



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Welcome to the Weight Loss for Busy Physicians podcast. I'm your host, master Certified life and weight loss coach, Katrina Ubell, M.D. This is the podcast where busy doctors like you come to learn how to lose weight for the last time by harnessing the power of your mind. If you're looking to overcome your stress, eating and exhaustion and move into freedom around food, you're in the right place. Well, hello there, my friend. Welcome to today's episode. I'm really, really happy that you're joining me today. This is inspired by my clients, the lovely women physicians who I work with day in and day out.

It's really something that I've had some fun learning more about and educating myself a little bit. And I think it's just a really interesting topic [00:01:00] to think about, so I'm excited to share it with you today. So let me just tell you a little bit more about the inspiration for this. So I will often hear from clients that they are type A or how does a type A person do X, Y and Z, or how does a type A person approach a relationship with someone who's not type A? And how can a type A person succeed at this, that and the other thing. And it really was, you know what what really kind of sparked this was I don't ever think about myself as type A, but I don't think of myself as like type B either. I just that is not an identity that I have one way or the other.

[00:01:40] And so I started thinking about it like, why do some people have such a type A identity or why have they just decided that they are type A? And then I thought, Well, let me just learn more about this. And it's actually pretty fascinating. I mean, I'm guessing that you may not find it as fascinating as I do, possibly, but [00:02:00] it's outside of the scope of this podcast for me to go into the historical details about how this

whole Type A personality thing was even created in the 1950s. But I'll just give you a very quick summary.

It was created or like the terms were created by two cardiologists who actually were trying to figure out if there were personality types that increased your risk of coronary artery disease. And so suffice it to say, there's been a lot of research over the years, a lot of ups and downs on this whole idea. And really what it comes down to is that being Type A is not a diagnosis. You know, it's not something like that. It just kind of a way to understand our behavior patterns, our tendencies a little bit more. Where I think it becomes a problem is when we really take it up as an identity where we think it's just who we are, which is what an identity is. It's just what we think is true about us, that I'm the kind [00:03:00] of person who X, Y, and Z has type A personality, behaviors or tendencies.

[00:03:06] And that can sometimes really sort of put us in a box. And I think that's maybe one reason why the title or the term never really stuck with me as an individual, because I definitely have some things that you would say are classically type A, but I don't have a lot of them. And so I think it always kind of felt a little confusing to me. It's actually I feel like so often if I take some sort of personality test or like the Enneagram, like everyone's obsessed with the Enneagram. And I took the Enneagram and I scored equal amongst three different numbers.

So basically it meant nothing to me and it was completely unhelpful, you know, So when people are like, I'm an Enneagram, whatever number, I'm like, Well, that's great for you, but it doesn't really work for everybody necessarily. And also, does knowing that number help? Sometimes it really does. Sometimes it kind of pigeonholes us. So part [00:04:00] of why I wanted to do this episode was to talk a little bit more about what it means to be Type A and what it means to not be type A and just educate all of us a little bit. But for us to also just kind of open our minds to even just thinking about other qualifications or terms that we give ourselves, kind of these identities that we have and whether they help us or not, I think sometimes it can help us.

[00:04:25] I've heard so many people rave about the Enneagram. They think it's the best thing ever. It's helped them so much. Amazing. Like they'll love languages is another thing, you know, like if it's helping you amazing Also seen where it doesn't help

people. So we just have to be careful with these kinds of terms and make sure that we really even understand what we're talking about. But big picture, let me tell you why I titled this episode, becoming type A minus. And that is because I think some of us who have some more of the type A characteristics and tendencies we probably could [00:05:00] benefit from, like shaving off a little bit of it.

And I think what so many of us are worried about is if we let go of our Type A personality, then everything will fall to pieces, will be absolutely unfulfilled, will live this horrible, very boring life, you know, like it's just something that's not attractive to us at all. So we kind of cling to that. Even though there can be some definite cons to being type A. The other thing that I think is very interesting, as I did some more research to this online, I found some things that were conflicting, which, you know, makes sense because that is often how these things go. Thusly when research hasn't really totally shown that these things all pan out.

[00:05:40] A lot of people say that type A is a spectrum. With type B, that type B is really just like the antithesis of type A qualities and characteristics. It's like the opposite of type A is type B and that there is a spectrum. I think that is an interesting way of looking at it, and that's why I kind of thought, well, like we don't have to give up all [00:06:00] of our type A tendencies like the things that we really like and that really benefit us and really help us to feel good in the world. But maybe we could work to release some of the ones that create problems for us.

