



# WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina: Well, hello there my friends. How are you? Welcome back to the podcast. How is your January going? How's your New Year? Are you finding that you're getting the results you want? Are you finally buckling down and making it happen? I think this is such great work for us. I can't wait to talk to you today about a coaching subject that a lot of people get tripped up on and they have a hard time wrapping their brains around it. I can't wait to dive into that a little deeper and help you to tease that apart.

First, let's talk iTunes reviews. I have 324. My goal is 500, so let's keep them rolling in you guys. Thank you so much. You may recall that so many people on the iTunes app or the podcast app on their phone are having a hard time leaving reviews. So many people have let me know, "I can rate you, but I can't review you." It's just not working for whatever reason, but when you go into iTunes on your computer, it's a lot easier to do and a lot more consistent. If you would not mind just heading in there really quickly and leaving me a review, I would appreciate it so much.

I think it's going to be so fun to figure out how long it's going to take to get to 500. I mean how many more months are we going to talk about this. It's so fun. In fact, oh my gosh you guys, I just had a webinar a couple days ago and it was so fun. I spent a whole hour answering questions. It was so great. Then we were kind of winding down and one of the gals was like, "iTunes reviews," like just reminding me, "Oh, yeah. Ask everybody for those."

It was so funny. I just want to read a couple of these for you because I want you to see how you can just leave a short one too. This is from Altee and she writes a fantastic show, "I have loved this so much. I am now part-time, but I think if I had found you sooner, I would've never needed to take a break from medicine. I'm recovering, starting to lose weight, and looking forward to going back this year. You rock. Thank you so much. Also, love Buddhify, which has been so helpful." Yeah, Buddhify is another meditation app that I like to use as well. It's so good.

I completely agree. I often think if I had known all this stuff, I mean well gosh even in childhood it would've been helpful, but if I had known all of this heading into practice, what would've happened? Or if I had someone like me to help me while I was in practice, would I even have left? I don't know. I think I've mentioned that before. Of course, it's all working out perfectly and I'm so excited to be doing what I do with you guys here. I certainly don't regret it or anything like that, but it is kind of fun to think, "I wonder what that would be like."

I also wanted to just read to you this other review that's very short and the title is Thanks, it's by Dr. Jay Dunnett. They write, "Awesome podcast. Love the weekly coaching through the episodes. This truly helps me to change the underlying reasons why I do so many of my behaviors leading to a better me." So short and quick, right? Thank you so much. That's so great. I had some people on the webinar say, "Can we really make that many changes from listening to your podcast?" I said, "You know what? Go and read my reviews and you will see how people are losing weight right and left just by listening to this podcast." So great. Always give you guys my absolute best work for free here on the podcast. If you've not hit subscribe yet so you don't miss any episodes, then you will want to do that in your podcast app as well.

Okay. Let's talk about the idea of buffering positive emotions. You guys have heard me talk before about buffering negative emotions, neutralizing them. A lot of people can get behind that idea. That makes sense to them, but they can't quite get what it means to buffer a positive emotion. What it really is, is that we kind of get confused and we think we're just having fun. We're just enjoying ourselves. Why would I want to make that more neutral? I'm not trying to make it more neutral. That's not what I want to do, but it is what you're ultimately doing. I'm going to explain that a little bit more.

I know we all have these stories. I'm just going to give you a couple examples in my own life. When I was in medical school and I'd had this hard break up with this college boyfriend, I spent a lot of time exercising and of course I was studying like crazy, and I just wanted to feel good about myself, and I was just eating healthy and things like that and things were going great and I wasn't gaining weight. Then I met my husband and we started dating and that involved lots of dinners out because what else are you going to do? We're med students, we're just either studying or working and you have to eat, so it's a great time to connect. We would have all these dinners out and of course, you're feeling love, you're falling in love, you're feeling so great, and you want to then also have some extra pleasure from food and sometimes alcohol. What that ended up equaling for me was some weight gain.

