



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. Well, hello there, my friend. Welcome to the podcast. I'm so glad you're here with me today.

Today, as this episode is airing, it is February 14th. It is Valentine's Day. So whether you're into Valentine's Day or not, Happy Valentine's Day. I sure am grateful for you being here. And I think Valentine's Day doesn't have to be such a romantic thing necessarily. It can be more of something that's just about celebrating love, celebrating the people that you love. And I certainly want to celebrate you. I love you and so glad that you're here and so glad that you're taking the time to give yourself a little spurt, a little few minutes of just realigning your brain, getting yourself where you need to be so that you can have a great week moving forward.

And that actually leads me into our topic today. Today, we're going to talk about work-life alignment. I was actually coaching just yesterday in our weight loss for doctors only program, and there was some good coaching of several different clients that came up that I'm kind of going to synthesize some of the main points for you here today, because I know that what we talked about absolutely is going to apply to basically everybody listening to this podcast.

So I thought, you know what, I think you need to hear this, too. I don't know about you, but if I hear the term work-life balance, I kind of cringe. My skin kind of crawls a little bit,

like I just don't love it. It's been something that people have been talking about for a while now, and I think for the beginning of the time people started talking about it. It was like, Oh, that's what we have to do. We just have to figure out a way to find some balance. And then what a lot of us found moving forward from that is kind of like, Yeah, but we actually just feel worse about ourselves.

The more we tried to create work life balance, the more we feel like we're doing a terrible job at work because we're thinking about our life, our personal stuff. And when we're at home or doing our personal stuff, we feel bad because we think we should be at work. In some ways, I think it actually kind of backfired. It sort of made us feel worse about ourselves, put us more into a perfectionistic kind of a state and just makes us feel like no matter what we try, we aren't making the progress that we want to be making or it's just not the experience that we want to have.

And certainly, you know, I think the best way to figure out if a certain way of thinking about something is good for you is just how you feel when you think about it, right? If you think that you need to be creating work life balance and then you have a negative emotion, or you're at least, you know, not even neutral or excited about it, then maybe that's just not the best way for you.

Maybe it's amazing for your friend or your coworker or whoever told you about it, but that's great for them. It doesn't have to be that way for you. It doesn't have to be something that is going to be the thing. So what I prefer instead is to think about work life alignment. And what I mean by that is having your work and your life aligned to me.

The balance word it brings to mind like a seesaw or a teeter totter or whatever the other terms are for those kinds of things. But in a children's playground, you know, not so often anymore. When we were kids, there were way more of them. But you know what I'm talking about, right? There's a little fulcrum in the center, equal, you know, space on either side of some sort of board or, you know, pull or whatever. Or maybe there's a seat back in the day, Right? We just sat on the wood.

We were fine. We hung on for dear life. So fun. And so if you are trying to create this balance in my mind, all it takes is one teeny little thing to change or be off and suddenly you're out of balance again, right? To get it to be balanced, then it needs to be even. It

needs to be evenly matched. You know, in our example, the weight has to be exactly the same. If there's a little bit even just a teeny bit more weight on one side, it starts to tip. And I think that's probably why it just hasn't really resonated. It's just too hard to accomplish that. Or maybe you can get it that way for a little while. But then when life does what life does and something new crops up, now you're out of balance. And so what do you do? Right? Because the weight has shifted a little bit.

When I think about Work-Life Alignment, I think of it more as thinking about your day, you know, as 24 hours and you know, how like on your phone, if you want to know how much your memory is taken up and it'll even show you like, you know, this percent of the storage space is used for podcast recordings or videos or whatever all the things are that are in there. And it kind of has this bar graph that goes across and each section is a different color.

And then when your phone is full, the whole thing is colored in. I kind of think of it like our day is that. Ma and it's all colored in. But there's just, you know, for simplicity's sake, there's two colors. We've got one color for work and one color for life or personal stuff. And when we are aligned, then we've got the transition from one color to the other color somewhere in the middle ish, right? Maybe between like 30% and 70%. You know, like the line is kind of around there. It's not smack dab in the center. Sometimes it does need to move to one direction or the other direction, But we're not overlapping, right? We're not trying to do both at the same time.