So we could call that maybe being type A minus or maybe being type B plus. For me, I think I'd rather try to be a type B plus. I'll tell you more about what I mean by those things in just a minute. But, you know, you can decide like if you're a Type A and maybe you are a partnered with somebody who's more type B, like maybe there's a way to just understand each other a little bit better. Maybe that's what type A minus means to you is working on being able to let go a little bit on some of the things that, you know, seem like it's, you know, has to be done that way or there's less flexibility there. But then as I learn more about this, I found out that some people talk about a Type C and a Type D as well.

[00:06:54] So I thought, well, shoot. Okay, I'm going to have to tell you a little bit about those as well, how they fit into the spectrum. I'm not entirely [00:07:00] sure. I think the

people who think of type A, B, C, and D don't really think of it as a spectrum. See, this is where it starts to fall apart, which is why another reason I don't love all of these qualifications, but regardless, I think it's still something that's good for us to talk about. It's just like this colloquialism.

It's a way that a lot of us talk, and I just want to make sure that if we are talking about it that way, we're making sure that we're perpetuating it in a way that is helpful to us and may be helpful to others as well. So I want to be clear that I'm not saying type A is bad or that type A is good or that type B is better or more desirable or, you know, like good in some other way. They're just different. And they both have really good pros, like really good, you know, beneficial parts to them. And they can have some cons too. Like we can't have a world of all the same types of people, right? So I just really want to be clear that we're not then shaming ourselves because, [00:08:00] oh, shoot, I shouldn't be so type A, It's not that at all.

[00:08:03] It's more just understanding. Does thinking about myself in this way benefit me? And if there are some cons that show up in my life, maybe those would be some areas I'd like to focus on in my, you know, personal development, in my coaching, in whatever I'm doing to develop myself and to grow. And I think the reason why this is relevant on a weight loss podcast is because when there are cons, you'll see when I tell you a little bit more about them. Often the way that we deal with those cons is by eating right. We use food to make ourselves feel better, possibly alcohol as well. So there you go.

So it's kind of funny when you think about like, well, it's a weight loss podcast, except what are all the reasons that we overeat? Well, like every other reason in life, like everything that stresses us out, everything that's difficult for us or that creates problems for us. So this part is definitely within the scope. So let me give you a little rundown on some of the traits of being type [00:09:00] A. So Type A, people are able to complete tasks, their high achieving, their ambitious, they tend to be competitive and sometimes this can be competitive to a fault like bad competitive. But they are competitive. They like to win. They like to succeed. They tend to be more direct and they tend to advocate for themselves more.

[00:09:23] They are goal oriented, they are resilient. They have a strong work ethic. They are motivated. They set a high standard and have a low tolerance for errors. Mean is this starting to sound familiar? I mean, anybody? Anybody? Bueller? Yeah. I'm like, Oh yeah, Hello? Yes, me. You write, a lot of these things are very familiar, right? But with that low tolerance for errors often comes some perfectionism. Type-a people can be very detail oriented, which is amazing, right? They put out real high quality work, but then they're [00:10:00] also prone to excessive self-criticism and difficulty delegating tasks.

You know the old adage, if you want something done right, do it yourself. Well, for some of us, that becomes a problem, right? And then another big part of being type A is time urgency. So being overly fixated on time. Type-a people often have a very strong need for punctuality, like really cannot stand tardiness. They have sometimes impatience with others. They sometimes have a constant focus on deadlines, and they thrive in high pressure environments.

So when you think about this, just think about what kind of people are required, particularly in certain fields of medicine, like when you are in a trauma bay in an emergency department. Do you want someone who thrives in a high pressure environment? I [00:11:00] would like that. You know, do you want someone who has a strong work ethic and has a low tolerance for errors? Yes, please. Somebody who's detail oriented is going to pick up on the fact that, you know, this other little minor thing is happening that actually is going to turn into a really big, major thing.

[00:11:18] Do you want someone who understands the value of every second that ticks by when you're in a really bad way? Yeah, you do. So remember, these are not bad traits. It's just kind of like the idea that a strength over done can become a weakness. You know, and so we just want to kind of understand ourselves and understand, yeah, in these environments, that type of tendency is really beneficial and great.

