



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Hey you guys. How are you? Thanks for joining me today. So excited to record this podcast for you guys. Getting such great feedback from you guys, seriously, every day. Sometimes multiple times a day I'm getting tagged on Facebook by you guys. It sounds like this work is really resonating with you. That makes me so happy because, seriously, it's made all the difference in the world in my life. I'm so excited to share it with other people so that you guys can get some amazing results too.

Before we jump in today, I want to just share with you guys, my husband and I went out last night and saw Jerry Seinfeld live. Oh my god, it was so funny. Seriously, you guys, if you have the opportunity to see him, I highly, highly recommend it, if you were a fan of the show back in the '90s. It was so good. Laughing until you're basically crying. Just so funny. It was just great.

He did a whole thing about what it's like to even just go out. His thing is basically, it's a show about nothing and how you think you should go out and then as soon as you are out, you're like, "When should we go home? I think I need to go home." That's exactly how it was. He's like, "Don't worry, pretty soon, it'll happen to all of you. You're going to want to go home." That's exactly what happens. After about an hour you're like, "This has been good. I'm ready to go home now." It was just so funny. Obviously the crowd was probably people in their late 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s. He's 62. I couldn't believe that. He certainly acts like a young 62, that's for sure. Anyway, I highly recommend that show. I think he's just touring around the US and doing some shows here and there. It was just super fun. I highly recommend it.

Today we are talking about justifying going off your eating plan. Let's first just talk about what the definition of justification is. Justification is something that justifies an act or a way of behaving; an acceptable reason for doing something. Another way of thinking about justifications then is as excuses; excuses not to eat on plan, to not exercise, to eat whatever we want whenever we want. I'm going to give you an example here so you can envision this in your mind's eye.

You go to a restaurant confident that you'll be able to find something on the menu that fits into your plan. You sit down, the waiter comes, you find out they have special craft cocktails. You impulse order one. You justify this to yourself by deciding that you don't go out very often and certainly not to this restaurant. This is just the one treat you'll give yourself at this meal. Keep in mind that you didn't go into the meal deciding ahead of time that you're even going to choose a treat.

Then you start looking at the menu. The foods that fit into your plan don't really seem as exciting and delicious as other ones that aren't on your plan. The person you're eating with suggests splitting an appetizer. You agree because you promise yourself you'll just have a taste. You see that they have house made pastas, which are your favorite. You justify ordering this because you decide that eating it is a way to be nice to yourself.

The appetizer comes and you let yourself go into a fog and you eat half of it. The pasta dish comes and you decide to eat all of it because it tastes so good. By now you're pretty full. You've also got a decent buzz going because you had two glasses of wine with dinner. You justified the wine by deciding that red wine is healthy for your heart.

Then the dessert menu comes and you order one justifying it by thinking that you won't eat all of it. You just want a little sweet taste to end the meal, get the garlic taste out of your mouth. You end up eating the whole dessert. As you're walking out, the physical and emotional discomfort has already begun and you start beating yourself up in your head. You're physically stuffed. Your stomach hurts, you're burping a lot, you've got some heartburn, you're really tired because of the alcohol. You remember that your original plan was to eat on your protocol for this meal and you realize you barely ate anything that was on your protocol. You're totally disappointed in yourself.

You wonder to yourself why you can't ever do what you say or decide you're going to do. You don't sleep that well that night and the whole next day your energy is low, your mood is cranky. You realize that you took a really nice pleasant experience and ruined it by overeating and over-drinking. You're so disappointed in yourself. You snack to feel better justifying that you'll get back on track with your eating on Monday when you go back to work. Has this happened to you? Let me give you another example.

You're post-call and you have a plan to eat only foods that are on your plan at the hospital cafeteria. You walk down there and find a few things that are okay, not great but okay. To compensate for that, you grab an enormous chocolate chip cookie for dessert. You justify it by telling yourself that you deserve a reward for working so hard. You'll just eat half, but really knowing full well that you'll actually eat the whole thing. Has that ever happened to you? It definitely did for me. That cookie thing was pretty much my entire residency right there.

What it is when we justify like that, it's romanticizing the action of overeating. It's all these little justifications that add up to going completely off the rails. If you're a very all or nothing person like I am or have been in the past, this one meal or one cookie can be the start of regaining all the weight you lost and then some. I didn't know why I couldn't keep my commitments to myself. It was basically like my commitments were just a suggestion, like I might honor them, but it's also just as likely that I won't. I often joke with my clients that the way we approach weight loss is, "I'm 100% committed, but only about 80% of the time." Eighty percent of the time we're gung ho, totally onboard. Twenty percent of the time, we deserve a treat.