I think where we really struggle is when we're like, Hey, I should be putting 80% of myself into work and 80% of my self into my personal life. And that doesn't work, right? And we feel totally burnt out. We feel exhausted. It's just not sustainable. It's something that doesn't work for us. And we know that, right? We can feel it and it's just not something that is a long term solution. But if you think about it like it's just that bar and the division between the two colors work and life can slide back and forth, then you have some flexibility. What I feel like is part of the problem with work life balance is it's quite rigid, right? It's like it needs to be the certain way.

You need to figure out what balance is for you, what's going to be the balance. I mean, when I think about that question, I feel pressured, I feel kind of confused. The first thing that comes to mind is like, I don't know, and I just feel like I'm doing it wrong. That's kind

of the overriding experience that I have. And I'm guessing that you've had that too, that like there's some elusive balance out there and I haven't figured it out, and I don't know if I can ever figure it out. And so therefore, it's just not available for people like me, right? It's not something that I can look forward to. Instead for work life alignment, it's like if you're going to give more to work, then life's going to have to give a little. If you are giving more to life than work's going to have to give a little. And that center division between the two colors of work and life can slide back and forth based on what you have going on.

So, for instance, say, God forbid someone in your family is having some sort of illness, or maybe your aging parents need your help with some things or just, you know, someone in your family had surgery and you need to help them with recovery and you need to devote more time to life.

Then you can do that. But then you have to recognize that something's going to have to give with work. We're going to have to figure something else out there. And similarly say with work, you're short staffed. Or I've been hearing so much from all of my my clients and members that I work with how, you know, there's just a lot of hiring going on, you know, looking for different doctors to fill different positions or maybe not even doctors. It could be other supportive staff. And while that position is vacant or maybe multiple positions are vacant, everybody has to step up and do a bit more to make sure everything is handled.

All the patients are cared for the way they need to be. All the work that needs to get done gets done. And so maybe that bar in the center has to slide over a little to accommodate for work, requiring a little bit more of you in this time. But that to me feels like something that's more fluid, more flexible and more doable because things we just don't know, like, you know, say you get pregnant and you were like, my last pregnancy was fine. And now this one you have hyperemesis, right? You're probably not going to be able to function in your work life the way that you were before. You might not even be able to function in your home life the way that you were before.

You're going to have to create some flexibility in there. One thing that I think is really important is making sure that the way we think about work isn't super rigid. This was one thing that I was coaching somebody on yesterday. This lovely, amazing doctor is

super committed to her work, super committed to all the different aspects of her work. I'm going to keep it real vague to protect her privacy, but very, very committed. On the flip side of that, she also has a family life and some demands and requirements. They're things that she wants to spend time on. But if we're really being honest, she wants to spend more time on her work. In her spending more time on her work, she's developed a bit of a rigid way of thinking that makes her think that the only way for her to get all her work done is for her to spend as much time at work as she is, which the other people in her life who are important to her would like her to do less of.

They would like her to be more available at home. They would like her to leave earlier, more predictably, basically show up more and be more present in the home life because of this rigid way of thinking about work. She's not able to see that there are other options in maybe getting all the work done that needs to be done, but over a shorter period of time.

And I think we all fall into this in some way, shape or form somewhere along the line where we look at whatever the thing is, the task or the involvement or whatever it is that we're up against, and we tell ourselves the story that it has to be done this way. You're the one who has to do all these things, and they're just really is no other way. In the case of this client, if she leaves early, then the work just won't get done and it will just pile up and pile up and pile up some more, only making it harder for her later.

So what she thinks when she's telling me that is that she's just telling me the truth and it is the truth of what her experience has been so far. As a result of the way she thinks about it. Right. She thinks she's the only one who can get this stuff done. It takes a certain amount of time. If she leaves early, that work's going to build up. And then, you know, there's no free lunch. Like eventually you have to pay for it somewhere along the line, right? Because that has been her experience. That has been true for her.

But what's been really interesting is seeing what happens when I offer a different way of thinking. What if you could get all your work done? In the time that you want it to take, right? Not like it typically takes us much time.