And in others it's maybe not like an area where I think being overly fixated on time becomes a problem or, you know, just really having this strong need for punctuality is just in clinic, you know, like people. [00:12:00] And, you know, I struggled with this myself, you know, running behind and then hating that I was running behind and wanting to be on time for people and just wanting to be thorough and having a strong

work ethic and, you know, some things that were just kind of competing motivations that created problems. So now let's talk about some characteristics of type-A people that are not necessarily so great. I think this is maybe, again, when we talk about a spectrum where things can really sort of start to swing, you know, far in that direction, that far out direction. Some type-A people can be very self centered.

[00:12:36] They can be very rigid, they can be driven by ego, and they can have really like an excessively strong competitive drive, which means that they basically must be winning or succeeding to feel good enough or worthy. And I think we can all think of people who are like this, right? Like are some people [00:13:00] kind of popping up in your mind? I don't think that they're typically people who are going to be listening to this podcast, but they might be. They might be. And if that's you, I'm so glad you're here.

But typically that's that person who is just excessively, you know, putting themselves first have to be the hero in every story, you know, or thinking about themselves a lot sometimes have a very fragile ego, really need to be like one upping other people. And then another big part of this, this when type-A was first described a long time ago, a big part of that personality trait was hostility. It was one of those original traits that they described. So being angry or hostile, which is interesting, right? Like that is more of an outlier or not even an outlier, like farther reaches of that spectrum or that pendulum swing. Think. So what are some of the cons of being type A? You know, we've identified like these can be very, very beneficial, particularly when [00:14:00] you're a doctor. But what are some of the downsides? You know, as one of my kids teachers loves to say, there's no free lunch.

[00:14:07] So what is the price that we pay for being able to complete those tasks and being so goal oriented and having that strong work ethic? And the number one thing is chronic stress. I mean. Right. It's just it's a lot of pressure. It's a lot of stress. Then in increased risk of burnout and anxiety. Sound familiar? Right. Like so many doctors struggling with this right now. A difficulty with delegating tasks. I'd mentioned that before, but this is something I coach on a lot. People who just really have a hard time letting someone else do it when they know they could do it just a little bit better themselves. Right. Other cons, excessive self-criticism and feelings of inadequacy.

This is the heart of so much of what I coach on day in and day out, thinking [00:15:00] that beating yourself up kind of voice, that negative berating, kind of really meanly driving way of thinking is somehow going to be helpful. But it creates a lot of problems, right? When that's the way that you think about yourself inside yourself, it would make sense that you would want to avoid yourself. You would want breaks from yourself. You would want to zone out, go into a fog, just not have to be exposed to that. So here comes food, alcohol, shopping, social media, TV, gossip. Et cetera. Okay, so this is a real big downside. A real big con of Taipei.

[00:15:45] Okay. Other cons difficulty with work life balance. So unfamiliar. A lot of people struggle with that rigid thinking like a relative inflexibility. You know, like some of us, it just we need to have it our way. It starts to really be, you know, a problem [00:16:00] for us if we don't get it our way. And sometimes we see that in our feedback that we get, you know, that we aren't maybe as good of a team player as others would like us to be or things like that. And it really being a type A person can strain social relationships. It can be difficult for type A people to connect with others on a deep level. That's an issue that a lot of people ask for coaching on as well.

Like really struggling with making those deeper connections, knowing how to relate to people when they're in that, you know, strong type, a kind of a place. So that's type A. Now, I'm guessing that at least some of those characteristics sounded familiar to you. And some of them you're like, That's probably not so me. And if anything, what I'd love for this to be able to do is to help you to see that if you already were identifying as type A, that maybe there's flexibility in there, maybe you're not all Type A, maybe it's not such a hard, you know, rigid identity. Maybe you have [00:17:00] some of those characteristics. You're someone who can be type A, but you're not always type A, I think those things are important rather than just deciding I am someone who is type A, I think that can really create some problems.

[00:17:13] Okay, now let's talk about type B, because sometimes I think it's easy for us to think that like type B is so much better and, you know, think that they can be happier. But I'll tell you more about them. So type B people are more easygoing. They tend to be more optimistic and more flexible. They enjoy achieving, but they aren't as devastated. You know, when a small goal isn't fulfilled, like they're not really having a hard time with

that, But they do like to succeed and achieve In general. They have lower stress, they're more adaptable to change.

