



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell, MD: Hey, everybody. Welcome back to Weight Loss for Busy Physicians. I'm Katrina Ubell. Thank you so much for listening and for subscribing to this podcast. We're already on episode four. This is so great. It's been so exciting doing this for you guys.

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It's a cold, rainy day here today in Wisconsin. It's supposed to turn to snow later, which is exciting because we are big skiers, and this weather has been kind of raining on our parade, literally. The snow base is not great for us for skiing, so we try to make the best of it here in Wisconsin, and really have a lot of fun. We're actually really busy in the winter with all the ski racing and little kids taking ski lessons and stuff. Kids are all off to school today and it's quiet in the house, and so I'm so excited to talk to you.

Today I'm so excited to talk to you guys about this. I've been thinking about it for weeks really. I want to start today's topic off with a story. It's a story about none other than Girl Scout Cookies. I thought this was a great time to talk about this, because it's ordering season. Maybe you've had some neighborhood girls coming by the house and asking you to sign up for some boxes. I have seen a number of people I know on Facebook offering to have their daughters call me if I want to order some cookies. In the office there's always at least a couple people whose nieces, daughters, granddaughters,

some sort of relative is selling cookies, so they're always asking us if we want to order. Of course, we want to support them, but we can make the cookies mean a lot more, and that's really what I did for so many years.

I was always really excited when it was Girl Scout Cookie time. I never wanted to miss it. I think one year maybe I did miss it, and once I started seeing everybody getting cookies, I was like, "Oh my god. I missed it." I was so upset. I would always make sure I had to get at least one order in, and if I ordered from multiple people, like say there were two or three gals in the office who were selling, I'd just think, "Well, I'll just buy some from all of them. Spread it all around," and I would just think about how much I'm helping these girls out, and how much it's helping them reach their goals, and then they get money to be able to have cool experiences at Girl Scouts. I'd think about when I was a Brownie, so many years ago, and how uncomfortable it was to ask people to order, to sign up for those cookies. I never liked doing that.

I felt so great about it. I was really patting myself on the back and really helping these girls out, but this is the thing. There's also this sense of urgency, because the thing with Girl Scout Cookies is you can only get them once a year. So if you miss out, you have to wait a whole nother year before you can get them again. This is the classic scarcity mentality, front and center, the idea that food is scarce so you need to take advantage now. This is partly why Girl Scout Cookies are only available once a year. I mean, right? It's a great marketing strategy. Even if you don't even really want cookies right now, they are telling you, "Well, you should still order them, because it's your only chance for the whole year."

I would oftentimes order some, and then a few days later I would decide that wasn't enough and I'd order some more from someone else, and even when I was dieting and I would think, "I shouldn't buy any. I should just not even get any," I would decide that I needed to buy at least a few boxes for the kids, for my kids so they could have some, like they can't survive without Girl Scout Cookies. They're still working on all their Christmas candy and last thing they need is more boxes of cookies. Then also, my husband would often order some at work too, and then we wouldn't communicate with each other about that, so then he was bringing home even more.

A couple weeks, month later or so, the cookies would arrive. Stack them all up in the pantry, and then I bet you can guess what would happen. I'm so curious how many of you have had this same experience. Of course, night after night, a whole sleeve of Thin Mints gone while watching TV, like the whole sleeve gone just me. I was eating the whole sleeve myself, and I probably could've even eaten more, but I would think, "Oh my gosh. That was a whole sleeve. You got to reel yourself in here." Not even sharing with anybody I would go through cookie after cookie, and I'd even throw on some of those Peanut Butter Patties for good measure.

I know a lot of people out there are fans of the Samoa. I'm not a big coconut fan, so that's really not a big draw for me, but I just want to point out as a side note, when I was a Brownie they were called Samoas, but where I live now they're called something different. What are they called? They're called like Caramel Delights, I think is what they're called. That always was super confusing to me. Everything else is called the same thing, so maybe someone has some Girl Scout insight they can explain that. Why are they called different names?

Anyway, so I would eat all these cookies. My husband would be eating some too. That would make me feel better, like yes, of course this is what you do. They're so good. Thin Mints out of the freezer, even better. This is the irony of it though. We would totally control how many cookies the kids would get to eat, like after dinner for dessert. We were like, "Well, okay. You can have two of those and one of those," but we were not controlling what we were eating at all, or not very well at all. We should've been eating way less. Then when all those boxes were gone, sometimes we'd still see Girl Scouts selling more boxes, like outside of different stores, or in the mall. Then of course, scarcity mentality was back again. We'd gone through all our cookies. We didn't have any more, or maybe we were getting to the last dregs, not many left, so we'd buy a few more because we were thinking, "Oh my gosh. We aren't going to be able to get any more until next year again."

