



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Welcome to the Weight Loss for Busy Physicians podcast. I'm your host, master certified life and Weight Loss coach Katrina Ubell, M.D. 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.

Hello, my friend. Welcome to the podcast today. This is a special one and I'm so glad you're here. Not only is it special because this is the fourth and final episode in the New Year New Thoughts series. But guess what? I'm laughing because I can barely believe it. This episode is the sixth year podcast anniversary. Can you even. I can't. I know when I first started this podcast, it felt like I mean, I've told the story before about starting this podcast. At other anniversary episodes, it was just it felt like such a huge deal. If you'd told me then six years from now, you're still going to be podcasting. I don't even think my brain could have comprehended it. It just felt like a kind of a one day at a time, one week at a time, one episode at a time kind of adventure. And here we are, 316 episodes later and doing this for six years. I actually had noted by this one and my tracking system that this was the sixth year and I thought, No, it can't be.

I literally had to count on my fingers. Really. Is it really? And it actually has been six years. So I know some of you listening are people who have been with me from the very beginning. And if that's the case, I am so, so glad you're still here. Welcome. I mean, so glad you're here. For the people who are newer. I'm so glad you're here as well. And don't let 316 episodes overwhelm you. What I am saying lately is, of course, we have our podcast roadmap, which you can get for free, gives you 30 episodes to get started with. You can get that right away by going to katrinaubellmd.com/resources. That page

will give you all the free resources that are there for you. So great opportunity for you to get some guidance. But another way of going about this is to just scroll and let your finger guide you, let your heart guide you which episode is calling out to you, which is the episode that just seems like it might have the answer that you need?

I cannot even tell you how many things have started for me. Great things that have happened in my life that have started for me from just randomly listening to some person's podcast episode that I was like, This one might be good. And then finding out about something and then that leading me down this whole long path.

And so just know that whichever episode you listen to, you're going to get the information that you need. And when you listen with that perspective, you're so much more likely to be able to really like, absorb, soak in the really good parts that, you know, are exactly what you need and what's going to move you forward. So super, super good. So anyway, happy podcast anniversary. Wish I had some confetti to throw. It's pretty fun if you're doing the math and wondering because I just know that some of you are.

When I first started the podcast, I started with three episodes just say, you know, I published three episodes at once and I remember it was like it was the last Tuesday of the month of January in 2017. So, so crazy. But here we are still doing it. And you're here listening. I'm so glad that you're here. All right. Well, before we dive into the final part of the New Year, new Thought series, I just want to be honest, I have been really kind of missing having a little chit chat with you. And I know some of you like that, and some of you are like, just get to the point already. So it's hard to make everybody happy. But I feel like we need to talk about this. And so I'm just going to mention it. I started watching a show over the Christmas break and the year break that last week, and it's like rocking my world and I'm late to the party.

So you probably have already watched it, or maybe you've already decided you're not going to watch it. But in any case, I started watching *The Handmaid's Tale* and I didn't watch it at first. Well, first of all, we didn't have Hulu and that was like the only thing to watch on Hulu. And I was like, just kind of, you know, on principle. I was like, I'm not paying for another streaming service to watch one show. Like now I'm surviving just fine without watching the show. So that was the initial reason why I didn't get into it. And

then after that, I heard from so many people how it was like very heavy and very dark and very dystopian and like that tends to not be my vibe.

Like, I'm kind of like there's enough real things like that going on in the world that I don't feel like I want to watch that for entertainment. Typically, that's kind of the way I look at it. So I just really didn't think too much of it. I knew my husband was watching it and that he thought it was good, but I just, you know, whatever. I was doing other things. Anyway, in the fall, I listened to an interview with Elisabeth Moss, who is the actress who plays June, who's the main handmaid in the show.

And it was really, really interesting. And I just learned more about the show and just kind of it piqued my interest a little bit. I just it sparked my interest in in maybe watching it. So I talked to Matt, my husband, and I was like, okay, so you've already watched this, right? And he's like, Yeah. I said, Would you watch it again with me? He's like, Yeah, because I really didn't want to watch it by myself. But this is the thing is I really can be a quiet, little sensitive soul. I'm pretty soft and mushy inside and you don't want to live with like. Nightmares or being, like, really scared. Like, I just didn't know. Like, horror is not my thing. I was just like, I just didn't really know what we were going to get into. And I thought, it'll go better if I just have someone by my side. So.