These justifications can be really sneaky because they're so easy to believe. When we believe these justifications that our brains come up with, we don't ask our brains to look for other solutions. We don't question it. We decide to believe that going off plan is the only solution and basically actively turn off our inner wisdom and problem-solving abilities. We're really good at solving problems if we give our brains half a chance.

You might recall in the last podcast I talked about how to change your thinking about using, “I don’t feel like it,” as a justification for eating something different than what you’d planned for. This, seriously, the “I don’t feel like it,” just came up for me again a couple days ago. I was checking out at Trader Joe’s getting my groceries. The checkers are always so chatty and friendly. I had a bunch of vegetables. I try to shop just once a week, so it was a lot of food for a family of five. The checker was like, “You get all this stuff. It’s so healthy. That’s so great.” Then he’s like, “We always plan on making healthy stuff but then my wife will decide she doesn’t feel like eating that and she wants potstickers instead.” I just totally started laughing to myself in my head. I was like, “Oh my gosh, we were just talking about this.”

I said to him, “What I do is I have this agreement with myself that ‘I don’t feel like it’ is basically irrelevant. What I feel like doesn’t matter if I’ve made a plan ahead of time. If I’ve made a plan then I just do that regardless.” It was funny. He looked at me like I had three heads, like what is this strange concept that you’re presenting to me? Maybe I just planted the seed for thinking about it. Who knows?

This way of thinking and acting is so commonplace. If you do this, it doesn’t mean something is wrong with you or that you’re defective or something. It’s modeled for us everywhere we go. People constantly talk about how they’re going to do one thing and then they go and do something else. They always have a good excuse for it, right? Then they wonder why they don’t get the results that they want in their lives.

One way of thinking about this is if you and I had a lunch date, say, every Thursday at noon. If we both showed up right on time every week, had a great lunch together and then said good-bye every week, that would really strengthen our relationship as friends. We’d become really, really close friends.

Now imagine that you show up right on time every week and I show up an hour late half the time. The rest of the time I just don’t even come at all. Then you ask me where I was and why I didn’t come. I tell you that I just didn’t feel like it, just wasn’t into it. Something else came up. What do you think that would do to our relationship? It would totally start to break it down. You would probably either stop showing up too or you’d tell me that you didn’t want to do regular lunch dates with me anymore, something like that.

This is exactly what we do to ourselves when we justify going off our plan in the moment. Beforehand, we make a plan for ourselves like planning to go have lunch, but then when the time rolls around to eat that, we don’t show up for ourselves. It’s like we just don’t even come. We justify going off our plan and we think it’s no big deal, but it’s a really big deal. It means that you’re breaking down your relationship with yourself, your ability to trust yourself every time you do this.

I’ve talked about this before on here, but I’ll repeat it again: Your relationship with yourself has got to be strong in order to achieve permanent weight loss. You can’t constantly go behind your back and cheat on yourself or let yourself down. You can’t wait until you’ve lost the weight to work on this for yourself. You need to work on it now so that by the time you get to your ideal weight your relationship with yourself is strong and loving and supportive so that you’re confident that maintenance is going to happen this time, like it’s a guarantee. There’s no way that someone who has a great relationship with themselves will end up going behind their own back and regaining all the weight.

Let’s come up with a long list of justifications that we use to eat off our plan. I’ll offer a bunch here, but I want you to go to the Show Notes page for this podcast, which you can find at katrinaubellmd.com/11,

and tell me about other justifications that you find yourself using to excuse yourself from your plan. Here we go:

It's a special occasion.

I've worked so hard, I deserve it.

I'm so exhausted, I deserve it.

I'm so beat, I deserve it.

I'm so depleted, I deserve it.

It's just one bite.

It's just one nibble.

It's just a sip.

It's just a lick.

It's my birthday!

It's my anniversary!

It's so delicious.

It tastes amazing.

I won't ever be able to come back and have this again.

This won't taste as good as leftovers.

I'm traveling so I can't take this home as leftovers.

I had a hard day.

I had a bad day.

Here's a good one, one of my absolute favorites: My patients sucked the life out of me. Anyone else have that thought?

The kids have been driving me nuts.

I just need to do something nice for myself.

