



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Hello my friend. How are you? Welcome back to the podcast. I'm so excited to have you here today. I have a great episode for you today. We are doing some questions and answers. This is our first Q&A and you guys are asking such great questions on the comments pages for each podcast show, that I just wanted to answer some of them in more detail here on the podcast. Sometimes the comments or questions are just something really quick that I can just answer easily and sometimes it's like, "Wow, that's such a great question and there's so much more for me to delve into."

So, that's what I'm doing today. I picked a few comments and questions that really needed more explanation and I'm going to go into that today, but before we get started with that I wanted to share with you a comment that I got that was on the Emotional Responsibility Podcast a few weeks ago and I just thought it was so amazing. If you haven't listened to that one yet you definitely will want to do that, but I just thought it was so great to show how quickly and easily this work can change somebody's life if you're open to it.

Let me read it to you. The writer says, "I wanted to share with you how this episode has actually helped my nine-year-old daughter. She was having difficulty with some anxiety and had a fear of the dark. After listening to this episode I told her what you said, 'Circumstances lead to thoughts and our thoughts lead to our feelings.' I told her if she is having a negative emotion such as fear that she needs to change her thoughts. I emphasized how she is in control of her thoughts and that if she is thinking of herself, for instance, then she needs to shift her thoughts toward something that she loves, like Disney World. The first night she did this she actually slept better and told me, 'Thank you.' She learned that she really is in control of her thoughts and that she feels so much better knowing that she is in charge of her life. What a powerful lesson for her to learn so young."

Oh my God, I totally agree. "Most of my adult life I have spent being the victim wherein everyone else is responsible for how I feel. Now, at almost 43 years old I realize that I was the one in charge of my emotions and because of my thinking I was allowing others to take on that responsibility for me. I find this idea of emotional responsibility so liberating and powerful and I am so grateful to have listened to your podcast. I belong to a Physician Mother Weight Loss Facebook page and let me tell you, a lot of us are listening to you and you are helping so many women with your words. Woot woot, what's up, PMG? I know you guys are listening. Love you. Thank you for your podcast. Please keep on doing what you are doing."

This is so great, you guys. This is what I love about kids. They just take what we told them at face value. Her daughter is just like, "Oh, my thoughts create my feelings? Excellent. I don't need to be afraid of the dark anymore." It's so amazing. What a gift for her daughter to learn this now. I mean, of course as she enters the teen years and everything she's going to have some reminders and see how this really applies, but it's so great for our kids to learn this so that we don't have to be well into our 30s or 40s or 50s before we're learning this kind of stuff. This is so great. If you're feeling comfortable, for sure, share it with your kids.

I actually coached my 11-year-old son in the spring. He had a big presentation about a state that he had to give at school. His state was Idaho, if anybody's listening from Idaho. So, he wanted to just practice giving his talk a little bit the night before he was going to give it and I wanted to go for a walk so I said, "Well, how about you walk with me and you can just basically give me the talk while we're walking." We did that and he told me all the things you want to tell me and I helped him with organization a little bit and then we were finishing up the walk and I said, "Are you a little nervous about it?" And he said, "No, I don't really think so." And I said, "Has anybody else who's presented been nervous?" And he said, "Oh, yeah, definitely." And I said, "How did you know? How do you know that they were nervous?" He goes, "You could tell."

I was like, "Okay, so why do you think you're not nervous?" And he's like, "I don't know. I think it's going to be fine." I just took that opportunity to explain to him that nervous is a feeling that's created by our thoughts and the people who are nervous generally are the ones whose thoughts about their presentation are about themselves, like, "I hope I don't screw up. I hope I don't look like an idiot. I hope I don't fail this. I hope I do a good job. I hope I don't forget everything." Those thoughts make you feel nervous and then your actions are to give the presentation, but to be a lot more nervous, to actually be more likely to forget things, to be all up inside your head and not to do as good of a job as you otherwise could.

