to do. I'm going to bake with my kids." But I went into it consciously knowing that that was the outcome of that and my husband is like, "You're so much squishier now. I love it.

Katrina Ubell: Well, here's the thing, if you want to lose those 10 pounds, you know exactly how to do it. That's what's so empowering. It's not like you're like, "Oh, I got to find out what's the latest diet thing." It's like, "No, it's the same thing."

Deb Butzbach: You know what's really crazy, as I've gone through all of this, I've realized I don't actually even want to be thin. I don't care if I'm thin or not. I know that sounds crazy and everybody's like, "How can you not care?" But now I've just decided there are things I want to do that are food related and I choose to do them and I don't really care if I'm as thin as some of my friends are, which I never believed that I would be there.

Katrina Ubell: Talk about freedom, though. The way you can get to that is by getting to that place where you were not emotionally eating anymore and you see that, really, it isn't better when you're at that goal weight. It's fun. It can be nice the

way clothes fit or whatever, but you're like, "No, I'm still me and I'm still living my life," and you might decide you want to stay there, or you might decide you want to gain some weight and either way is totally fine. You're not just thinking that, "This just is impossible for me or see if I could just lose 10 more pounds, then life would be better." No.

Deb Butzbach: No. I actually got to that weight and I was like, "This is a lot of work to stay here," and to stay at that thin weight, I really couldn't eat much. That was not really, really tightly planned. I just decided I'd just, with four teenage boys, I just didn't really want to live like that.

Katrina Ubell: There's nothing wrong with that at all.

Deb Butzbach: I was actually like, "Oh, this is so beautiful. I'm going to just love my body at the weight that supports the life we want to live."

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, totally different perspective on it, having gone through that whole process. So you learned all of this and then you're like, "You know what? I think my cancer patients could actually really benefit from learning this stuff."

Deb Butzbach: So as I was going through this, I just became more and more aware that mindset is so much of everything in life. So I decided to get a life coaching degree and I started doing coaching for cancer patients and my goal is to get everyone to a thought that just feels a little better. Some of them will come on and they really want coaching, and some of them will just take a little thought here and there, but I'm still in the clinic full time.

So I talk all the time with my patients of, "You have cancer." That is just the truth of life is, "You have a cancer diagnosis. We can't change that." But do you want to be thinking, "At some point, my cancer may come back and I may fail and die? Or do you want to be thinking, 'To the best of my knowledge, I'm cancer-free today?'" What feels

better?" Just these little conversations that I have in the clinic just opens people's minds. There's some people who are like, oh, once they hear that, they're like, "Oh, I want more of that," and then there are some people who are like I just get them pointed in the right direction and that's great.

Katrina Ubell: It's almost like giving them permission to have a better outlook. I could see some people being like, "Well, okay. So I beat the cancer for now, but now I have to be in this hypervigilant, worry-filled, anxiety-filled state as though that will prevent the cancer from coming back," or we're so afraid that we'll be happy and then, oh my gosh, the other shoe will drop, so to speak. We'll find out that we have a recurrence, as though worrying that whole time, instead of being happy would prevent that.

Deb Butzbach: That is really, actually, one of the things when I coach people, I coach on that because so many people are afraid to accept that happiness and joy back into their life because they feel like it's going to jinx them. So we really actually need to work on that brain mindset of, "Can I jinx myself by thinking positive thoughts or having positive emotions? I actually coach people because we know that stress hormones like cortisol affect immunity. So I actually believe that if you're living in a place of negativity and you're constantly worrying that your cancer is going to come back, it actually may physiologically increase the odds that your cancer is going to recur.

Katrina Ubell: I agree. I really agree with that. Yeah. I'm like, that's powerful though. Right? You teach people that and then you teach them how to change their thoughts and how to change their beliefs. It's just like giving, handing them such a gift because it's like, let's just say in five years, do you have a recurrence and you pass away. Would you like your last five years to have been spent in terror and fear in this contracted down small life or would you love to be able to say, "You know what? The last five years of my life were the absolute best years?"

Deb Butzbach: Were the best years. I tell patients that all the time. I'm like, "Okay, so here are the two scenarios. One, is 10 years from now, you realize your cancer is cured and you look back on the 10 years. The other option is 10 years from now, you realize, 'I'm going to die tomorrow,' and you look back on the 10 years. Either way, how do you want to look back on those 10 years? Do you want to look at those 10 years that you spent in fear and worry and not doing anything because you were afraid to jinx it, or do you want to look back on it and be like, 'Man, I lived the hell out of those 10 years,' no matter what outcome is going to happen."