But she made it for me.

I can't ask them to make something special for me.

I'm hosting and my guests don't want to eat what's on protocol for me. I don't want to make anyone around me uncomfortable.

It's a party!

They'll be offended if I don't eat it.

It's so delicious I just can't resist it.

I'm expected to eat it so I have to.

Tell me, what did I miss? I'm sure there's ones that you guys have. Tell me what they are, the justifications and excuses that you use to overeat. Go to katrinaubellmd.com/11, and tell me in the comments section. We'll come up with a good list here.

When we think about the thought model, which is that foundational principle that all my coaching is based on, we remember that circumstances can trigger our thoughts, thoughts cause our feelings or emotions, feelings drive our actions and actions create our results. All of those justifications that I just listed off are all thoughts. It's really important to recognize that because we think that they're circumstances.

Circumstances are neutral facts that everyone would agree on. You may think, I can't ask them to make something special for me is a circumstance because you believe it. You think it's a fact. It's not because not everyone would agree. I certainly don't agree. You absolutely can ask. If you think about asking them to make something special for you, that thought creates a feeling. That feeling is really uncomfortable. You'd probably feel embarrassed or like you're imposing or something. That feeling definitely doesn't drive the action of actually asking them to make something different for you or even problem-solving the situation.

In order to not feel embarrassed or like an imposition anymore, you decide to change your thoughts so that you feel better and then you just accept the new thought that doesn't serve you. You decide that you can't ask them to make something special or different and that new thought relieves you of the discomfort of those emotions for the time being so you don't feel embarrassed or like an imposition anymore.

Once you do that, you shut your brain down so that it doesn't even have the opportunity to think of any alternatives like asking if you can bring a dish to share and then making sure it's something that's on your plan. After you go there and eat whatever is served because you didn't ask for something different, you end up regretting eating it and then circle back around to the thoughts about I shouldn't have eaten that or eaten so much of it. Sometimes we blame others because they didn't telepathically know we wanted something else.

You can see how these justifications are incredibly sneaky and feel really true in the moment, but ultimately totally have a down side. I'm going to give you another example that my parents just told me about last weekend. My parents are both from Germany. For Christmas, my mother makes a whole bunch of different Christmas cookies that are authentically German. I grew up eating them. Of course, I think they're amazing. They generally are not as sweet as a lot of American Christmas cookies, which we think is great but I could see how a lot of Americans maybe aren't as into that. We love them. She makes Stollen, which is a traditional German cake for Christmas that's really good too.

My parents have some friends that live out of state. They were talking to those friends. The friend was talking about how she makes these amazing cookies and the same Stollen and everything too. That friend sent my parents some Christmas cookies and Stollen this year for Christmas. My mom was saying that they really didn't think they were as good as hers, that they really preferred the ones that my mom makes for a variety of reasons. I was like, "Did you just throw the rest out?" They're like, "No, no, we ate them." I was like, "You did? Why did you eat them?" They're like, "They made them for us. They sent them to us." These people are out of state. They would have no idea whether they actually finished the cookies or not. That's just such a little justification. Here you are eating cookies you don't even think taste very good because you feel this obligation to somebody who made them for you who isn't even going to know whether you ate them or not.

You could see how this flawed thinking, these beliefs that I can't waste food or I need to eat this because they were made specifically for me, it totally has a down side. Thankfully, my parents don't have weight issues, but they still probably could have benefitted from not eating that. Really, if anything, if you're going to eat some cookies, then make sure they taste really good. There's no point in eating cookies that you don't even like.

I want you to work to stay aware of your thinking and watch for these little justifications. This is where being aware of your thinking again is so important. You want to take on that watcher or observer role and pay attention to what these little thoughts are that are flying through your head and question them. Don't believe them as though you're just noticing something like you're just reporting the news. This is just a fact.

Remember that every belief you have was adopted into your belief system intentionally, meaning you decided to believe it. You either came to the conclusion on your own and decided to believe it or someone told you that this is the right way to do things or you saw it modeled for you and then you took that on as a belief for yourself. You get to question your current beliefs and see if you still want to believe them to see if they're even true anymore. You can change your mind and decide to believe something else, something that serves you that has an upside that's useful to you. It's not all about positive thinking. It's about what's useful to you, especially in terms of your weight loss goals.

With that, I'm going to say good-bye. I love talking to you guys every week. Have a wonderful rest of your week and I'll talk to you later. Take care. Bye-bye.