I explained to him, "The reason you don't feel nervous is because you have different thoughts about it." I explained to him what I try to do is I try to stop thinking about myself and think about my audience. I find that when my thoughts are all about the people who are listening, making sure that they learn what they need to learn, understand what they don't already understand and I make sure that I give them amazing content, that they are going to come out of this presentation or this talk knowing something they didn't know before and it gets me out of my head and I don't feel the emotion of nervousness. I feel a lot more confident, I feel determined, I feel calm and then my action is I give a good presentation. And he was like, "Oh, yeah. Okay. Cool." Don't you love that? It's just like the best when they're like, "Oh, that's how the world works? Excellent. I'll file that away. Thank you."

Okay. Let's move on to our first question here. This is from Jennifer. She writes, "While I was listening to this episode ... " This is also the Emotional Responsibility episode she's writing about, "The thought crossed my mind that being responsible for my own emotions almost seems like I'm giving other people carte blanche to treat me poorly as how I react to it is up to me and not dependent on their behavior. I'm sure this isn't true and that setting boundaries regarding the way you allow people to treat you is a healthy thing to do, but how do you reconcile these two ideas? I love the podcast, by the way. I've binge listened to all of them over the past few weeks and can't wait for your new MD group to start. Thank you for the information you share."

Okay, Jennifer. This is such a great, great question and there's an area here where you're getting confused and lots of people do. That's why I definitely wanted to address this question. What you're doing here is you're trying to use different thoughts to feel better about a bad circumstance. In this case, the bad circumstance is a person treating you poorly, but what you don't see and understand is that other people don't treat you poorly. What? Yes, this is true. Other people say things and do things, then you have a thought about that. Your thought is that they shouldn't do or say that and you interpret what they say and do as them treating you poorly.

This can be a mind bender at first, okay? Because it's just not at all how we've been raised or how most people think, but you could say something to me and I decide to make it mean something that offends me and then I think that you are treating me poorly and then you could say the exact same thing to someone else and they have a totally different interpretation of what you said. They might agree with you or just think that it's not any problem at all, and this happens all the time. Maybe your mom said something to you and you totally took offense and got upset, but your husband heard the whole thing and didn't think it was a big deal at all. What your mom said is totally neutral and what you made it mean is totally different than what your husband made it mean.

You think she treats you poorly, but he doesn't think she treats you poorly. So, remember a circumstance, which includes what other people do and say, is always neutral until you apply meaning to it with your thoughts. You're totally right though Jennifer in that how you react is 100% up to you. It's always a choice it may not feel like a choice because your patterns of reaction are so habitual that it seems like your reactions sometimes just happen, but they always, always, always start with a thought about the other person or circumstance, which makes you feel a certain way and that feeling drives that reaction. The reaction doesn't just happen.

If your mom says something to you that you would normally perceive as say an attack on your parenting skills you could decide not to make that mean that anymore. Most likely the reason you're interpreting what she says as an attack on your parenting skills is because of the story you've created in your head about what she thinks about you and your kids and how you're raising them. Now, some of that story might be based on what she's actually said to you, but most of it will be based on your interpretations of her looks or her little comments to you, your whole story about growing up with her as your mom and how she parented you and then also on your manual for how you think a grandmother should act.

Remember, the manual is your imaginary instruction manual for how other people should act and not act and what they should say and not say and how they should live their lives. That manual will definitely cloud how you interpret what the other person says. That's how we decide that other people are treating us poorly. The best news is that all of this is optional. When your mom tells you how to parent your kids you could instead choose a thought like, "Mom loves me and loves her grandkids and wants the best for all of us. One way she shows that love is by giving me suggestions on how to parent them."

This is also true and doesn't it feels so much better to think that. It doesn't mean you necessarily do anything that she offered to you, but it certainly makes your experience of your mom so much more pleasant and you see your mom didn't have to change at all. All you did was change your thinking about the neutral facts of what she said to you. This is so, so, so, so good. So good. Thank you for your question, that was great.

The next question is from somebody who gave me their initials. So, this is LNO. LNO writes ... Again, this is about the Emotional Responsibility Podcast, "Excellent hard hitting podcast. I struggle with how to teach this emotional responsibility to my five year old and how to enact this in my relationship with my husband. What I don't understand is how to do this and not become some hybrid of an emotionally detached robot and a zen master." Don't you love that? Can you just imagine that? The robot combo zen master. I love that example.