And so if I leave early, it doesn't all get done and I have to deal with it later, instead going, you know what? I'm going to work, let's say 2 hours less every day and all the

work's going to get done and nothing's going to be compromised. And I mean, I get this because I've gone through this in my life as well. When you're kind of challenged with that idea and your brain almost seizes up, it's like, you know, rusty gears or something that are just like, oh, like totally screeching to a halt. Your brain's just like, What did you just say? And no, that's not possible. And so sometimes we just have to spend some time just being in the space of, you know, could it even be possible ever for anybody that this work could be done and I could leave consistently at whatever time, say, 6:00, and it would all be done and nobody would be harmed. Everybody would be winning.

It can be very, very hard for us to start seeing this as a possibility. The reason why I see it more as a possibility is only from practice, because I've done it so often in my own life and proved myself wrong. You know, I was so convinced it had to be a certain way and then realizing I was completely making that story up. Not the truth at all.

And then, of course, leading my clients through it as well. I've seen it time and time again, and we don't want to force ourselves to think differently. Sometimes, right? We're trying to just pick a different thought and believe it, and that's just going to be the way. Except we don't actually believe it. And it just. What I would say is that it just doesn't have any traction. Then you can keep trying to believe that. But it's just it's too far of a leap. What we sometimes need to do is we need to just even work on expanding the possibility. Could it be possible for a person with this kind of a job and these responsibilities to get their work done and leave consistently on time?

And if we can just even open it up to like, okay, it could be possible. I know for myself, you know, when I've been, like, so committed to my old way of thinking. I usually could get myself to a place of admitting. Well, I mean, pretty much anything is possible. So, like, is it possible? I mean, I guess so. I can't see how I could do it. I don't think it's possible for me. But like, could it be possible in this world for somebody? Okay, sure. That's usually been the kind of the door cracking open. Like, okay, maybe. Yes, it could. It could be a thing. And then we can start opening up to, well, how would that work? What could that look like? We often think that it means that we just have to do all of the work ourselves faster or more efficiently.

And sometimes that is a huge part of the solution because there are a lot of people who think they're being as efficient as possible and then they realize, Oh, actually no, I'm not.

There's so much improvement that can be made here and I'm spending way too much time charting. There's so much more efficiency that I could build into my charting or all sorts of other things. I mean, over the years I've talked to so many different doctors who are like, Yeah, And then actually I spent, you know, 45 minutes talking to my partner about some stuff that probably was more procrastinating than actually like an important conversation that needed to be had. Right? It's important to just be aware of that.

We're not saying you can't have that conversation, but let's just be aware. There are some areas where we could maybe build in some more efficiencies, but what are we often have? A lot of rigid thinking is in thinking that the only way for things to be done, the way we want them to be done is if we do them. And this is an area where I think there's a lot of room to explore. It may not always be the right answer for everybody, but it's certainly worthwhile to spend some time considering.

So if you are recognizing that, you know, just the sheer volume of charting that needs to be done, even when you're efficient, is more than what you'd like to be spending on it, then we can get creative. You know, there are definitely people who have hired scribes and that has helped them so much. But I've also heard from a lot of doctors who say, Well, you know what, I'd love to have a scribe and it really would help me, but my organization won't pay for it. And so they think that's like full stop the end. No more room for discussion.

And it may still not be the right thing, but I still think it's worthwhile to actually crunch the numbers and consider how much would it cost for you to hire your own scribe? What more could you get done? What would that do for your productivity? What would it look like in terms of your compensation? And also, would you be willing to take maybe a small hit to your compensation in order to not spend so much time doing this, charting that you don't really want to be doing and you get to leave on time every day? Like, could that be a worthwhile investment in yourself and in your enjoyment of your work? So we just want to get really creative. We want to open our minds up. Maybe we do some work that really the residents can do just fine, but we've convinced ourselves that we should really just do it.

Or you know what? Honestly, there really there's an administrative assistant who could do some of this stuff, but we've just sort of felt bad asking someone to help us. I mean,

these kinds of things come up again and again. But the only way we can even see that as a possibility is for us to open up to the idea that it is definitely possible for us to leave on time. And the work is done every day to the level that we expect, like whatever our level of work product is, that we expect that it is done.