Overall, that is a net negative. It seems like, I'm going to make this great feeling that I'm already having, this feeling of falling in love, better or more intense by having more food, but the long term outcome is a negative. The long term outcome is I gain weight, I don't feel good about myself, and sure, I have this great relationship, but there's this other new problem that I've created for myself.

Similarly, I used to cook and bake a lot on the weekends and entertain myself with new recipes. Sometimes I would have 12 things that I would make on the weekend. I was just cooking and baking all day long, making dishes after dishes, and all these things and thinking this is so great, look at me, I'm preparing all this food for us for the week. I was sometimes baking bread from scratch and making all kinds of stuff that was fun, homemade granola, and all these yummy things. The thing is, is that activity in of itself, is not a problem. There's probably many naturally thin people who do that and they love it and it's not a problem. In fact, one of my very good friends is like. She loves to bake, but she doesn't overeat what she bakes. She doesn't have a problem just getting enough and then leaving the rest.

The problem for me was that it resulted in something I didn't want. I spent all weekend cooking and baking and I was eating way more food thinking this stuff is going to go bad or it needs to be eaten and a lot of it was non fuel foods. It was a lot more food than my body needed just in general. That also made my desire sky high because I had all this delicious food under my nose all the time. I was constantly entertaining myself with new recipes, thinking about food, thinking about what I was going to make next. The net result for me was weight gain. Also, often pretty significant physical exhaustion from standing around in the kitchen all day and also not moving forward with other projects that I wanted to complete. I felt like I had no time while I was spending so much of my time doing all of this cooking that I would not move ahead with other things that I needed to do in my life.

One thing that I did realize about myself as I did this was that I recognized that all of that cooking was in a way, a way for me to get away from everybody, which is what I needed as an introvert. I needed some time alone, but I didn't feel okay saying to my husband, "Look. I just need to go sit in bed and read a book for three hours." I felt like that wasn't okay like I should be interacting with the family. If I was doing something that was benefiting the family like staying in the kitchen and doing a bunch of cooking while my husband was playing outside with the kids or something like that, that seemed okay for me and that seemed like it was a way that I would want to show up and I didn't feel bad about doing. It took me a while to realize I actually really like this time alone in here. I like just being on my own, doing my thing, and not having to talk to anybody, which is what ends up happening when I have too much interaction, too much exposure to people and things like that. It was an interesting revelation to realize that was another way that I was trying to make myself feel better because I felt like I just needed a break and it was an okay way to do that.

What I want to offer to you is, when it is okay to do this and when is it not? How do you know if it's actually a buffer? The way that you know if what you're doing is a buffer or a neutralizer is what the result is for you. Let's say you're out to dinner, you decide to have one glass of wine, you've planned it ahead, then you stick to that plan. This is not a problem, right? This is totally something that you decided with your prefrontal cortex. This is great.

Sometimes we don't plan ahead and we just tell ourselves in the moment, "I'll just have one glass of wine." Then that one glass turns into three and then now you're eating a bunch of food you didn't plan on and then this fun event, this fun dinner out, turns into a net negative. The result for you is you feel bad. You feel disappointed in yourself, you might beat yourself, you might gain some weight, or you're certainly not going to be losing like you're trying to do, and you might also feel bad physically. So often my clients will tell me how they feel bloated and swollen, their rings won't fit. You might feel hungover or just really dehydrated or you didn't sleep well. You thought you were having fun and you thought one little glass in the wine in the moment, that decision, would make it more enjoyable and would add to the pleasure that you're experiencing and that it would make it more fun, but it really doesn't in the long run.

It's the same with any kind of celebration or party. We think it's impossible to have fun and enjoy ourselves if we don't partake in the food. This is because it's what we've been conditioned to do since childhood. Literally, many of us have zero experience with what it might be like to celebrate something or go to a party and not have a whole bunch of food.

Think about birthday parties from day one. Your first birthday party, you were eating cake. It's just what we do. Or our only experience might be going to a party, resisting all the food because we're on a diet, feeling totally sorry for ourselves, feeling super deprived because everybody else is enjoying everything, and so then we think that the only way to have fun is to eat and drink because our experience of not eating the food was so miserable.

