



# 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 there, my friend. Welcome to the podcast Today. I am, as always, so excited to talk to you. This is a beautiful sunny day. Just I'm feeling good.

I actually got up early this morning, took my dog for a walk before I got the kids off to school and the sun was rising. And it was one of those I mean, listen, I have not seen a lot of sunrises in my day because either I was getting to work before it was light or trying to not have to get up so early. But anyway, it was just a beautiful pink sky. It was like such a special kind of feeling to be out there when it's quiet and breathing some fresh air and getting some good light in my eyeballs. That's part of what I'm trying to do, just trying to keep my, you know, trying to do good things for my circadian rhythm so that I can feel tired at the right time, go to sleep at the right time. Anyway, It's just it's one of those days. It's those small things I'm really, really trying to enjoy.

Like remember to enjoy and appreciate what is really good. And in my life, right? Like what I'm feeling really good about. So today I actually want to talk about something else because it does impact our experience of our lives or how we feel about our lives. The impetus for this or like what inspired this show's topic, which is talking about whether it's magical thinking to try to create peace and freedom around food comes from me listening to a different podcast where somebody was not talking about coaching specifically, but this person was talking about actually Intuitive Eating, which I did an

episode on not long ago about that, and saying that for her, intuitive eating was just magical thinking.

And it got me really thinking like, I know for me it's not really magical thinking at all and I know for hundreds of my clients it's not. But do people think that creating peace and freedom around food is just like a magical thinking type of a thing? So I thought, Oh, isn't that interesting to explore? And I'm excited to talk to you a little bit more about it because it turns out in my Internet research that magical thinking is not necessarily a bad thing. Like magical thinking can be really, really helpful for us sometimes and sometimes really not. So whether it is or it isn't, think is up for discussion, but I think it's still interesting to explore, you know, like when is it good? When is it veer into not so good? So the first thing to discuss is like what actually is magical thinking? And really what it comes down to is thinking that you know what you do, what you think, how you feel can actually influence the outcome of a situation or affect someone else's behavior or something like that.

So some of the easiest things to think about are sort of like superstitions because those fall into the category of magical thinking. So that's like thinking you need like, you know, whatever, like your lucky eraser, you know, if you're taking a test and have that on my mind because last week my 17 year old son took the act and then like five days later took the SAT. So it was just a big standardized test week in our household. Right? So sometimes it's things like that or, you know, if you've been into a high rise hotel or office building anytime recently, often they don't have a 13th floor. And that's because, like, they just literally don't name it that, you know, it's like if you just call it the 14th floor, then people are fine, right? Because of our thinking that something bad would happen in the 13th floor. Other things can be sort of like rituals that we do. Things like crossing your fingers, you know, or knocking on wood or touch wood, as the British people like to say. Those of you who are listening, you know, when you blow out your birthday candles, often people say like, make a wish, you know, things like that.

And, you know, these are not bad things. Right. I don't think anybody is feeling like there's any kind of, you know, recourse that's bad from doing some of those things. So it can be, you know, harmless in that sense. But it really can be disruptive for some people, too. It's really common, obviously, for children to, you know, just think in magical thinking. This is just a part of human development, right? Like young children thinking

that, you know, if they wish for something, it'll make it happen. Or like if they made a wish and then that thing happened, they're like, Oh my gosh, I made that happen, you know? And then with maturity, of course, we generally, most of us figure out that, you know, that's probably not actually what happened. It just was like, true, true, unrelated, more of a coincidence.

But where it can become a problem is when we start kind of using some of this stuff to try to maybe control our environments or lessen our anxiety in some way. Sometimes it's even just trying to avoid every bad thing that might happen. Like if I just really can imagine every terrible thing that could possibly happen, then I can make sure that I don't do any of those things and then it'll be safe or then it will work out okay. You know, maybe thinking about, like, with an airplane, right? Like if you get there with enough time and if you, you know, make sure you keep track of all your stuff and, you know, you just really try to control the whole environment.

Like, you know, kind of either consciously recognizing this or deep down believing like, you know what? Then I'll have a safe flight. When we know that those really actually aren't related. Right. So what I was thinking about, like when it comes down to this person saying like that intuitive eating was more magical thinking is this idea that and I think this relates to the coaching work that I do as well, is this potential idea that, you know, looking at your thoughts, processing your emotions, you know, doing things that are, you know, what I call like active de-stressing, like, you know, doing active things to help yourself to get more into a parasympathetic state, like taking part in things that if you do all of those things, then you'll get the result of the body that you want.