Okay. So, she gives us an example, "Husband chooses not to put away laundry and take out trash like he promised to for the 10th time. I am very irritated. Yes, I would like to not be irritated anymore, but what are the correct thoughts about this situation? What I do is take out the trash and put the laundry away for myself because I want these things done. Where this leads is need doing far more of my share of the household tasks. Do I choose to think that I don't care anymore, to not expect this of my husband and just do it myself? Then I end up doing everything. How do you practically deal with people who regularly let you down and not get emotional about that? For me, to not have strong feelings about these things I feel like I would completely not have to care about what anyone else does as long as not harmful and then what kind of relationship is that anyway? For my son, how do you teach children to experience their emotions and feelings while also being responsible for them? I think it is normal to feel hurt when someone does something mean and unkind on purpose. I appreciate any feedback."

Okay. This is so, so, so, so good. Great question. Thank you so much for asking it. So, let's break this down into a couple segments. First, let's talk about husbands. Most of us have some sort of division of labor in our households. I know we do. So, it sounds like part of your husband's responsibilities are to put away the laundry and take out the trash or at least maybe his responsibilities are to help you out with whatever you need help with. Then part of your manual for him is that he should do what he says he'll do. You said he promised to do it 10 times and then when he doesn't do it you make it mean something with your thoughts that make you feel very irritated. So, based on what you wrote, you understand that the irritation is coming from your thoughts, not from what he didn't do, but you're having a hard time finding a new thought about it that makes you feel better.

Now, the reason you're struggling with a new thought is just like with the last question. You're trying to find a new thought about what you think is a negative circumstance, but all circumstances are always neutral. Husband is at home. Garbage is inside. That's the neutral facts here. Laundry is downstairs folded in laundry baskets. It's totally neutral. It's just garbage and laundry sitting there. Then you have thoughts like, "He said he would take out the garbage and he didn't do it. He didn't put away the laundry like he was supposed to do. He always does this." Those thoughts make you feel irritable. So, let's follow this model through then. Then how do you act when you're irritated about the laundry and garbage? You take it out and put it away, which is great, but you're totally resentful of him while you're doing it.

You're cussing him out in your head. You're telling yourself a whole story about how he doesn't respect you or the house or the family and he's letting you down and why do you always have to do everything and the result is that the laundry is put away and the garbage taken out, but you also not feeling loving or connected with your husband. You're feeling distanced from him and entitled and like a martyr and you're having an adult tantrum. Ultimately, your marriage relationship is weaker because of that line of thinking. That's the result of it. You write that in order for you to not be so emotional about something like this you think you'd have to not care about what anyone else does and this is a really common misconception.

Let me explain this to you here. You can still have expectations of other people. You can still think your husband should take out the garbage and put the laundry away. It's what you make it mean when he doesn't do it that is the part that you can control. Right now, if he does it then you get to be happy and feel loved and cared for and if he doesn't do it, you get to be irritated and resentful and feel let down. That's your manual. What I want to point out here is how we have such high expectations for others and don't give them any grace to make mistakes like all of us humans do. We want others to be perfect at all times, even though we have tons of evidence that we're not perfect.

If my husband's job is to take the garbage to the curb on garbage day and he forgets once I can be totally irate or I can remember that I forget things all the time too. I can give him the benefit of the doubt, just like I'd want him to give me the benefit of the doubt if and when I forget something. Maybe he was in a big rush, maybe there was an emergency at the hospital and he had to leave quickly, maybe he forgot, maybe he was distracted by something else he was taking care of on the way out of the house. There are so many reasons that are innocent that he might not have done it. Also, maybe he just didn't feel like it. Can that be okay? I don't feel like doing things sometimes too.

In your current line of thinking the only way you can be happy is if he always does everything he says he'll do or what you think he should do, because if he doesn't you'll make it mean something negative for sure. A great way to approach changing this model is to decide how you want to feel when the laundry and garbage is sitting there after you've asked him to deal with it. I'll give you a hint. The emotion that always feels the best is love. If you can't get to love though, try to get to something like feeling peaceful or content. If you feel love and peace and contentment with the laundry and garbage sitting there, what would you do? You'd gladly take out the garbage and put away the laundry. You'd decide that you're the best person to deal with it because you're the person dealing with it. You'd wonder if maybe something happened to him and ask him if he's okay since the garbage and laundry were still sitting around.