So anyway, we thought because, you know, I have small children. Well, not small children, but medium age children at home. I'm not going to turn that on when they're around. So between Christmas and New Years, my two younger kids who are nine and 11, went off to winter camp. So the YMCA camp they go to in the summer, they actually have this amazing winter camp between the holidays every year. And it's so fun.

Like literally they say it's more fun than summer camp and they love summer camp. So it's just four days, three nights the very last night they have a New Year's Eve party every year. My oldest son, he went to it several times. They go skiing. It's just very, very fun. So anyway, they went and I said to Matt, like, Oh my gosh, we have all day no kids. We can actually like binge watch shows like normal people do. And so that's what we did. So we got through that first week. We got through the first season and wow, wow, wow, wow, wow. Was all I could say. Like and here's the thing. I had actually read a bunch of interviews that Margaret Atwood had given about this. Like, I already knew a lot about the show, but I just never seen it. And oh my gosh, is it powerful and

disturbing? But like, not as scary as I thought it would be, but also really, like, it just hits you.

But, you know, I want to say it's like a good way, but it's also extremely thought provoking, like these characters. And this story is so in my head, like, I'm thinking about it literally all the time. And it's been a very long time since any kind of show or series or movie has kind of like occupied my mind so much. And I think partly it's because, you know, several things that are depicted on there.

Well, Margaret Atwood said that every single thing that is in that book, in the book at least, has actually happened in real life. Like, you know, at some time in human history, it's actually happened. And I think that's something that really, really hits home where it's like, oh, this isn't just someone's imagination. This is like, this is actually a thing. And just what we're kind of facing moving forward. I think it's very thought provoking. So certainly not saying that you should watch it if you decided you didn't want to. It's not for you. Cool. Totally get it. But wow, emotionally, it has hooked me.

So I think right now we are halfway through the third season. There's five seasons, so we're about halfway through the whole thing right now. And then I've heard they're going to do one more season for Handmaid's Tale, but then Margaret Atwood, maybe a year or two ago, I think published her sequel, which is like 15 years after Handmaid's Tale and talks about. So Hamill's tale is kind of more about the rise of a totalitarian society. And the second book is about the fall of it. So I'm desperate to know more about that, and they're going to make a show about that as well. So that'll be the follow up. So I think we're going to have Gilead, which is the name of their the country that America used to be, at least the the lower 48 Gilead is going to be in my life for a while to come.

So anyway, and if you're into it, then you can share in my I also said Joy is a joy. I don't know. It's just like so thought provoking and so like, it's very interesting. It just gives you really a lot to simmer on. And I will also just say that if you're going through a hard time right now, probably not your thing, you can skip this one if you're going through anything reproductive health ish that is a sensitive subject for you, then maybe this is also not a good show for you. So that's cool. It'll wait for you for another time or never and you'll be just fine if you don't watch it. I'll just share that.

Okay. So next we're going to talk about this final little excerpt or segment of my book, *How to Lose Weight for the Last Time Brain Based Solutions for Permanent Weight Loss*. And I'm really excited to walk you through this part because this is like the meat and bones, like I remember when I was sitting there. Writing this chapter, just being like, Oh my gosh, like, what if people don't get this far? They have to get this far. You'll hear that even in the first and the first paragraph. But I want to read also one more Amazon review that Jenny Nick wrote, and it's titled *Mind, Body, Soul*.

And she writes, As a physician, trying to live their best life. Katrina's message resonated loudly. Her approach to focusing on your mind and emotions is revolutionary. I already recommend this book to my patients as part of an all encompassing approach to self betterment, including weight loss. And so, first of all, Jenny, thank you so much for posting this review and make such a difference. Of course, anybody who's picked up the book and hasn't left a review yet, if you could go to Amazon and please leave that it really, really, really does help more people. It basically optimizes it. So Amazon shows the book to more people so it can get that help to more people, of course. But the other thing that she talked about is encouraging her patients to pick it up and recommending it.

And so if you are a doctor, which you probably are listening to this podcast, then I would love for you to share it with your patients. And if you're not a doctor, then I'm glad you're here as well. Maybe you can actually tell your doctor about it or you can share it with people who you know would help as well. And if you haven't picked up a copy of the book yet, then maybe what we talk about today will put you over the edge and convince you because you need this book.

All right, here we go. We're going to go through about five pages in chapter eight, starting on page 187. So if you're following along, then you can hit me up there. But if not, then just listen. So the title of this chapter is *Eating Against Your Own Will*, and that's what I titled this episode as well, because I think that this really resonates with so many of us, right in our minds and our hearts and our souls. We want to be doing the thing that really supports and nourishes us. And then yet again, we're still doing the thing that doesn't nourish and support us. Right? And so it does feel at times it may be like metaphorically eating against your own will, but sometimes actual literally.