This was a classic way that I would get thrown off my New Year's Resolution diet year after year. It's just like clockwork. That scarcity mentality shows up in how we eat and how we think about our food all the time. There are so many examples. I could go on forever, but another one for me, a big one that I've had to work on as an adult was from my childhood. Whenever we'd go on vacation, we would either go to a restaurant for

breakfast or sometimes the hotel would have the big continental breakfast, and my mom would always encourage us to eat a big breakfast. She would just say something like, just offhanded like, "Okay. You need to fill up because we don't know when our next meal will be. Make sure it sticks to your ribs," or something like that.

It's really a benign comment. We were not at any real risk of starving or not being able to get any food or anything, but because she was my mom and she was in charge, I believed her. I believed that on vacation there's a ton of unpredictability about food, and so the best thing to do is to really, really fill up and overeat, especially at breakfast. I have carried this all the way into adulthood, and I have to actively remind myself on vacation still that there's plenty of food. "I'm totally fine. I can get something to eat any time I need to. I don't need to overeat right now."

This is just that really very old brain programming that I'm still working on upgrading. This kind of thinking is taking a bit longer to reprogram because I'm not on vacation that often, so I don't have, overall, that many chances to practice this new way of thinking, but the more I practice it when I'm on vacation, the closer I get to really fully reprogramming those thoughts about food on vacation so that it's permanent, so that the automatic way I think about food on vacation is the way I want to think about it. It's the new way of thinking.

Our brains are totally conditioned to think automatically from a place of scarcity. I think for some of us it's worse than others based on our experiences in the past and our history in the past, but overall it's really protective. It's helped the human race survive as long as it has. If you could recognize that there's not always food around when that's actually a true fact, then you know, "Okay, hey, when there's food, I shouldn't just let it all go to waste in the fields. I should go collect it all and preserve it so that when winter comes we have enough food." This is very protective to think about it this way, and up until probably the last 50 years, it was probably helpful to think that way at least some of the time, but never before in history has food been as available to us as it currently is. I mean, when you think about it, everywhere you turn there's food you can eat. It's definitely abundant for most of us in our culture. Not for everybody, but for most of us.

When we still have these beliefs around certain foods that are completely scarcity driven, we get into trouble. Here's some examples of these beliefs. I need to eat these

Christmas cookies because I can only get them once a year. This can apply to any holiday, any celebration, any religious event where there's special foods that are served there.

Another one that I thought of when I was thinking of this ... So last summer we went to Mackinac Island, which is an island between the lower peninsula and the upper peninsula of Michigan, and their big claim to fame is their fudge, which is funny because I don't even like fudge that much. It's just not a thing for me, but I still had thoughts when I was there like, "This is my only chance to get Mackinac Island fudge on Mackinac Island!" So you can see that scarcity of, "Well, I'm not going to be here again, maybe ever. This is my only chance. I should have it even though I don't want it."

Another one that comes up for people a lot, and used to come up for me a lot, was, "We don't go out to nice dinners that often, so here's my chance to eat that amazing dessert, whatever they have on the menu." We didn't know what they were going to have, but once we see it, we immediately go into scarcity. "Oh my gosh, this is my chance to eat it. I won't have another chance to eat this." What we're doing is we're creating this drama around food. It's this self-creation of drama by telling ourselves these stories about the food and then believing those stories. When we have that drama, what's really good is to separate out what the facts are.

Let's look at the facts here. We can bake those Christmas cookies whenever we want them, even in the middle of August. Do I ever do that? No, of course I don't do that, because I don't even want them then. They're only really a big draw around the holidays because of that scarcity mentality. Here's a big one. Pretty much any fudge shop on Mackinac Island will ship you Mackinac Island fudge very, very easily. If I ever decided I wanted it, I could get it. It's not a problem at all. Then with restaurants, you find out they're serving this amazing dessert, and you hadn't planned on having dessert there. Guess what? You can actually go back. This was like a novel concept for me. You could actually go back and just have dessert, or you could go back and just ask to take the dessert home as takeout. Eat it as a joy eat on a day you've planned for it. That is a possibility.