The result would be that the laundry and garbage would be dealt with and you'd be in a loving marriage relationship with your husband. So, then you choose a thought about that, that makes you feel love and peace and contentment. I always ... Because this was a big one for me too. I always come back to who better than me. If it bothers me, if it's what I want done then I will do it. It's not a big deal. It doesn't have to be a big deal. Where some of my clients get stuck in this situation is what they think is right versus wrong, "But people should do what they say they'll do." They'll tell me, but when I help them turn that around on themselves they see that they don't do what they say they'll do all the time. Maybe in some areas of their lives they do what they say they'll do, but so often they don't follow their eating plan. They say they'll eat a certain way and then they won't when they're in the moment.

When it comes to themselves they don't do what they said they would do and this is how humans judge. I learned this from Byron Katie. Whenever we're judging someone else that judgment is really about us. If the judgment is that my husband should take up the garbage and put away the laundry the truth is that I should take out the garbage and put away the laundry. My husband shouldn't put away the laundry and take out the trash because he doesn't. I'm pretty sure if he said for the 10th time he'll do it then this behavior is a bit of a pattern for him most likely. So, it's really not that surprising when you ask him to do it and he doesn't do it, but we like to act like it's such a shock, like, "Oh my God, can you believe it he didn't take out the garbage again and the laundry is still sitting there." Like it's so surprising, except that's how he rolls. Consistently taking care of household chores is not his deal.

But if you stopped focusing your brain on all the things he doesn't do and instead start looking for all the amazing things he does do, watch your relationship with him completely transform. You won't care in the slightest that you had to take out the garbage because you're focusing your brain on all of his wonderful attributes. Let me give you a personal example. What happens in our house from time to time is that I'll clean things up and then you know how it goes, the clutter kind of just starts filling up and adding up and there's these papers and that mail you didn't open and these packages and just things kind of start to get a little cauterized.

What happens for me is that at a certain point I just can't take it anymore. I don't know what that point is, but there'll always be like this one point where I'm like, "Oh my gosh, we have got to clean up. I can't take it anymore." I used to always think, why doesn't Matt, my husband, why doesn't he ever initiate this? Am I the only person that sees that all this crap is laying around? Does nobody else notice? I also have this story. He apparently kept a very clean room as a child and I'm just like, "What happened? You used to care about neatness, untidiness and now you totally don't. Why don't you ever initiate it? Why do I always have to be the one to do it?" Just total emotional childhood, you guys, totally right there.

Then you guys know that a couple weeks ago I did that podcast about our strengths and so I had my husband do the strengths assessment as well and it was so fascinating, you guys. Within the strength one strength is activator and activator means that you're really good at initiating tasks and then another one is achiever, which means that you're really good at following things through and achieving goals. What I found out is that in my top 10 strengths I have both activator and achiever. So, that means that when I think something should get done I do a good job of getting started at it and then since I also have achiever very high, I do a good job at following that through and finishing it up and achieving that goal.

When my husband did it, his achiever was in his top 10. So, achiever is high for him but activator is way down in the bottom and I was like, "No wonder. Oh my gosh. Of course. I'm just going to stop ever expecting him to initiate cleaning the house up because that's not one of his strengths." This is an example of how knowing your strengths can be so helpful because you just drop all these expectations. That's like asking me to go woo a crowd. It's just like my absolute lowest strength. That's my weakness. I'll never be good at it. If you haven't listened to that podcast, for sure listen to it. If you're interested in getting your strengths and your husband's or spouse's or partner's strengths done, I highly recommend you do it because then you can really see like, "Oh, this thing that really annoyed me about you actually it's just who you are. It's okay. I can accept you for that. It's totally not a big deal."

