



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Hey, you guys. Welcome back to the podcast. I'm so excited you're back here again. I have to confess to you guys that whenever I think about you guys, with so much love in my heart and so fondly, I always think about you guys like you're my lady doctors. I have to tell you why that is. When I started my practice right out of residency, I was joining a private practice that had been in existence for 40 years and I was the first female physician that they had ever hired. Wow. Big deal. 40 years of all men and here's the first woman. Even though we were in a metropolitan area, it was really this small-town feel which was so nice.

The three receptionists that sat at the front desk at that time were these three adorable women. All of them were in their early 60s or so. For them, having a female doctor was this really big deal. I would not always be busy as you are when you're first starting. I would be sitting at my desk and I could hear them talking to people on the phone and stuff. It was so cute how they would sometimes pick up the phone and say, "Dr. So-and-so isn't in today but you can see our lady doctor," like, "Our new lady doctor." It was so cute. It was like, "I can't be offended by this," even though I was like, "Why does it even matter if I'm a woman or not?"

They were so excited to have a woman there and I think it was kind of a new thing. They really hadn't had any or very many women physicians as the doctors who took care of them, certainly not when they were growing up, so I think they were really excited to be able to try to promote me and get people to accept me. It didn't take long but anyway, I always have that little Wisconsin accent in my head when I think about you guys. Like, "Oh, they're my lady doctors doing the same thing that all of us are doing and proving to the world that we are just as capable as the men are."

Let's move on today. Last time I talked about the thought model. I'm going to give you a quick review of that in a minute but what we're really going to talk about today is awareness of those thoughts. Last time I talked about how it can be a little bit difficult to even know what you're thinking or maybe your surface thoughts are very much just like that, on the surface, doesn't seem like there's something deeper going on but there really is. We have to figure out how to get to that. Let's get started with that.

Let's review that thought model again. Again, this was created by Brooke Castillo. There's five components to it. The first is the circumstance. The circumstance is just what are the neutral facts. It can't be, "My boss yelled at me." It would be more, "My boss told me that I'm not doing a good job,"

because that can be proven. Somebody else can say, "Yes. I heard the boss say that you're not doing a good job." We can't say, "My boss was really rude to me or said in a mean tone, 'You're not doing a good job,'" because I'm interpreting that as mean but someone else might be like, "Oh, no. I don't think that's mean at all," and probably the boss doesn't think he was being mean so that really isn't the neutral facts.

The neutral facts are really just the facts, what someone said to you, how much you weigh, things like that. Like, "My kids fell on the ground and were crying loudly when I told them they couldn't get ice cream." It's not like, "They were throwing a fit and acting like brats," or something like that. That would be a thought about them throwing themselves on the floor. That's our circumstance, that neutral fact that everybody would agree on. Our thoughts can be triggered by those circumstances. We have thoughts about those circumstances and then our thoughts create feelings in our bodies, or emotions.

Our emotions drive our actions and our actions can be things we do or things we don't do so that we are avoiding what we should be doing like an inaction. Always a big example is binge-watching Netflix and probably eating rather than going and doing what you should be doing. Our actions create our results. The result is always proof or evidence of that original thought. We're going to really dig deeper into that today on this podcast.

The very first thing I teach my clients when I'm teaching them these concepts is the difference between a circumstance and a thought. This is super, super critical, you guys, because we really think our problems are our circumstances and we want to change those. It just applies to everything, right? It's like, "I don't like my neighbor so I'm just going to move," or, "The patients in this practice are so difficult that I'm going to find a new job." This is the thing, right? You are totally welcome to move or find a new job. Nobody's saying you can't do that but you should really like your reason. You don't want to be choosing a new job because you're trying to get away from somebody at your practice or your patients or the group of patients that you see, or getting away from your neighbor.

Sure, you would get away from them but there's also a much easier way to handle your emotions about your neighbor so that you don't have to move and the neighbor gets to be who the neighbor is, the patients get to be who the patients are, and if you can get to point where you're completely in charge and managing your emotions about those people and then you still decide, "I still would really rather just work with a different patient population," you're totally welcome to do that. Of course you can do that. You can do whatever you want but it's what is driving you to do that. We really have to see what the difference is here.

I'm going to give you an example that is really pretty easy to understand and then I'm going to show it to you with something that's a little bit more difficult. I do want to say that looking at our circumstances and seeing our experience in our lives or what we see around us as the problem is the way most people look at this. There's nothing wrong with you if that is the way that you view your life. That's pretty much how we all do it at first because that's how it's modeled to us. People look at it like, "I have problem people in my life." The reason you think they're a problem person is because of the way you're thinking about them, not because of what they're doing. We're going to get deep into that in future podcasts. You might be thinking right now, "Hmm, I don't know about that. That sounds a little strange," but we'll get into that as we go along.