A lot of people will identify as foodies. People say, "I just love food. It's just so amazing. We just enjoy it so much," and they love going to the latest popular restaurant and tasting all these amazing foods and wines. When they go on vacation, there's always a food tour in there or wine tour. They get so much excitement and entertainment and pleasure from those experiences. Again, this is not a problem if you are a naturally thin person. There are naturally thin people who are foodies. I mean there are New York Times food critics who are paid to eat constantly who are naturally thin. That is because they take a taste of everything. They really taste it, get the pleasure out of it, enjoy it, and they stop when they are not hungry anymore. That is not how foodies with a weight problem approach their eating, right?

If you're a foodie with a weight problem, you tend to eat too much. You get overly full. You drink too much wine or too many cocktails and you feel terrible the next day. Plus, you get the potential weight gain and then over the course, that adds up and then you feel bad every day in your body. Maybe your self talk is terrible because you are just beating yourself up so much and wishing that your body was different, wishing you had more self control and you were more disciplined. You can see that net negative. You go into it thinking it's going to be so great and in the moment, you do have fun, but on the back end, the net result is not good for you.

It really is this idea that we can make a good experience better with more food. If you have a celebratory meal, why can't just the right amount of food for your body be enough? Why do we have to have all of the foods? The appetizer and a cocktail and then the salad and then at this point, we're already full before the entrée even comes, but then we eat some of that too. Then we still order dessert and finish off the bottle of wine. Now we feel like we have to be rolled out of the restaurant. How is that celebratory? We go into thinking this is going to be a fun experience to celebrate our anniversary and we leave it feeling like a big roly poly slug.

It's important to take a look at what our current thoughts and beliefs are about eating for positive emotions. We feel joy and accomplishment and pride. Pride, in the sense of you feel really proud of yourself. You feel love. These things feel amazing. They are part of the 50% of the human experience that feels great. We want to have these. When we buffer these emotions, we're thinking that food and drinks will make the positive emotions even better. One of my clients was saying how she felt like a sugary dessert brought a plus seven level fun experience to a plus nine and that she was bummed out that she only got a plus seven. This is the thing. It might bring it to a plus nine in the moment, but shortly after that for like 15 minutes, then after the fact when we feel too full or when the scale goes up or doesn't go down like my clients working on it doing, then there's net negative. The overall fun level in sum might only be a plus four or a plus five.

By eating the extra food, we are actually buffering the positive emotions. Think of what a buffer does. It neutralizes acids and also bases. It's always drawing the solution toward neutral. It's so funny to me that I'm talking chemistry because seriously, chemistry is the pits. I was thinking, "How did I ever take all those chemistry classes?"

It's really an amazing miracle that I'm a doctor. My brain and chemistry are like what? They just don't mix. Anyway, when we buffer negative emotions, they become more neutral. We feel intensely negative ones or just minor negative ones and it helps us to feel better. The same goes for positive emotions. They become more neutral as well. That means they become less fun. When we think we haven't had enough fun in our positive experiences, we try to repeat this whole thing over again. You've had fun, you've had the positive experience, but then the extra food buffered that and made it less fun, made the experience overall not as good. Then we think, "well, I just need to have more fun and more positive experiences in my life," and so we do it again, searching for more and more pleasure. The net effect for us then is more and more weight gain while feeling worse and worse about ourselves.

If you can recognize this pattern in your own life, what do you do? What is next? Some of you might be thinking, "Yeah, totally. This is completely what I do. I need to stop that. What do I do?" The very first thing you need to do is you need to start by becoming aware of what your thoughts. You need to see how this is playing out in your life. Maybe you can think back to some of the experiences you've had where you think, "Yeah. Pretty much every date night this is what happens. Wow. Okay, date night is an issue. For sure, I need to do some work on that." Or parties or whatever it is. You start getting really aware. What was my thinking, why was I thinking that snacking on everything was making it better, and really getting in tune to that.

It's so easy for us to just want to quickly change everything. We're like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. I do that. Okay. How do I make it better immediately?" I want to offer to you that it's so much more effective, you're so much more effective at changing this permanently when you really see how it's playing out in your life currently. You need to really see all the ramifications of it before you can really decide this is a major problem that I want to change and this is what I'm going to do about it. First of all, start getting really away seeing how these things play out.