The drama is created around the scarcity. This is my only chance, but that's really not true. Because those scarcity beliefs seem really true, when you look at them and tease it all apart and you realize they're not, you get to decide to maybe think about it differently. You can find Girl Scout Cookies being sold online throughout the year if you really want them that badly, if you really want more. They have that ice cream that has the bits of Girl Scout Cookies in it. You can get that and get your fix if you really need it. They're really not as scarce as my brain wanted to believe.

Beliefs are really just thoughts that we've thought to ourselves so many times that we believe them. This is excellent news because this means that we get to decide to believe something else if we want to and if it serves us. An example of that is we might've heard people of authority telling us things when we were children, and so we decide to believe that and never question it. Well, now as adults we can question those beliefs and decide if it really serves us. Do we want to keep those beliefs? I want to just repeat that again, because this concept is probably very new to some of you, and that is that our beliefs are totally optional. We can look at a belief, decide it has no upside for us, and then decide that we want to believe something else on purpose.

How do you know then if the belief has no upside? Because you might even believe that the belief has an upside, but when you really take a look at it, it doesn't. The way you know that a belief has no upside is by thinking about that belief and then identifying how you feel when you think it. For me, scarcity mentality thoughts create feelings of urgency, panic, and vulnerability. When I feel that way, when I feel urgency, panic, and vulnerability, I get major fear of missing out, the classic FOMO, fear of missing out. I need to get all the things, all the food, make sure I stay safe and I'm cared for. That's the action that I take. The result is that I perpetuate this flawed thinking. I keep thinking that way, and I give myself a pass to overeat sweets, so there's no upside to that at all.

What I've decided to believe is that there's plenty of food all the time. I can buy it whenever I need it. I don't need to stock up just in case. When I need more, I just go find it. It's not a problem. Those thoughts make me feel content, in control, and give me freedom around food. When I feel that way, I buy foods that are fuel for my body in a rational way. I'm not stockpiling up, creating the huge pantry. I don't indulge in brain chatter about which foods, how much, when to eat them. It's just not even there at all.

The result of these thoughts is that I maintain my weight, my body feels good, I don't have to think or worry about food very often, so this is total freedom.

I want to encourage you to think about where the scarcity mentality is showing up in your life. Write down what your beliefs are about it. Where do you feel scarcity showing up, and then about that subject, just write, and write, and write. Try to put the pen to paper for five to ten minutes, or I prefer to type, so I'll just open up a blank Word document and just type, and type, and type for a while, just empty it all out of my head. Then you can start pulling some of those thoughts out and going through the thought model with it. If you're new to the thought model, not sure what I'm talking about, in episode one of this podcast there's a lot more information about the thought model, and the show notes for that podcast also go through it some more as well. You can find that at katrinaubellmd.com/1.

That's how you see what the results are. You plug the thought into the model. You see how that makes you feel. Then you see what you do and what you don't do, what actions you take, what inactions you take, how you react, and then what the result is for you. Then you can decide if you want to keep that. Is that a result that you want? If it's not, you can decide to pick different thoughts that create the results that you do want in your life. Then you think those new thoughts over and over again. When your brain automatically goes back to the old programming, the old scarcity way of thinking, you just remind yourself because you're aware of your thoughts, "Oh, yeah, I don't think about it that way. I think about it in this way. This is the way I approach it now. I think about it that there's plenty of food everywhere all the time. I can buy it whenever I need it." Then that changes that feeling for me right away.

Eventually, the new way of thinking is just there's never urgency around food. There's never panic around food. I never feel vulnerable. I know that even when there's no food, I've got my body fat stores to give me fuel. That's why our bodies are so freaking amazing. I mean, we're so engineered to be able to survive, but we have thoughts that make us think that if we miss one meal, that's it. Our metabolism's ruined. We might as well just farm ourselves out. We're done. Looking at those thoughts and deciding to change them to ones that serve us is the ticket to the mental freedom and then releasing your body of that fat because you just don't need to act on those scarcity thoughts with overeating anymore. It's really, really amazing.

So you guys, thank you so much. I just want to encourage you to let me know what you think about this podcast. If you have any questions about what I've been talking about, any content you'd like me to cover, certain areas of your life you're struggling with, I'd love for you to put that in the comments in the show notes, which you can find at katrinaubellmd.com/4. I will talk to you guys next week. Have a wonderful, beautiful week. I will talk to you soon. Hopefully we'll have more snow. Bye-bye.