Let me give you this first example to differentiate the difference between a circumstance and a thought.

If I have a thermometer and I have it outside and I look out the window one morning and it reads 40 degrees, then I can say it's 40 degrees outside. That's a circumstance. It's a neutral fact. It's a scientific instrument. It is showing me what the temperature is and any person in the whole world could come over and look and see, "Yep. 40 degrees outside. That's what the temperature is." That is a circumstance. If I say, "It's cold outside," that is a thought even though that is totally my experience of 40 degrees. I'd say, "We need to bundle up. We need to put coats on," things like that. The reason that is, is because that's the meaning that I'm assigning to 40 degrees.

Somebody else might look at 40 degrees and go like, "Oh, my gosh. That's not really that cold at all." Think of someone in Alaska or Siberia or somebody who's like, "At 40 degrees, we're getting on our windbreakers, we're wearing shorts. This is like spring's coming." Their viewpoint on 40 degrees is totally different than somebody, say, in the south or California or something where 40 degrees is crazy, crazy cold. Our interpretation of 40 degrees, whether it's cold or not that cold, is a thought. Most people are able to get that example, understanding the difference between the circumstance and the thought there.

Now I'm going to extrapolate that over to something a little bit more emotionally-charged. That is what happens when we stand on the scale. When someone stands on the scale and the scale reads 200 pounds, that is a circumstance. I mentioned that last time on the podcast that it's a scientific instrument. All it's measuring is your gravitational pull on the Earth in that moment so everybody could come over and look. "Yep. 200 pounds. That's what we've got here." If you then have a thought when you step on the scale and see 200 pounds, "I'm fat," that is a thought. You might really argue for that. "No, but it's true, right? I really should be weighing 130 pounds. I'm 70 pounds overweight. I'm fat."

Think about somebody else that might step on the scale and see 200 pounds. Someone who weighed 300 pounds two years ago steps on the scale and sees 200 pounds and they're like, "Holy crap, you guys. I just lost 100 pounds. I am such a badass. I'm the most amazing person." They have every right to look at it that way, right? You get to decide what 200 pounds means. You could look at 200 pounds and go, "Okay. This is the highest I've ever weighed and it seems to me like this is probably something I want to change," versus, "Oh, my God. I'm so fat. This is horrible. How did I let it get so bad? I have no self discipline. I'm a weak person." All those kinds of things.

This is something I want you to start mulling around in your brain. Let this start marinating in there as to what you think about this, whether you can see how there are times when our experience of something can totally vary from someone else's experience. You might have an experience of 200 pounds as, "Oh, my gosh. I didn't even weigh that much when I was pregnant," and someone else might be like, "Oh, my gosh. 200 pounds would be a dream for me right now." All of that is a thought. You get to decide what you think when you step on the scale.

This is excellent news because what this means is that nobody else needs to change and nothing around you needs to change in order for you to think about something differently and think about it in a way that serves you because if you have the thought, "I'm fat," when you see 200 pounds, what you make that mean, "I'm fat," then you feel totally defeated, then what do you go do? You go binge-eat cookies and in the result, you gain a pound which proves that you're fat. Having that little sneaky thought that seems really truthful, like you're keeping it real for yourself, doesn't serve you. We're going to have lots of examples in upcoming podcasts where you can see this connection and see how we really need to start questioning and evaluating the way we interpret most of our lives, or certainly the areas that aren't

working very well for us.

This applies to other things that are not related to our weight as well. You can change your experience of a difficult person in your life without them having to change at all which is awesome because what we really would rather do is never have to see them. If your great aunt drives you crazy, you would just rather never see her and never go to Thanksgiving or something. That would be the easiest thing to do but that's oftentimes not really a possibility so if she's not going to change, your choices are to either change you, which is a possibility, or I guess run away and hide, which a lot of times doesn't work or isn't something acceptable, or sit with your misery in what you think about her.

This is the thing. When you feel upset about someone else, they don't feel that. Only you feel that. We think like, "I need to be upset about this person," but it's not changing that person at all. It's only making us feel miserable and then oftentimes, because of that miserable feeling, we go and eat. It could be something else. How many people are out there, "Oh. I need a glass of wine." This is like this badge of honor amongst moms, I feel like now. "I need to have a glass of wine all the time. I need a drink." It's kind of funny. We joke about it and that's all fine but really what we're doing is we're just trying to neutralize those negative emotions rather than actually dealing with them and making it better for ourselves.

