Katrina Ubell: Hey guys. Good morning! It's about 5:00 in the morning and I am here recording this podcast for you. You can probably hear I've got morning voice. I'm holed up in my little playroom office, in my "ploffice". I'm recording this podcast for you guys. I planned on recording it two days ago, and then yesterday, and just life kept getting in the way, and it wasn't happening. And of course I need to have a quiet house to do it, and so I just decided I would get up and have a nice little early morning recording session with you guys, so here I am. I'm sorry for my gravelly voice. This is me in the morning, for sure.

You guys, I just want to share, I have a client who is so amazing. I mean, all my clients are amazing and I love all of them, true story, but she seriously yesterday hit the 100 pound weight loss mark. She has lost 100 pounds. It's so amazing. Isn't that amazing? I mean, that is a lot of weight. That's such an accomplishment, and she's done it in about six or seven months. Isn't that crazy amazing? I mean, I'm seriously so proud of her. I think I'm happier for her than she might be.

I'm not even sure, but I just think it's just such an accomplishment in this day and age to, first of all, decide you're going to take action like that and commit to it, which she is so 100% committed, and being willing to do the work, you know, like being willing to just know that there's going to be ups and downs, but this is for the long haul here. This is not a quick fix. This is not something that we can rush and hurry away. You just keep plugging away at it. You've got your long term goal, you have your compelling reason, you are committed. This is what happens. This is the result that you get. I just think about her all the time, and recently, just with this loss, I mean it's just so exciting. What an accomplishment, so I'm sure you guys will be thinking that, too. Just, I mean, how amazing. She's just such a bad ass. She's so cool.

Anyway, today we are going to be talking about constraint, and I know that's like, "Oh, yay, constraint!," like, that's kind of crazy, hard to be excited about that, but I'm going to hopefully convince you guys on this podcast that constraint is the ticket. I mean, seriously, it's so good. It's like my favorite thing now. I'll explain to you guys why.

What is constraint really? Because it sounds so restrictive, right? But constraint is really just applying limits to something. That itself is neutral. That's a circumstance. Then we get to have thoughts about it, so we get to decide if the limits are a good thing or a bad thing. My favorite example of this: I think about raising a child with and without limits on their behavior.

Without limits, they act out, they don't learn how to function in society very well, and they think that they should get everything they want, whenever they want it, right? They're just out of control, but with limits, they learn how to function within a structure that creates a safe place for them to thrive. They get to be themselves, they get to grow and flourish, but within a framework.

The exact same thing applies to our lives as eaters. When we don't apply constraint to our eating, we do the same thing. We act out, we don't learn how to function in society very well, and we think we should get everything we want, whenever we want it, right? Just eat everything because we want it. When we do apply constraint to our eating, we learn how to function, how to eat within a structure. That creates a safe place for us to thrive. We get to be ourselves without the buffer of overeating, and we get to grow and flourish as humans into the best version of ourselves within this framework. It's the same thing. We get to reach our natural weight and then stay there permanently, all while just rocking out this amazing version of ourselves.

Applying constraint to our food is really freedom, okay? I know it sounds like restriction. You probably saw me, you're probably getting tense in your shoulders like, "Oh my god, I don't want limits like that," but it really is freedom. It's freedom from all the decision-making. It's freedom from overeating and weight struggles. It's freedom from spending so much brain energy on food. It really is just peace from decision-fatigue. It's just a release from constantly having to make decisions.

What does this mean, then? What does it mean to apply constraint to our eating? It doesn't mean that it's really restrictive, right? We can interpret it that way with our thoughts, that it's restrictive and then interpret that as being really uncomfortable. A lot of people think they can't live within those confines. I used to agree. I mean, variety is the spice of life, right? This was such a deeply held belief that I had that I really had to question it if I was going to finally take care of this weight issue.

A big reason people think like this, me included, is because they believe that the most exciting thing in their lives is food. If it's not the most exciting thing, then it's definitely in the top three, right? What I want for you, though, is for your food to be really boring and for your life to be really exciting. Let me repeat that. What I want for you in your life is for your food to be really boring and for your life to be really exciting. Constraint is a huge way for you to get there.

When I first learned about this concept of constraint, I was pretty skeptical, which is not surprising, because this is totally my pattern. I learn about something new and then my primitive brain responds by saying that that's a terrible idea, and it definitely won't work. Do you do that too? I mean, right away, it goes into like, "We're going to die. Don't do anything different. Stay in the cave. This is how we're going to survive." I decided to test it, though, you know? I was like, "Okay, let me give this a try. Let me just see." I'm generally open to trying things and just deciding if I want to change my mind. The way I decided to approach it was to try to implement it in one place in my life first as a test to see if it really was that good of an idea. The first area I applied it to was our family dinners. I used to pride myself on all of the different dinners I would make.

I seriously had this little binder and I had a whole list, like multiple pages, like seriously three and a half pages typed. I would reference this. It had all the different recipes that I liked to make that my family generally liked, even had a list for recipes I wanted to try. It was all organized by type of cuisine, like American or Mexican or Italian, and then listed with the name of the cookbook and the page number.