As far as kids are concerned with emotional responsibility, first focus on learning and applying the concept on yourself. I did this too when I first learned about it. I thought I immediately needed to teach my kids all about it, but kids learn way more by watching you live your life and seeing how you respond to things than what you tell them or teach them. Number one, work on your own self and your own relationships, especially with them and how you talk about your relationships. That is huge right there. Then you can gently correct your kids as they tell you what's going on for them.

For instance, my six year old will sometimes get upset and say that my four year old made him forget what he was going to say. I'll just say, like in a caring loving tone I'll just say, "I can see why you think that, but actually nobody can make you do or say anything." Of course, he's like mmm, because he wants to get her in trouble and he's frustrated because he lost his train of thought, but like in that first comment I read you can see how kids are so incredibly receptive to this work.

They don't have years of ingrained thinking like we do, so they're much more open to learning a new way. So, we just keep offering that to them and letting them kind of soak it up like sponges. Just remember that old phrase, "See one, do one, teach one." Before you try to teach your kids anything apply these concepts to your life so that you really understand them before you start passing them on to the next generation. Such a great question, thank you so much.

Okay. Last question. This is a short one from Zarina. "Hi, Katrina. I just wanted to thank you for recognizing that physicians have a hard time with weight loss too." Yes, we do. "I have lost and gained the same 15 pounds three times in the last five years since having children. My question is about eating more fats in my diet. How do I manage cholesterol? My doctor recently put me on Welchol for elevated lipids and triglycerides. What do you recommend in this case? Thank you so much." This is a really common question. First off, of course, a disclaimer. I am not offering medical advice here. For sure, I defer to your doctor to help you manage this.

There's so many factors that play into cholesterol management that just what you're eating, more than just what you're eating. So, you'll need your doctor for sure to be the expert for your body. One thing I've noticed, though, working with lots of clients is that how their bodies respond to eating more fat while they're losing weight really varies. I've seen people have mildly elevated cholesterol when they never had trouble before. I've seen people be able to come off their cholesterol medication and get their numbers in the normal range after they were eating this way for a while and lost weight. I've had clients see their doctors and their doctors panic about how their cholesterol has gone up and their doctors have told them that they needed to stop losing weight immediately.

And the irony. Ultimately the literature is always changing on this subject. There are people who don't believe that dietary fat intake even has much effect on your cholesterol at all. Ultimately, the jury is still out on this, but you're going to want to find somebody who is receptive to the newer research and the newer ways of thinking about this, not somebody who's still operating from the mindset of 10, 15, 20 years ago. I think that when your body is burning through your fat stores, which is what needs to happen in order to lose weight permanently, some people will experience an elevation in their cholesterol.

I think it's important to focus on getting the weight off and then seeing where the numbers settle out before making any big decisions. I don't think it ever makes sense to ask someone to stop losing weight because of a bump in their cholesterol. I mean, of course, if they have a bunch of underlying health issues and they're on the brink of having a massive heart attack or something, that's of course an entirely different story, but the vast majority of you listening here are not going to be in that type of situation right now. If your doctor wants you on a medication right now, then by all means go ahead and do that. I would focus on consuming more plant based sources of fats like avocado and nuts and olives and olive oil, coconut as well.

You don't necessarily need to eat a super high fat diet like the low carb-high fat people do. I just would not recommend a low fat diet. I'd focus on moderate fat, moderate protein, tons of vegetables and a smaller amount of fruits and grains and see how you do. I looked up Welchol and saw that it helps to lower high blood sugar and diabetics as well. I think that's fine, but you can do a lot of that yourself just by stopping eating flour and sugar and not snacking anymore. Once you change your eating habits you'll have to watch to make sure you still need that medication. You might be able to lower your blood sugar on your own just with that.

Listen, you guys this is the kind of personal help that you get when you work with me in my coaching groups. I still don't give you medical advice or prescribe you anything, but we work together with your doctor to make the best decisions in your individual case. I help you with your specific problems with your husband or your mother or mother-in law or your boss or whatever is going on.

Please keep these questions and comments coming if things aren't sitting right with you or you're like, "I'm getting stuck somewhere." Please post them in the show notes pages and I'll answer on future podcasts for you. Have a wonderful week and I'll talk to you soon. Take care. Bye bye.