Or spending too much. "These people drive me nuts so instead, I'm going to get lost in online shopping and rack up this huge bill on my credit card." For some people, it's gambling or looking at porn or doing drugs or whatever it may be. Those are all ways of trying to neutralize those negative emotions. You can think about your overweight body in a way that serves you. There are people who coach people who are morbidly obese on fat acceptance, which I think is fantastic. There are people who are just like, "Look. I don't want to lose weight but I also don't want to hate myself at this weight that's high." I think that's fantastic but if you're someone who's like, "You know what? I want to not hate myself but I also do want to get thinner," then this is the work for you right here.

Another way that you can change your thoughts is about money. Whether you have a lot of money or a little money, whether you have a huge amount of debt or no debt, you get to decide what you think about money. You can decide from a scarcity mentality that money is hard to get, that if you lose all your money, your life is over. So many people are raised with this mentality that money is really difficult, or you can decide to think, "Money is everywhere. Money is waiting for me to earn it. There's no problem getting more money," and deciding that and believing that and then doing the things it takes to get that money.

Let's pivot here a little bit. We have to start really evaluating and realizing what our thoughts are. When we do that, we take on a role that people call the observer or the watcher of our thoughts. Humans, as far as we know, are really the only people who can do this. This is called metacognition, where we can actually think about us thinking. We can see what's going on for us and yet distance ourselves a little bit as well and pay attention to what's going on for us. This is really fascinating and it's part of what really makes us human.

You can start to pay attention to what you're thinking. Rather than just going through your life not putting any attention on this at all, you can start to just observe, just watch. If you think about an observer or a watcher, they're not somebody who is judging, they're not berating, they're not making hateful comments, they're not talking in a condescending way. They're just observing. They're just

watching. They're noticing. You want to come from a place of compassion, of curiosity, and of interest, like, "I wonder what's going for me. I wonder why I'm thinking about it that way. Poor thing. Look at how you immediately go to worst case scenario. I wonder why that is." Looking into that and figuring that out is all what we're looking to do here.

I sometimes think of an anthropologist studying a new culture for the first time or something. You've got your magnifying glass and you're just paying attention. What are those thoughts? What you'll probably notice is that when you get stressed, you start experiencing negative emotion that your brain wants to go straight to unconsciousness. Not literal unconsciousness like you are unconscious on the floor. That's not what I'm talking about here. What I'm talking about is you go into a state where you don't want to pay attention, where you're basically asking your brain not to remember, like, "This is uncomfortable so I'm just not going to have any memory of this."

I sometimes think about when you're trying to eat healthy and then you finish the crust of your kid's grilled cheese when you're cleaning up their lunch and you have a few of those things, then when you go to food journal at the end of the night, you don't write that down because you actually don't remember it. If you really thought you could remember it, but you're like, "Oh, no. All I did was just eat the food on plan today." That's because our brains kind of go unconscious, like, "This isn't going to count so don't even file this away in our memory because I know I shouldn't be doing it so I don't want it to count."

When we don't lose weight like we think we should, we say the diet isn't working. It can't be something we're doing. It has to be that diet isn't working for me. Pay attention to that, what your brain does, how when you're feeling stressed out, you're feeling upset, you're feeling really exhausted, how you might just be like, "It's too much work. I can't do it." Again, compassion. Compassion is what we want to do.

Remember, we have 40,000 to 60,000 thoughts going on for us every day. I don't think all of those are really on the surface. They're not all surface thoughts but there will be deeper thoughts underneath them. Those are going to be the ones we really want to start identifying. We practice and practice being aware and have that compassionate viewpoint and start asking ourselves questions about it. Think about if your best friend came and talked to you or your teenage daughter came to you and told you a bunch of negative thoughts or thoughts about things. You wouldn't go immediately into, "Oh, my God. You're so weak. You're so stupid. That's so stupid to think that way," or, "Well, it sounds like you deserved it. I guess that's what happens when you make a bad decision like that."

Of course, you would never talk to them that way. You would start asking, "Why do you think you did that? What are you making that mean?" and from the most loving place possible, "So what that that person said that?" and answering the questions for yourself. That's how you start finding out what it really means. Those are what your thoughts really are. You can keep asking yourself that. "Okay. What are you making that mean? Why do you think about it that way?" You start to find out those deeper root causes for why you're doing these things that you don't want to be doing.

You can practice the tone of your self-talk, too. How many times have I thought to myself, "Oh, my God. What is my problem?" or something like that, versus, "What's the matter, love? What's going on for you right now?" Just a really compassionate way of talking to yourself, like you're holding space for yourself. You're creating this safe place for you to unpack what's going on in your mind. One great exercise that I highly recommend you guys start doing is called the thought download. Ideally, you would do this every

day. It takes like five to 10 minutes to do this. It's very, very short. When to do it in your day totally depends on when you have time. When you have time is when you should do it. You can do it while you're sitting on the toilet if that's when you have time.