I know this sounds very, very organized, and that's probably the most organized I've ever been in any area of my life. I just decided one year on, I think it was a New Year's Day. I just spent a couple hours and thought, "You know, I'm just going to get this all organized and put together and make it easy for myself." I think it was kind of a New Year's resolution motivation kind of thing, and I loved it.

I really did like it for a long time, but I would seriously try not to repeat the same dinner for at least three or four months. I thought I was doing my kids such a favor by exposing them to all kinds of different flavor combinations and different ethnic cuisines. I'm thinking, "They're going to be the most amazing, diverse eaters."

While this seemed really great and fun and exciting, it was actually keeping me overweight. I had so many choices that it was completely paralyzing. Okay, so meal planning and making a list for the grocery store seriously took a couple of hours because I would need to make all these decisions, and then find the cookbook, and then check and see if I had all the ingredients.

I often ended up wasting food because I had to buy certain unusual ingredients for recipes, and didn't have another recipe to use them up. Cooking took a lot longer because I wasn't super comfortable with most the recipes. Nothing was simple and basically practically mindless to make. Then cleanup also took longer because of all the different kitchen tools I needed to make them and sometimes, I mean, it was ridiculous how many measuring cups and spoons and bowls and things I needed to use to make these recipes.

I would spend weekends cooking and baking all day long, I mean really exhausting myself. I would be so physically exhausted, but I would tell myself that I liked it and that it was my hobby. It was something that I could do whenever I had the time and had this whole story about how I was a busy doctor and didn't have any other time for any other hobbies and this was my hobby, and it worked out great because we had to eat anyway, but it made me overeat.

I thought about food and what to eat next constantly, which definitely contributed to my overeating. I decided to work on constraining the dinners first. What I did was I made a list of about 20 different dinners that at least four out of the five of us in my family really liked. Of course there was always the outlier, like my five year old doesn't like eggs, so that wasn't a big deal. I knew I could always work around one thing like that, one person not eating it pretty easily with some leftovers, but I figured, you know, "Okay. 20 dinners gives us about three weeks worth of recipes before we have to repeat." I mean, I'm serious you guys, this sounded so restrictive to me at that time. Now it seems like a lot.

Whenever I was thinking about what to make for dinner, I would just reference that list, and honestly, the list over time became smaller and smaller. I mean, there's probably, with some variation in there, eight to 10 recipes that I make on a very regular basis at home. Then, most of us constrain ourselves naturally when it comes to our breakfast and lunch. Most of us end up eating the same couple things over and over again for breakfast and lunch, and there's really not very much variation there. I was like, "Okay. There's not that much here to choose from. I'm going to try eating this and try serving this to my family and see what happens," because I also had a story that they wouldn't like it if I constrained that.

The first thing I noticed is that grocery shopping became so much easier because seriously, I just bought the same food every week. I basically didn't even need a list anymore, if I wasn't out of something really unusual that I was going to forget. I mean, I just made the rounds in the store, bought the same stuff I always buy. Of course with some variation based on what looks good and what's in season and that kind of thing, but it was basically like, "Buy fruits. Buy vegetables. Buy eggs." Buy, you know, just the same things, and I could keep that in my head. I mean, it was seriously so constrained.

What I loved about that was really at any time, I could run through the store and get all my shopping done, because there are other times where I'd think, "Oh, shoot, I didn't make a list. I can't do it now," or, "I know I'm going to forget something," or I would actually forget something because I would think that I could remember. This way it was just like, bam, "I'm going to go grocery shopping. I'll be back in 25 minutes," I mean, so quick, so fast and easy.

Then I started noticing how making dinner became so much easier. Before it would, you know, I would try to give myself at least 30 minutes, sometimes 45, to make the meal. I started noticing, because I was making the same recipes over and over again, that I basically didn't even need the cookbooks anymore. I just knew how to make them. Of course, I had chosen simple, easy recipes on purpose, but it was just like, it required so much less thought and brain chatter and energy to actually make the dinners. It was like I was on autopilot, which was also really freeing and nice. It just was so much faster and so much easier.

I started to realize that was so much more brain space, I could use that energy and space to create more awesome things in my life, a lot more excitement. There was so much less brain chatter about what to eat. You know, do I have all the ingredients? How long will it take? Do I feel like eating it? I just didn't have any of that. I was completely freed of that.

I do want to talk here for a moment about what you feel like eating, because we use that thought, the "I don't feel like having that tonight" thought, as the excuse not to honor our decisions ahead of time, all the time. I talked a lot about decisions ahead of time in the last podcast, on episode eight. Well, that was two podcasts ago, so if you haven't listened to that one yet, definitely check that one out.

Thinking "I don't feel like that tonight," or, "I don't feel like eating that tonight," seems like this innocent little thought that feels really true, but it's really just straight up poison in your brain, because what you're doing is you're giving yourself an out. You're deciding what to do, but always with this little caveat that if you don't feel like it, then you can just act on your urges and let the primitive brain take control of the wheel. Then we wonder why we can't ever stay on our plan for very long. Have you ever wondered that? Like, "Why do I make this plan and then I never stick to it?" This is why.