I have had so many people tell me and I've had this experience too, they're eating the food and they're even aware that this doesn't even taste good and they're eating it anyway and they don't know how to stop or why that's even happening. So that's what we're going to dig into today. Just a first little chunk of that. So like I said, I was concerned that people wouldn't make it this far in the book. So here's how it starts. Still with me. Okay, good. Because you've just arrived at the first of the two most important chapters in the book. This isn't just where pounds change, but where your whole life can change for the better.

There are lots of diet plans you can utilize to help you lose weight. There are also lots of diet plans that pay lip service to the idea of maintaining your weight loss and changing your lifestyle. Not just dieting, but where so many fall short is in addressing the emotional aspects of eating and then, most importantly, what to do about it. So good, right? I felt that way so much like what am I supposed to actually do? Could you just tell me once you realized, Hey, I do use food to feel better in lots of situations, you've taken a very important first step, the step of recognizing that you emotionally eat.

You need this awareness of the issue before you can begin to address it. But then how do you address it? You don't just need the simple instruction to stop emotionally eating. You need tools you can use in the moment to keep the food out of your mouth. I mean, that's what we're talking about here. Like this book is practical. Like, what do you actually do to keep the food out of your mouth? But what we have to do in order to get to that place is we have to open our minds to the idea that, you know, cutting out this macronutrient or counting something in a novel way is going to be the solution, Right? That is not going to keep it out of your mouth maybe for a short period of time.

Right. Give us lots and lots of rules And we're like, okay, sure, You know, I can do that for a while, but long term, we never stick with it. And this is why exactly what we're about to talk about those tools are what you're about to learn. Stay open to the idea that losing weight goes beyond just changing what types of foods you eat, what time you eat, and how much you eat. Those are all parts of the mechanics. But figuring out what to do so that you won't automatically ask food to give you an emotional boost is the key to sustaining weight loss without having to constantly work at it.

And that's really what we want, right? We want to not have to work at it all the time. That's when I talk about having peace and freedom around food. That doesn't sound effortful, does it?

And guess what? It's not. It's just the way that you go about your life. It's a way that you coexist with food and with all the ups and downs of life. Right. That's what we're looking to achieve. Too many of our weight loss attempts have been centered around white knuckling it, putting forth all this effort and energy. And of course, we can't keep that up long term, particularly when we're mostly relying on willpower. So the header to this section is called Whatever the problem is, the solution is not in the fridge.

I could just stop talking right now and that could be it right there. Well, I'll keep going. But whatever the problem is, the solution is. In the fridge when we're no longer using food to feel better, we're saying yes to the full emotional experience of being a human. That can feel risky. We can grow so accustomed to relying on food to numb us out or make us feel better that we never really learn how to deal with our feelings without that crutch.

We go through life with a growing pile of neglected emotions that we're not even aware of because we keep using food, drink or other devices to push those emotions back. This is so important for you to understand. There is a problem. You're looking for a solution, and right now you're asking food to solve that problem for you. Right. We're asking food to numb us out or make us feel better rather than dealing with the real problem and not like, Oh, the real problem is that colleague of mine is a big jerk. I mean, I know you think that that's the problem, but it's really how you feel about that person that is the problem. You don't want to feel that way. And so you're looking to feel differently because you cannot change that person, right? That person is probably going to do what they do.

I love that old Maya quote When people show you who they are, believe them. So that's what we're really looking to address here is the feelings. I don't know why I kept eating. My client, Chelsea confessed. I don't even like pretzels all that much. Like a lot of my clients, Chelsea worked hard as a primary care physician all day and then typically came home to find antsy kids and an exasperated partner who can relate. Right. So many doctors are experiencing that. While Chelsea scrambled to make dinner, she

would randomly grab a handful of pretzels from the pantry. She noticed this pattern after starting to write down everything she ate in her food journal.

The food wasn't always the same. It could be any snack sitting out in their kitchen, but the timing was consistent and the chaos was too, right. It's just that witching hour with kids. Often we eat in order to avoid feeling an emotion. In Chelsea's case, she was stuffing her face with snacks to avoid feeling overwhelmed and even more stress than she had already experienced throughout her day at work. But she wasn't fully aware that that was what she was doing. Her brain had learned to interrupt and repress the feelings of being overwhelmed and stressed with a snack because feeling stressed at home was uncomfortable and felt unsafe.