And this person was like, No, like that's not how it works because that's her personal experience. Now, she, as far as I know, don't know her. I don't think she's taken part in any kind of coaching at all. What she was actually saying about intuitive eating is that her intuition is always saying that she should eat more and more and more and more. In my opinion, that is just her being confused about what the messages are, because I'm not saying she's doing it wrong.

I just want to be clear about that, that I'm not like, well, she just doesn't know her intuition. Like I know her intuition better than she does. And that's certainly not what I'm saying here. But I do believe that when we really understand like how to listen to our

bodies and, you know, part of listening to our bodies can be intuition for some people or that gut feeling. It's not to, you know, overeat or do things that make us not feel good. So I think that that's just, you know, her experience and what she was saying works for her is a lot of like calorie counting and things like that, which I'm not going to take anything away from that if that is what someone wants to do and it works for them. I'm like, totally, absolutely fine.

But I really was kind of like, I don't think that what we do in coaching is actually magical thinking. But then I came to find out that magical thinking can actually make people feel really good. It can make people engage in their lives in a certain way that actually really benefits them. And so, you know, when I was reading is, was that like a lot of people who engage in magical thinking don't see it as magical thinking. They see it as like personal beliefs or their theories about things. And, you know, for some people, they think that anyone who believes in a religion, that that's just magical thinking.

But of course, people who are part of that religion and believe it don't think that it's magic at all. Right? It's part of their beliefs. It's what they think is true. And so we want to be really careful, right, that we're not just thinking that, you know, magical thinking is harmful for everybody. It's important to understand that really, is this like a belief system that helps me? Is this an adaptive thing or is this causing significant distress, disruption issues in your life in another way? Right.

So ways that it can be more of an issue is by thinking that you have to do everything perfectly or you can't get the result. So I do see that in my clients a lot. Like they start thinking because I certainly am not telling them that this is the case. So somewhere along the line they just, for whatever reason decided that like, Oh, I have to do all of these different things and if I do all those things, then I can get the results that I want, right? Then I can feel the way I want to feel in my body, or then I can have the relationship with food and myself that I want to have. But if I can't do all of those things, then it's my fault. I'm weak. You know, being really harsh with themselves, like a lot of negative self-talk.

And so this is something I coach on all the time and helping them to realize, like it's actually a belief that you have to do all those things in order to get those results. Like what if that belief is just not true? What if whatever you can do today is enough for you

to get those results that you want? And that's a belief system that actually could be really, really beneficial. And you might be like, But hold on, How could less still work? Well, it's literally just a made up thing that we've decided is true, that the only way we can get the results we want is that we have to do all the things like, you know, we have to be doing yoga and we have to meditate and we have to, you know, get outside and exercise and we have to, you know, do certain things with our food in a certain way and all of these things.

And if all those things line up perfectly, then we can get the result that we want, but otherwise we can't. And that's a way of thinking that really holds us back, whether you want to call it magical or not. Regardless, what I have found that particularly with physicians, particularly women physicians, I mean, if you have the kind of life where you can like super consistently do all that every single day, I mean, I am super impressed, like go you. I think that's amazing. But what I have found is that for the vast majority of people that is not possible.

And so we have to approach ourselves differently. I like to think of it as like you have a whole tool kit or like a tool belt, so to speak. You know, you have all these different things that can help you in all these different ways. And so then what you're doing, rather than saying, I need to do all of these things every day, I need to use every tool and every skill, every single day Instead, you're going based on my day to day, What would be the most supportive thing?

What's going to be the thing that will potentially move the needle a little bit more or maybe even just what do I feel drawn to today? What feels exciting for me to take part in? What is something I'm curious about? Maybe I could do more of that, right? Maybe you kind of, you know, reacted to something yesterday at work that you're like, that was a little weird. I'm not sure why got upset about that. Like, then maybe the best thing to do that night or the next morning is maybe a little journaling. Like, let's just explore that a little bit more. Let's just get curious about what that was all about. Maybe we can understand myself a little bit more, right? It doesn't mean that like, you know, you have to do that and meditate and, you know, whatever, get on the peloton.

You know, I mean, for some people, you'd have to get up at like 3 a.m. every day just to be able to fit all these things in. And you'd still be rushing around, which defeats the

whole purpose, right? That doesn't sound like freedom to me. That doesn't sound like peace to me at all. Like not even close a thing, though, that I think that some people think with the magical thinking thing about like intuitive eating or just like weight loss in general is like the magical thinking is in thinking that there's a certain plan out there or a certain book or a certain person or a certain trainer or whatever the thing is that's outside of yourself, that that is going to be the solution, right?