Another way of looking at it is, okay, I'm at the place going in the future. I'm in the place where I leave every day at six. All the work is done. There is nothing that I'm doing on my couch at night. It's all done, like getting to that place, connecting to the place where it's done, and then asking yourself, How did I do it? Often your brain will be like, Oh, like this, this, this, and this. All it needed to do was really understand where it was trying to take you. When you don't think that there's another possibility your brain will not look for other solutions. The reason why it's worthwhile to expand the possibilities, to really open your mind up to it being able to be different and still good or even better is so that your brain can do its amazing work.

You know what's so skilled at which is problem solving? So when we're going, well, I want my work in my life to be in alignment. But work is has so many obligations. There's so much that I have to do. That's something to be questioned. That's something to be worked on. The other area that we have to look at is sometimes we tell ourselves that we have to do all this work and we have to be there longer. We have to help with all these things, take on all these additional commitments, because deep down, maybe even subconsciously, we don't really like what it feels like to be in our personal lives.

And I see this time and again, particularly with people who have really young kids, they've got babies, toddlers, you know, just that season of life that is a lot. And not everybody feels that way. There are plenty of people who love that time or maybe love parts of it, but I've done other episodes in talking about it being okay that things feel hard. What we have to do is we have to honor that we're not always going to love every season of life that we're in. There's going to be times where it's like, Look, you I mean, I've talked about this before. My daughter was for, oh my God, she was just hard. She was so hard.

So sometimes what I prefer to maybe be at work where I could feel like I could be successful. And people gave me positive feedback and it didn't feel like such a slog all the time. Of course, that makes sense. Okay, but let's just call it what it is. Let's just

recognize, you know what? Personal life doesn't feel super great right now, and that's why I'm spending more time at work, not because I can't figure out work life balance, not because my work is so difficult, it involves so much and they really need me and I can't leave. So that really what we're doing is working at the expense of our personal life, our relationships and all the other things we have going on. Just recognizing, you know, I don't love that right now. Maybe some coaching would help make it more tolerable. In fact, I'm quite confident it would. But just recognizing, you know, the reason why I want to work so much is because home doesn't feel so fun right now.

Or maybe you get home and you're like, you know, I've been saying I want to be dating, but I'm not doing it. And so then otherwise I'm sitting home by myself and then I don't feel good about myself. So I'd rather just be around people and be at work. Okay, let's just be honest about that. But then we can't tell ourselves, You know what? I'm just so busy at work.

I don't have time to date. Actually not true. And it's holding you back from the long term result, the long term outcome that you're really desiring. So ultimately, wrapping this all up work life alignment is something that works with you. It's more flexible, and the way you're going to know that you're in alignment is because of how you're going to feel. If you're constantly feeling like you're doing a bad job in one area of your life. I would argue that you're out of alignment.

I mean, in some way, shape or form, things are not matching up the way they're supposed to. You're trying to overlap two areas instead of finding what works right now. What we don't want to find ourselves doing is ignoring the issues that we have for so long that there ends up being something that's irreversible, such as a partner deciding, you know what? Like, I'm really, really, really, really tired of coming in second always no matter what's going on at home. And so I don't think I want to, you know, be in this partnership anymore or whatever it is, other relationships that are falling apart because we're prioritizing work. So we just have to understand, we'll tell ourselves these stories about how great work is. And, you know, it's really meaningful. And what we do is important. And it is. Yes. To all of that. And. That's not going to be there with you. You know, work is not going to pick you up from having your procedure or pick you up from the airport or, you know, be there for you when you're 75.

Right. Your personal relationships are very important. There's so much data on how important that is to people's well-being and happiness. I mean, it's ridiculous. So you really have to think, am I working on the alignment? Even if working on those relationships right now is really hard and uncomfortable? Right. It's not always going to be super fun in both areas, but we can find a way so that it feels like it's aligned.

And that's what I want to challenge you to do this week, is to think about your work, your personal life and are they aligned. If they don't feel aligned, then where's the issue? Where is there some area to think about, to contemplate, to maybe get coached on so that you can get to a place where you're like, You know what? I keep myself in alignment no matter what's going on in both areas of my life.

All right. I wish you a happy Valentine's Day sending you love. I love you. You're very lovable. And I'm so glad that you're here. Thanks for your attention. I hope you have a great rest of your week and I'll talk to you next time. Ready to start making progress on your weight loss goals for lots of free help, go to <https://katrinaubellmd.com/>, and click on [Free Resources](#).