They tend to be more patient. They tend to have a higher tolerance for ambiguity and a higher tolerance of other people. They tend to be less driven by time pressure. They tend to have less anxiety, they're more reflective [00:18:00] and they're more imaginative and creative. So which of those things did you recognize in yourself? Because I recognize some of those things in myself as well. And I think it's actually really nice to recognize, hey, you know what? Yeah, I can be easygoing. I can be flexible. Like I tend to have a generally pretty optimistic mindset. You know, I can be pretty tolerant of others, at least sometimes. You know, I can be creative and imaginative.

[00:18:29] Right? That's when we start to realize, you know, maybe I'm more a type A minus. Maybe I'm kind of actually more like a type B plus. Maybe type A isn't the thing. The other thing I actually didn't even mention is that I think Type A is often really kind of glorified. Like the way you should be is type A, like type A is better because they're the people who get Bleep done, you know, they're the ones who get crap done and they're the ones who have their names remembered, who leave a legacy, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Like all of those things where the type B [00:19:00] people are working for the Type A people or something like that. And I just want to offer that we can just blow up that whole idea. We just really get to decide what we think about everything, right? We really, really do. And so I think particularly for women, having some of those type B characteristics actually is super beneficial for us. Like that's what is desired and it often makes us better leaders and we're better able to identify with others. I think it often makes us better doctors because of the way that we can relate to others. I think there's some really, really good things about being type B. It is not a bad thing by any stretch, so you can see how those things can be like a spectrum between type A and type B.

[00:19:44] But let me just mention real quick, type C and type D, just because you're probably curious and you're like, all right, which of these are me? So type C, type C, people tend to be cooperative and kind. They're very agreeable, they're very patient, but they tend to be more cautious, [00:20:00] sometimes more serious and more

submissive. They really prioritize harmony and consensus over competition, and they often prefer a more structured and predictable setting. So like working the emergency department or in intensive care would probably not be the thing that they are looking for. Right. And that's not the thing.

And I think, you know, I can think of people like even some supportive like ancillary staff in the hospital who often are people who have characteristics like this, which is really amazing. Like it takes all kinds to make a team work. We can't have a whole bunch of type-A people trying to work together without other people in the mix. You know, it tends to not work out as well. So that's type C and then type D is kind of interesting. Type D, people tend to be more persistently and consistently in a negative mood or kind of regardless of the situation, they tend to be more [00:21:00] prone to anxiety and depression. They tend to avoid social interaction. They may struggle with motivation and self confidence, and they tend to avoid conflict and negative outcomes. So I think that that is probably, you know, sometimes maybe where we fall.

[00:21:20] I think that in general, people who spend a lot of time in this place are often not going to be the people who are following through on what it takes to become a doctor. But we are surrounded by people like this, and there's definitely people I can think of that are more along that Type D personality kind of pattern and tendency. And again, not good or bad. It's just it is just a different tendency. So I just wanted to let you know about that. What do we do with this information now? So now we know about this. I think really the first thing is to evaluate your identity.

Like, do you want to [00:22:00] think of yourself as type A or type B? Like does it help you or not? Like, why would you want to think about yourself that way? Or why wouldn't you want to think about yourself that way? Like I said, it's not good or bad, right or wrong. I think we just need to be careful about not pigeonholing ourselves. Like you see this with other personality tests too. With like Myers-Briggs. I can't remember what those letters are, but, you know, like, oh, you're a blah, blah, blah, you know, conglomeration of letters like, oh, that means you're this and this and this. What I always think about these things that I think, like any personality test, the thing you have to remember is that it requires you to take a test where you talk about yourself or you answer questions about yourself.

[00:22:39] So really, the results are a reflection of your thoughts and beliefs about yourself and your identity is part of that. So it's just reflecting your thoughts and beliefs and your identity back to yourself is what it really is. So some people say, Oh, you can't change those things. I actually disagree because I know that we can change the way we think when we decide [00:23:00] we want to and what we believe and we can change our identity. And if that's something that serves us and we want to do it, we absolutely can do that and then that can change things.

So just kind of keep that in mind. I think that we are all, you know, uniquely amazing and we have traits that are awesome and create amazing things for us in our lives. And we have traits, sometimes the same traits that can create problems for us in our lives. And the more we can create awareness around those things, the better off we are right? The more we can make conscious decisions. Instead of just saying, Hey, this is just who I am or this is just my personality, or I'm just type A, So therefore that requires me to respond in this way or react in this way and actually think that that type of mindset is abdicating responsibility and ownership for yourself as a human being. Right? It's easy.