So again, that action, if I just get that information in my life, I get that person in my life, I join that program, I do whatever that thing is like, then the result will occur, right? So like if I sign up for weight loss for doctors only, then I'm going to, you know, very happily and all like take part and everything and always want to do every part of it. And like, I kind of always joke. It's like we're going to, you know, have had a brain transplant and we're just going to be a different human being who loves doing this stuff all of the time. You know, it's like, no, we're still us. And I think the reason that's, you know, talking about magical thinking, being a little bit more like childish or, you know, something that's normal for us as children, I don't mean this in any kind of offensive way at all, but it is kind of childish or a less immature way of thinking to think like, I'm not going to have to do anything.

I'm not going to actually have to take responsibility. Somebody else is going to do it for me. Like they're going to have the answers. And then just me sort of being in their presence or being around all of it will just change. Everything Like that is magical thinking. Like that's not how that works, you know? Like I'm just going to suddenly have peace and freedom around food because I watch some coaching calls like, No, that's really not how that works. Now, am I open to that happening for someone? Sure. I mean, that would be amazing if it happened. I just don't think that that's going to be the experience of the vast majority of people. So I think what we have to understand is we don't need to keep chasing diet book after diet book or plan after plan. You know, when we're not actually doing our own personal work. Like, think of it as like it's like a joint kind of a thing. Like I always say in with, you know, our program, our coaches and everything is like, we are showing up 100% for you. But that's not enough.

Like, I need you to be showing up too. Like, I need you to meet us so that we can do this together because we're totally here to support you. But, like, I cannot do it for you right? Like, I can super guide you. I can give you so many shortcuts. I can make it so

much easier and faster, but I cannot do it for you. That's the part that I can't do. And if I could, I would. But not possible. Not possible for me to do it right. So I think it's also for some people, they think, well, you know, peace and freedom around food, that's just magical thinking. Like that's not even a thing that could happen for someone who's maybe had a lifetime of struggles with food and, you know, disordered relationship with themselves and food and all of that stuff. And, you know, my response to that is I just don't know how it's helpful to think that things aren't possible for us if it's something that we want, right?

So I think what happens for some people is we go, oh, that's just magical thinking. That's not actually something that's available to someone like me. So we're basically essentially settling for less than what we want because we're telling ourselves that's all we can have, right? Peace and freedom around food isn't available or possibility for people like me. So I'm just going to have to work to be okay with counting macros because I know if I do what it works, even though I don't really like it and it feels really controlling for me, but it does keep my weight generally where I want it to be.

So I'm just going to do that. I mean, listen, again, no judgment. People can do whatever they want, but my issue is why are we not believing that the thing that we truly want is possible for us? Why are we believing that that's not possible for us? Like, I don't think that that can be. I think we're like, it's like I don't want to try to lose weight because I might fail, so I might as well just not, you know, not even try. It's like the same thing. It's like, well, you know, I'm afraid that maybe for someone like me, peace and freedom around food is impossible.

So I'm just going to tell myself it's not possible and believe it's not possible. So I don't have to find out the truth that it's not possible. Right. Or that maybe I'm just not, you know, don't have enough fortitude or, you know, whatever. Mental strength or discipline or whatever it may be. I don't see how that's a helpful way to approach ourselves. What I like to think of is, rather than like it being a destination, it's a place that we're moving toward. You know, when I talk about having peace and freedom around food, the vast majority of time, I feel like I'm there.

And every now and then I'm like, oh, look at me. Like, you know, it just happened the other night. I had had a day that was really quite stressful and I was walking my dog in

the afternoon and like after dinner and walking back into the driveway, I noticed myself having thoughts about, like, you know, what could I eat? And I was like, Oh, look at that, Look at that. There it is. And one of the main things that helped me to not do that, not because I was feeling like I had to, like, resist against myself or stress about it or anything was that I got home and I don't know how this happened, but like on a weeknight, everyone was available to play a game and so they had already pulled out my family, they had pulled out Pictionary and they're like, Let's play. And we had so much fun. I mean, the belly laughs.

We laughed so hard. And that was like literally balm for my soul. Like after that, I had no more desire to eat because I was able to, you know, essentially fill the hole that, you know, my brain was like, hey, food might fill that hole, which of course, we know it never does. Right? But human connection, enjoying my loved ones, you know, laughing. I mean, it's so active de-stressing to to laugh hard like that, you know, So to say that like literally it would never occur to my brain to ever offer me to eat again.

Like, I don't actually consider that peace and freedom around food, you know, is it something that requires some maintenance and awareness and working on it? Totally. But I would much rather me personally speaking for myself, much rather be doing that work than counting calories or points or macros or giving myself shots or like whatever those other things are, because that's just my personal preference and this is just what I would like to have. And you know, probably the majority of the people who are working with me in my programs feel the same way, right? So this idea that like, I'm just going to tell myself that it's not possible because I know other people can have that, but I'm like kind of too broken or I've gone through too much in my life or whatever it is. It's just like too difficult. I think that's selling ourselves short.