Part of constraining your eating is committing to eating what you decided to eat ahead of time no matter what. It's as good as done. There is no wavering commitment. You're all in. You totally have your own back. The first thing to do is to decide that you're going to follow through on your commitments to yourself. No more cheating. I mean, we'd never tolerate anyone else treating us the way we treat ourselves in this matter, how we just give up on ourselves or don't show up for ourselves.

It's like if you had a friend that you were going to meet for lunch once a week, and she, last minute, just would call you or text you and tell you that she wasn't coming, or sometimes she just wouldn't show. I mean it wouldn't take long before you would start thinking, "Okay, I mean, we need to change this. I'm not going to keep showing up for her and then she just lets me down." It's the exact same thing that we do to ourselves.

Then, what I want you to do is to is to decide to believe that most of the time, eating is about fueling your body with high quality nutrients. The purpose of eating is not to entertain you or to make you feel better. This can be a big thinking shift, a big belief shift for us to start thinking that. Of course the food tastes good, it feels good in your body, so there's some inherent pleasure in that, but seriously, I will make and eat the same thing two separate times. One day, it's thoroughly enjoyable, and then the other time, it's just really okay.

It's just, I mean it tastes the same. It's fine, right, but my experience of it is different. One time I think, "Oh, that was amazing. That was so good." The next time I'm like, "That's all? Bummer." Rather than making the just okay meal mean that I need to eat more or I need to eat dessert or a snack to get more of that feeling of "That was amazing, that was really good", I just shrug my shoulders in acceptance basically. I'm just like, "Yep. Not every meal is going to blow my mind, you know?"

Not every day at work is the best day ever. Not every vacation is as good as you expected it to be, right? That doesn't mean that something's gone wrong. It doesn't mean that you just give up and you never go on vacation ever again. It's just part of our human experience and we don't have to make it mean anything else. We certainly don't have to make it mean that we should overeat.

When I'm deciding what to eat, my brain might sneak in a thought about what I do or don't feel like eating, and my response to that thought is, "Noted." You know? "Thanks for your input. That's great, but that doesn't mean I need to act on it." Then I just make the food and I eat it anyway because I've made that commitment to myself ahead of time to eat that, and so I'm going to eat it. Then rather than spending a bunch of time thinking about how sad and unsatisfying that meal was, I move on and I do the other exciting things in my life. This is really where the money is, you guys.

Creating a life that provides the entertainment and excitement you're looking for is going to be the ticket to stopping entertaining yourself with food. You can apply constraint to other areas of your eating life, too. Think about when you go to a restaurant. You don't let yourself drown in decision-fatigue with all the choices on the menu. You apply constraint. You have your eating protocol, which is just your framework for what you're going to eat and when, and then you just find the appropriate foods to plug into that framework and you eat those.

If my dinner protocol consists of a serving of protein, a salad with fatty dressing, and some cooked vegetables, then I find the appropriate items on the menu and I order those. I basically plug those in to that framework. Even if that means that I have to ask the server to combine two entrees or bring me a couple side dishes to make it up, there's very little thought involved, which makes eating out so much easier and less stressful.

If I've never been to the restaurant before, sometimes I'll go online and check out their menu, and make my decisions before I even go, so it's classic decisions ahead of time again. Then I get to the restaurant, I'm not lured by what I smell or what I see on someone else's table as I walk in. I know what I'm going to eat, I order that, and then I eat it. Plain and simple.

You can do the same thing at the hospital cafeteria. You don't know what they'll be serving for lunch, but you have your framework. You have your protocol. You just fill it in. Serving of protein, serving of fat, vegetables, and then fruit, or whatever your protocol is. You find those foods and you eat them. Then on to your afternoon. You just move ahead.

The long term benefit of doing this is huge. I may not get quite the food entertainment at the meal in the short term, but do you know how entertaining and exciting it is to go into a clothing store and know beyond a shadow of a doubt that the clothes will fit you? That you don't have to be worried about covering all your flaws or minimizing lumps and bumps? I mean, that's some serious life excitement and entertainment.

You get it every single day when you get dressed in your closet. I notice, now, how I'm not constantly pulling down my shirt in the front to try to cover up my belly, because my belly's gone now, and the shirts fit like they should. That is way better than an hour of entertainment at a restaurant. What also feels amazing is having a completely trust-filled relationship with yourself, knowing that when you say you'll do something, you do it, and not just because you're being held accountable to someone else, but because you're holding yourself accountable.

I want you to think about giving constraint a try. You know, just see if there's one area in your life where you could apply it and see how much it changes everything for you. I mean, it's absolute freedom. It's such a gift you can give yourself. So you guys, thank you so much for tolerating my gravelly voice. I am so sorry, and it's just not getting better too quickly.

I'm going to go make myself a cup of coffee. I am crazy impressed that nobody in my house has woken up with me talking. It's now 5:33 in the morning, and nobody's awake, which is seriously amazing. I'm so glad I got up and did this for you guys so that I can make sure to bring you excellent, excellent content and help every single week, so you guys have a wonderful, wonderful week. I am so excited to hear from you and see what you think about constraint in your life. All right, have a good one. Take care. Bye-bye.