Katrina Ubell: Right.

I love that. That is so great. So great. So do you mostly focus on people who are in remission or have found that cure?

Deb Butzbach: I actually don't let anyone in who's still in treatment because a big part of my program is, actually, I do weight coaching because so many people struggle with weight gain after cancer treatment. It's really multifactorial because they're on new medications and they've had changes in their metabolism from being on chemo, but also, it's that whole eating to feel better that I was doing at the start of my journey.

Katrina Ubell: Right. We all understand that here.

Deb Butzbach: We all know that. So I do a lot of coaching on just eating to fuel your best health over eating to feel better emotionally, and then letting someone else help you through all the emotional aftermath of all of this.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. That's amazing. That's amazing. So there might be some people who are cancer survivors themselves, who are listening, but more so, we know that there's a lot of people listening who take care of people who are cancer survivors who are really, really struggling. So it'd be so awesome if doctors could make that connection or

anybody listening, really, so that they can get that help that they need. So you have a podcast. You have a free Facebook group. What's the name of your podcast?

Deb Butzbach: So the podcast is Best Life After Cancer. The Facebook page is the same Best Life After Cancer, but there's an MD on the end, so Best Life After Cancer MD. I have a website that has all sorts of freebies from the start of your cancer journey to the end. There are freebies for good questions. There are freebies for understanding weight. There are freebies for helping to deal with your mindset and that's all at bestlifeaftercancer.com.

Katrina Ubell: Well, I think it's so great about you being a doctor about this is that I could see, even if I were not a doctor myself, if I had gone through this whole cancer treatment thing and then I'm looking for some help, I feel like I would feel safer having a coach who was a doctor because if I came and said, "Well, hey, this thing happened," or, "that thing happened," if it was a non-doctor, I feel like who was like, "Well, don't worry about that." I'd be like, "What do you know? I don't know if I can trust you," but when it's a doctor and you're getting some of that feedback, I think that's really helpful.

Deb Butzbach: I think it does really allow me to point people in the right direction because there are things that I'll be like, "Oh, that's your brain drama going on?" Then they'll tell me something and I'm like, "Hmm, that actually probably should be looked into; back to your primary team for that." So I don't give medical advice, but I do help them to understand when they come and talk to me about something, if I'm concerned, I'll be like, "Oh, this is something that we'll deal with the mind aspect of this, but I also want you reporting that to your primary team." I think a lot of people who come in and want to be a survivor that coaches, don't have that ability to differentiate things.

Katrina Ubell: Right. Well, and they shouldn't be expected to. That's not really their area of expertise. So it's like, you have the both of the best worlds. I think that's what I'm trying to say. You have it all there, which is a great package. And I know you're helping so many people. I think that's so great. I could see coaching being, oh my gosh, so, so, so, so helpful. I've heard of this just friends whose parents have gone through cancer and are just really struggling afterward and really thinking, "I'm not sure I should even have done the treatment because life is so awful afterward." It's such a shame, especially when there's options and ways that we can improve it.

Deb Butzbach: It just really is. People's mindsets, just really, I think that all of us just having gone through the COVID pandemic can understand this because you set this intention of, "I'm going to get through treatment and then life is going to go back to normal," and then it doesn't. It's Pandora's Box. You have this new knowledge that you can't just put back in the box. I think that we've realized this with COVID. A lot of us said, "Well, as soon as I'm vaccinated, life is going to go back to normal." I don't know about you, but I got vaccinated and life didn't just go back to normal. So this is where we start to look at, "Oh, look how much brain drama I have after all of this." This is all things that we can work on.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Amazing. Amazing. Well, Deb, thank you so much for coming on. I know so many people are going to get so much help from you and it was so fun to hear your story and just for you to share how much weight loss coaching, of all things, can help your relationships and everything else. That's so great, so thank you so much.

Deb Butzbach: Thank you so much for all you've done. It's been absolutely life-changing for me and I can't tell you how much I appreciate it.

Katrina Ubell: Oh, thank you, Deb.

Ready to start making progress on your weight loss goals? For lots of free help, go to katrinaubellmd.com and click on free resources.