I don't think that that's a very loving way to approach ourselves at all. And so I just think that when we can use our brains, leverage our brains to think about things in a way that really helps us, right? Maybe we're like, you know, I'm always going to be moving toward peace and freedom around food. I'm going to be continuing to work on figuring that out for myself, because I know that that's something that, you know, I can experience more and more of and I'm excited about soon or, you know, at some point going throughout my life, at least half the time feeling that I've got peace and freedom



around food, and then I'm going to work on it being 60% of the time and then 75% of the time and moving in that direction.

Like, I don't think that that's magical thinking at all. I don't think that that hurts us. Right. But we have to be careful because we will start thinking in certain ways. Like the magical thinking can be very all or nothing, right? It's like I have to do it this way. If it's not done that way, then the result can't be there. Like, you know, I have to cross my fingers and my toes and then I'll get what I want or whatever, you know? And we may think like, No, those things are actually really different, but they actually have a lot of similarities with that. You know, it's actually not as dissimilar as it may seem. So yeah.

So can magical thinking seep into any way that you're trying to, you know, work on your overeating, having a healthy relationship with food, having a healthy relationship with yourself and your body, and it absolutely can creep in. And that's where I think coaching can be so helpful because if a client comes and shares some of that magical thinking and says what they think is true, your coach who is, you know, holding clean space really there to help you evaluate your thoughts and your feelings, they're going to be able to point that out to you, not in an accusatory kind of a way, not in a way where you're being called out or, you know, judged or anything like that.

But just like, oh, that's something interesting to explore. You know, what I always love is that like coaching is not telling you you need to change your thoughts at all. Coaching is just saying, let's just understand what we are thinking and what the result is of that thought, and then we can decide if we want to keep it or not. And that's totally up to the person being coached. Like, I don't know what you should be thinking, but you'll know once you see what the results are of your thinking. And once you become aware of what you're thinking. So many of us have no clue what's really going on in there. And once we do find out, we're like, Oh, okay, well, that makes a lot more sense. I really understand myself so much better. And because of that, I'm now going to make a change that makes sense for me as an individual in my own individual life versus like everybody needs to be doing something in a certain way. I feel like the more I live this life, the more I realize that. There's just not going to be one thing that works for everybody. Not one way of thinking, not one way of feeling, not one way of approaching things.

Like I feel like the more I learn, the more I integrate. Like, the more I coach, the more I integrate lots of different coaching methods and lots of different styles so that each individual client can get what they need and what works for them rather than here is just like the blanket way we do things. Or this is how you should think about it. How can I know how any single person should think about anything? Right? Like, that's really my approach. So is it magical thinking? Yes and no. You know, is it magical thinking to decide that something is or believe that something better is possible for you? Some may say yes and others will say no. I say, you know, if it helps you, if it gives you the result that you want, who cares? Does it even really matter?

If it moves you in the right direction, then don't see what the problem is. If it holds you back, if it's making things worse for you, then we have to discuss, right? That's sometimes what we call using coaching tools against yourself, right? Thinking like, well, this is the right way. And then if I, you know, I'm not doing it the right way, then I'm shaming myself for not doing it the right way. No, that's not how we do this, Right? We are not using these tools unless we're approaching ourselves, you know, in their use with love, compassion, support. And that's why, you know, many of us find that we can only kind of get so far on our own.

And that's when we need to really dig in and actually be coached, you know, get someone else's eyes and brain on our brains so that we can really start to fast forward on that progress. All right. Well, that was a fun conversation. One sided, of course. But, you know, I envision you being there on the other side, like we're just having a chat. There's actually a new coffee shop that they're about to open really, really close to my house and it looks really fun. So maybe we'd be hanging out over there just having a chat and discussing things, as I love to do.

All right. Already know what I'm going to talk to you about next week, and I'm excited about that topic as well. So make sure to come and join me next time. Of course, you know, make sure that you are checking out all the free resources that we have on my website, Katrina Dotcom as well. All right. Hope you have a great rest of your week. Take care. Sending you all the best as you just go through your day and work through all of it. I'm here to support you and you are just an incredible human being, just in case you needed to hear that, because it's true. All right. Love you, my friend. Talk to you

soon. Bye bye. Ready to start making progress on your weight loss goals. For lots of free help, go to [katrinaubellmd.com](http://katrinaubellmd.com) and click on Free resources.