The pattern of eating as a way to comfort herself had become automatic, so important she wasn't sitting there going, Well, I'm feeling overwhelmed and I don't want to feel that way.

So what food can help me with that right now? Right. That was not what was happening. It was just this automatic thing. When Chelsea felt overwhelmed making dinner, it seemed like the pantry door magically opened, and the next thing she knew, there were chips in her mouth or peanuts or whatever else was available. Snacking simply became something she did every evening while preparing dinner. Who can relate?

Oh my gosh. This was me with making my kids lunches. For the longest time, I just ate dinner. I had plenty of food. I was probably too full because I was always eating those massive salads. And so I'm making lunch and I'm putting crackers in slike crackers in the thing and then some for me. And then here's some cheese and then some for me. And then here's the grapes and some for me, right? We don't even know what we're doing. Chelsea realized that snacking had become a deeply ingrained habit when she was driving home from work, and her brain started offering her suggestions of which snacks she should eat later when she was cooking.

She decided she wanted to stop this pattern, but despite her daily morning promise to herself that she wouldn't eat snacks that evening, she still couldn't stop herself from grabbing food from the pantry later in the day.

Who can relate? Oh, my gosh. Why? Well, our brains are designed to turn us into creatures of habit. Our brain chemistry strongly favors doing things we've already done over and over. It trains itself to recognize the situation and offer up the same solution that's worked before. Right. It's like I'm about to give you some other examples in the book, but it's like if you had to think about brushing your teeth every single day. I mean, it just doesn't make sense, right? You already know how to do that.

I'm just going to be totally open here. You know what I do when I brush my teeth? I actually stand on one foot and I use a sonicare toothbrush. So it takes 2 minutes. So for two of the beeps for a full minute, I stand on one foot and then I stand on the other foot with the other two because balance is important. And I actually was really uneven. Like, I definitely had way better balance on my left foot than my right. Which is weird because I'm right handed. But anyway, nevertheless. And so how can I think about standing on one foot and keep balancing and make sure my teeth are clean? Right? Because we're able to down regulate these things, right? We just start doing things and we do it again and it works for us. And so before we know it, the brain.

I mean, this is how the brain is efficient, otherwise we wouldn't be able to get anything done. So the brain's just doing what brains do. And what that is doing is contributing to us overeating just automatically. That's where we just are like eating against our own will. We don't even know why. Very simply, when we're bleeding, it offers up the idea of a bandage because that's what we've been given since our first knee scrapes on the playground. When we're cold, it reminds us to put on more clothes, get a blanket or turn up the heat because our brains know that's work to warm us up before and get us out of discomfort.

Then there are the other sorts of habits that are less physical need based. We get into particular routines and habits surrounding our schedules, what time we get up, when we brush our teeth, which shoe to put on first, what TV show we like to watch at night. Some of these habits are positive or neutral, but they can also be negative, as in the case of smoking, cigarets or overeating. The kind of accidental food habit formation that Chelsea experienced as common. When you do something enough times, your brain doesn't even consider whether or not you really enjoy it or whether it creates a positive

or negative outcome for your body or life. It just signals you to do it again. Might drop right there.

So it's thinking you did this thing before when you were feeling like this and it helped. So it must be a good idea whether it's eating ice cream after dinner most nights or having a glass of wine. As you cook, these habits develop into automatic conditioning that we act upon despite the negative long term consequences. This is an example of neuroplasticity or the idea that neurons that fire together wired together.

Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to adapt and change its structure and function according to your behaviors and circumstances. The good and bad news is a it can take effort to change old habits, but b once you've done something different several times, you can form a new habit that's also well ingrained. So that's what's really important here. I think it's so easy for us to be like, Well, now that it's downregulated, I guess I'm just screwed. No, Remember, you know how conditioning works. Pavlov's dog. You can be conditioned to do something. You can also be conditioned to do something and you can be conditioned to do something else as well.

The brain's wiring about 100 billion neurons and 10 to 100 times as many synaptic connections between them is set up to make our lives easier so that we don't have to stop and think about every decision we make all day long. Habits, Our brains. Shortcuts. They exist primarily in the basal ganglia without a whole lot of involvement from the prefrontal cortex, which helps us to think rationally and make carefully weighted out decisions.

Right. So think about that. Right. Your prefrontal cortex is like that part of your brain that's rational. It can think about the future. It's kind of like that mom who's, you know, got your best interest in mind. But this is happening in a much more permanent part of the brain. It's just like this is just what we do. There's no analyzing it. How ingrained a habit becomes affects how well developed the neural connections are. When you keep repeating a habit, it literally thickens and strengthens the connection between the neurons so that it becomes the path of least resistance.