[00:23:56] Well, I'm just the kind of person who is like this and this and this, or I've always [00:24:00] been this way. I'm kind of like. So that doesn't make it okay. That doesn't make it a positive for you or anyone around you, right? Like, I know that when we decide we want to change that we can. And the very first thing we have to do before changing is become very aware of the results of our thoughts and our beliefs and our identity. So do you want to think of yourself as type A? Why or why not?

And I think it can be helpful to think, you know, whatever your brand of Type A is, what are the cons of that? Like, what is the price that you pay for being that way? Is there a way for you to maybe modulate that a little bit, almost like rather than having your foot on the gas, like pedal to the metal all the way down, like is there an in between where maybe your foot isn't off the gas where it feels more like type B, but somehow you're kind of like your foot's in the middle of the gas pedal, like you're not totally pedal to the metal. [00:25:00] You're a little bit more type A minus. And what might that be like? These are things that we can play around with. There's, I think in the 12 steps, I think they say something about like doing the opposite.

[00:25:12] It kind of reminds me of Seinfeld. There was a Seinfeld where George Costanza, I think they call it like it was opposite day or like whatever he thought he should do. He did the opposite. And it was like working out super great for him for a while, you know? But I think within the 12 steps they talk about that too, where they're like, you know, whatever you would typically do, like try doing the opposite because whatever you're typically doing is not working for you. Like, so just try something else like, or like whatever that initial impulse is to do. Maybe try doing the opposite of that. It would be an interesting thing to play around with.

You can always go back to being your super bot in type self if you want to, if you feel like it benefits you. And so finally, I just want to leave you with a reminder that your beliefs and thoughts and your identity truly create your experience of your life. You know, like how [00:26:00] it is to be you in this life is solely created by the way that you think what your beliefs are and your identity. Because those things create your feelings and your feelings are That's your life right there. So if we're getting kind of existential about it like that really is. What your life is. And so if. Approaching things in this way, in this type a way creates problems for you. The very best news I have for you is that those beliefs and thoughts and identity can be shifted, adjusted and changed.

[00:26:36] And I see it every day. I've done it with myself. I have innumerable clients who've done it, and it's incredible. It's incredible what you can create if you decide you want to. But I will tell you that I'm not over here telling you you have to change. Okay? I'm not saying that. I'm just saying it might be something for you to consider if you know there's some cons from your type ness. Okay. So we can become type A minus [00:27:00] or type B plus. If we decide we want to, we can maybe even put a little dash of type C in there if we want to.

Maybe we don't probably want to add in any sprinkles of type D, I think we can probably leave that by the wayside, but we get to decide like what our unique mix is. I'm kind of thinking about it like type A, type B and type C, Those characteristics, they're all like different seasonings. And we get to create our own unique blend, you know, and like what blend works for us feels uniquely, authentically us. That gives us the results that we want, helps us to enjoy our lives in the way that we're kind of built to enjoy them, right? Because for some people, that's going to be more succeeding, for others, maybe less so, and then just own that, right? It's your own custom blend.

[00:27:50] So good we don't have to fit into anybody's mold or, you know, other definition. All right. Well, learning about this has helped me to think. Yeah, [00:28:00] I think I'm already a bit type-A. Minus. I think I could be maybe a little bit more type B plus. And the only reason I would want to work on that is because of how it makes me feel and what it makes my experience of my life like, right?

Not because someone else says or, you know, something's bad or anything like that, but just because there's a different experience that I would like to have and I would love for you to consider if you'd want to change things a little bit, too. So I hope that that was, you know, kind of a fun little rundown. Like I said, you can go down a little Internet rabbit hole on how type A and type B was first created back in the 1950s. And if not, think you got what you needed here today.

All right. Well, whatever you decide to do, even if you are firmly, you know, like deciding that you are type A, you know, ride or die type A, then I think that's amazing. I think you're amazing. And you do, you friend. All right. Have a great rest of your day and your week, and I will talk [00:29:00] to you next time. Bye bye. Ready to start making progress on your weight loss goals? For lots of free help, go to katrinaubellmd.com and click on Free Resources.