Another thing to do is to start looking at what naturally thin people do. Ask yourself, "How do they approach these experiences?" When you're with them, pay really close attention. It's kind of like you're on this mission like this exploring going, "These are the native people and I don't know anything about it. Here they are in the wild, in a restaurant, not overeating. What do they do? Let me pay attention." I know that's kind of silly but seriously, it is really what you're doing. You are trying to tap into that. If you know people who are like this, you can talk to them about it. Ask them. How do you approach this? What do you do when there's more wine being poured? What are your thoughts about that?

Then, you make plans ahead of time for upcoming positive experiences. This is so important. The day before at a minimum, if not more time in between, you need to plan ahead of time how you are going to approach this experience, what you are going to do. Not looking at like I'm punishing myself and depriving myself so that I do what I need to do. I'm just going to have to buckle down and just suck it up. Not that kind of thing. You're not beating yourself into submission. You're looking at it like I'm learning how to have a really fun time yet not overeat and over drink and I'm figuring out how to do that.

You come up with a plan and then you experiment. You go to the thing, whatever it is, and you try out your plan. You follow your plan. Then, this is so important, you have to be willing to fail. So many of us as doctors think, "Okay. I've got it. This is the plan. This is the algorithm. I'm going to follow this. I'll never have a problem with this ever again. I will never, ever, ever fall flat on my face. Great. Perfect solution." Then when things don't work out the way we want them to and we do fail, we think, "See? I couldn't do it. Just evidence. This is dumb. I can't ever have success with this." It just gets you right back where you are again, so you have got to be willing to fail and to not let it mean that this won't work, that it's something negative about you. It's so important that you just recognize that didn't work, it was an experiment. Most experiments don't work.

Then after you fail, you make sure you learn from it. This is so important. Do that Write it Down and Move On worksheet that I offered to you in episode 50. If you want that, you can go to [KatrinaUbellMD.com/50download](http://KatrinaUbellMD.com/50download), all kind of smushed together. You can download that and start using it. Write down what happened and what you can learn from it and you can follow through that whole worksheet that I have for you.

Now you've learned something, right? Now, what do we do as we go back to our plans ahead of time? You improve those plans, you tweak them, you try something different, you look at how you showed up the first time and what the obstacles were and figure out a different way of working through those obstacles. Then you practice that again. Over the course of time, you're going to figure out, you know what? For date nights, this is how I like to approach it. For parties, this is how I like to approach it. For whatever experience, going out for something else, a birthday party, this is how I like to approach it. Then you continue to practice that until it becomes what you do naturally. It's just how you do things. You don't have to think so hard because you have all this evidence that when you approach a party this way, you get the results you want.

This is super, super important, really, really good work because so many of us just think I'm overall a happy person. I just like food too much. It's just a problem that food is so great. The thing that I want to offer to you is that luckily, all of those are just thoughts. We think that's just fact, I just really love food too much, but that's a thought. When you have that thought, it creates desire for you and your actions are to overeat and the result is to gain weight. That one thought is keeping you overweight or making you gain weight, so that thought's not a good one. Even though it might feel true, there are other true thoughts that you can also think about yourself. I'm learning how to enjoy food, but not in excess. How about that? That's a good one, right?

If you're wanting to go through this again, I think is probably a podcast that some of you are really going to want to listen to you multiple times. Or if you want to just be able to read it and take some notes, you can always find the transcripts for the episodes at the podcast show notes page, which you can find at [KatrinaUbellMD.com/54](http://KatrinaUbellMD.com/54) and you can print that out and download it or you can even just scroll through and just read it that way as well.

So good, you guys. This is such important work. We talk so much about all the negative emotions and those are there too, but these positive emotions really deserve your attention as well. Okay, my friends. Thank you so much. Thank you for your iTunes reviews. If you haven't left one and you would be willing to leave me one, I would certainly appreciate it so much. All right. Take care. I'll talk to you next week. Bye.