If you've driven home the same way every day for two years and then decide to take a different route, your brain will fight you on it. What's this? We're supposed to go the

other way. I mean, I'll tell you what has happened with me with this is like I literally am like, okay, you got to go this way. And then before I know it, I'm back on the old path. It's just so automatic, right? When Chelsea came home and started to feel overwhelmed, her brain knew how to solve that problem. The urge to open the pantry and eat whatever was inside became automatic. But what I taught Chelsea and what you'll also learn as you practice, is how to change that pathway so it is supportive of your goals.

The good news is that even those thick, well established neural connections aren't forever. When you make different choices, weak connections break easily and stronger connections fray and disappear over time. Our brains remain adaptable our entire lives, as opposed to what we once thought in the medical community about brain development stopping by age 30. So you can teach an old dog new tricks. You just have to be patient and persistent.

And I'm telling you this, it's like, Oh my gosh, you don't get anything else. Listen to this part. It's so, so, so important. I feel like, you know, for those of us who are real science based and how we approach things. Once you understand this, you're like, Right, okay, well, that makes sense. Oh, okay. So it doesn't mean that something's wrong with you, that you're weak or lazy, or that you're just a bad person. If you find yourself taking part in these behaviors, it means that your brain is just doing what brains are designed to do. And what's cool about that is you can redesign what it's doing. You can really change it. It doesn't have to be so, like, dramatic or also like so personal.

There's no shortfall here or some issue with you. It's just how human brains work. So that's good to know. If that's how human brains work, then what can we do to leverage how they work so that they work for us? When we work with the amazing power of our body's natural systems, including the brain, we move faster toward our goals and make our weight loss permanent.

In short, yes, you've probably dealt with your emotions by eating food for a long time without even realizing it, because food is a necessary part of life and is a big part of the human experience. It may not have even occurred to you that you were eating when you weren't hungry or when your body didn't need it, but you can and will learn new ways of dealing with your emotions without using food. And over time, those new ways will become your brain's default patterns.

You won't automatically associate strong emotions with the desire to go grab a snack. You'll have new associations that will provide you with other ways to cope, celebrate or process whatever you're feeling. This is how we create peace and freedom around food. I mean, what I'm describing there is exactly what my experience was. I was like, Yeah, totally. I'm eating when I'm not hungry. Totally. I'm eating when my body doesn't need it. But I don't know how to stop. And through this process, I was not only able to stop, but I was able to stop even having to, like, catch myself wanting to go to that place and then switching it. It just is not how you operate anymore.

This is what we want to do, right? This is why, you know, eating the latest superfood, I mean, knock your socks off. I mean, that's what you want to do. Great. But that's not going to solve this overeating problem. Your brain down regulates repeated thoughts and beliefs to the subconscious level in order to conserve energy. Imagine if you had to re decide what you think and believe about everything in your life every day. However, when this happens, it can feel like our interpretations and reactions to the world around us just happen and are outside of our control.

Our thoughts and beliefs will start to feel factual and true. Thoughts and beliefs are not factual. They're just our interpretation of the facts. But by utilizing awareness to bring those subconscious thoughts and beliefs to the conscious level, you'll see that you have much more control over your experience of the world around you than you previously thought. So I'm going to end it there. What the main point here really is, is you can change how you cope with things and then the next step after that, once you're rewiring that brain, the next step after that is working on even how you're interpreting things. So this is a kind of a multi layered, kind of like an upward spiral type of a thing, right?

You master this thing or you're applying it and then you move up and you get to the next thing and you apply that and it just gets better and better and better as we go.

All right. So we ended on page 191. If you want to continue with that chapter, which I know you do, make sure you pick up a copy of How to Lose weight for the last time if you already have picked it up and haven't left an Amazon review yet, please go ahead and do that. I'd appreciate it so much. It really, really does help the book. And if you're recommending this book to patients, they probably will be going to their local library

looking for it. So you might want to call the library system in your area and just let them know, Hey, I'm going to be recommending this book.

And so you might want to pick up a couple of copies if they don't already have a few on hand. It just makes it easier for people to access it. All right, my friend, thank you so much for spending this episode with me. Six years. We're going to do six more. In six years, I'll be like 12 years. I'm here for it. And if you are two, I can't wait to do it together. Have a great rest of your day and your week and I'll talk to you next time. Bye bye. Ready to start making progress on your weight loss goals for lots of free health. Go to katrinaubellmd.com, and click on Free Resources.