Ultimately, ideally you do it at a time when you notice that you have a lot of negative emotion. Some people might wake up with a lot of anxiety or worries and that's a great time to empty that all out. Some people might find at lunchtime or at the end of clinic or after a busy OR day that that's when their mind is going nuts. For me, it definitely is at night. At night is when everything starts to seem like it's going to hell in a hand basket. That's a great time for me to do a thought download. You can see what works best for you.

What you do for a thought download, this is very simple. You can either sit and type it or you can write it out longhand. Either one is fine. Everyone has their own preference. For five minutes, you just write nonstop, write what's in your mind. Get it all out on paper. I want to tell you about a time just a couple days ago where I did this. I was feeling really, really overwhelmed. You know how people talk about a panic attack? I was having an overwhelm attack is what I call it. I was all of a sudden evaluating all these different things that I felt like I had to do at once and at the same time. I was completely paralyzed by overwhelm so I decided this is a good time to do a thought download. Let's see what's actually in there.

I actually went back to it in preparation for this podcast because I type mine out. I generally can type a lot faster than I can write. I had kept it, that thought download, and I went through and looked at all my thoughts and I pulled one out because I want to show you guys how you then put these into models and how you can change them. What you do is you write this all out and then you start looking at all the thoughts that you have. Which ones are actually the circumstance? What's the true facts here? Oftentimes, there aren't many facts. It could just be my life or my body or my practice, my husband, my mother, something like that. It doesn't have to be that some actual thing happened necessarily.

You start teasing apart what are the facts, what are the thoughts, and then you can pick a thought and put it into a model. It doesn't really matter which thought it is. It does not have to be the worst sounding thought or the most important thought or anything like that. In this case, what we're really trying to do is practice using the model. Before you know it, you'll be able to do a model on any thought that you have. Here's an example from my overwhelm attack I had a few days ago from that thought download. The circumstance is my business. The thought. "I have too many things going on right now to pick a financial business goal." My feeling is overwhelmed. My action was, "Make no decisions, distract myself on social media, and waste time," and then the result is I still have no financial business goal and I still have too many things going on because I haven't moved ahead on any of them.

You can see how that result is proof of that original thought or evidence of that original thought, of, "I have too many things going on right now to pick a financial business goal." Once I saw that, it feels so true, right? "Look, I've got too many things. I have all this evidence. I have to do all these things. It's too much. I don't have time to pick this financial goal," but by allowing myself to go into overwhelm with that thought, I was completely spinning in indecision. I didn't have to make any decision. Sometimes, even though it's so uncomfortable to feel overwhelmed, it's kind of a safe place because if I pick a financial business goal, that means I need to start working toward it and then maybe all sorts of other stuff might come up for me.

What I decided to do to change this model so it's one that serves me is I actually decided to work this

one backwards. I'm going to show you guys how to do that. First I asked myself, "What is the result that I want?" The result was that I had a financial business goal for 2017. I wanted to make that decision, then I worked backwards. "If that's the result that I want, what is the action I need to take to achieve that result?" The action was, "Pick a financial business goal and like my reasons for it." I didn't want to just pick anything. I wanted to have a good reason for it. Then I asked myself, "How do I have to feel if I am going to go ahead and pick a financial business goal and like my reasons for it?" The feeling I chose was in control. Then what I need to do is pick a thought about my business that makes me feel in control so that I pick a financial business goal and like my reasons for it and then have the result of having a financial business goal for 2017.

You may not agree with this thought. You might think, "This thought is not what I would pick," and that's totally fine. That's why everybody does their own work with this. The thought that worked for me was, "There's plenty of time to get everything done." I tend to get into this tailspin of, "There's not enough time. There's not enough time. I can't get everything done," and it's just not true. It's just a story that I'm telling myself and getting myself all wound up. I told myself, I had this deliberate thought, "There is plenty of time. There's plenty of time to get everything done." Seriously, it did not take long. Once I could get myself out of overwhelm, I could use the powerful tool that is all of our brains, my brain, to come up with a financial business goal and like my reasons for it.

That may seem like a dumb thing. You might be like, "Yeah, but I've got 80 pounds to lose. How is this going to apply?" It's all the same thing. I oftentimes like using really simple models like this to show how simple it really is when you tease it apart. To tie this all up, I definitely want to encourage you to start trying to do a thought download every day, five to 10 minutes, write it all out. That alone might give you such a release, just getting that all out of your head and onto paper. Looking at it again, you can evaluate it from a different place.

I often try to think, "I can do these models in my head." They're not as effective as seeing it in front of you. Start doing that and then decide what are the real circumstances here and what are the thoughts, and start running things through models. If you have questions, please put them in the comments on the show notes page. You can find the show notes at KatrinaUbellMD.com/2. I will talk to you guys very soon. Have a great week. Bye bye.