



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Hey, my friend. What's up? Welcome to the podcast today. I have been really excited to record this podcast for you because I think it's really something that people don't talk about and it's something to really think about. So I'll be so curious to know what you think about it, and you can always leave me your comments at the show notes page for this episode, which you can find at katrinaubellmd.com/58.

But first really quick, let's talk iTunes reviews. I'm getting there, creeping there slowly like a snail. We're getting there. We're over 500 on the ratings, which I super, super duper appreciate, but I want to get there on the reviews, too. Because remember, the reviews help other people find the podcast so that they can get some help, too. So if you could leave me one, I'd appreciate it. This review is from Sunshine State MD, so I'm going to go with ... Where do you think? California or Florida? Which is The Sunshine State? I should probably know this. I was thinking California, but maybe it is Florida. I don't really know.

Okay. Title is Thank You, and she writes, "Holy cow. What a revelation. My coworker and I, both medical providers, love talking over your podcasts. We've definitely benefited from listening to your podcasts again and again. Our mental well being and our ability to take care of patients has been positively affected." Thank you. That makes me so happy. Right? Losing weight is great and super fun. But seriously, changing your life, changing the way you approach your job, the way you're interacting with your patients, that trickles down. I mean, they're getting it from you. Then they're interactions with everyone in their lives is better. It's so, so fantastic. I love it.

Okay. Today we are going to talk about how normal people eat. And when I say normal people, normal is in quotes. Okay? So I'm air quoting, finger quoting as we talk, as I talk about this kind of stuff. And so this came up for me because I just started a new group, as you guys know. And I have all of my new clients fill out a form, just kind of an intake form, asking them a bunch of questions about themselves and what they're hoping to get from the program and what their story is about how they got to this point in the first place, and all that information.

As I go through these forms, I've done this so many times now, I've read many, many, many, many of these forms. And what I often see that clients write as a goal for themselves, these are physicians, is that they want to be able to eat like a normal person.

That's just a phrase that comes up over and over again. I want to be able to eat like a normal person. And so it's so fascinating to me, that thought. Right? I want to be able to eat like a normal person. What does that mean, really? How does a normal person eat?

We all have our own ideas. And I think if we all sat around and talked about how does a normal person eat, we'd all have our own individual viewpoints on that, and they would not all be the same. And so I think this is really important to address, because I think for most of us our idea of what normal people eat and how normal people eat is super duper skewed. Okay? We think that normal people have it made, but here's the deal. According to the CDC, in 2013 to 2014 over 70% – that is seven-zero – percent of American adults 20 years old or older, were either overweight or obese. Did you hear that? Right?

My jaw dropped. Over 70% of American adults 20 years old or older are either overweight or obese. And it might even be more now, because we're about four or five years out from this. So that means that well over the majority of the people that you interact with on a day to day basis, that you socialize with, that you eat and drink with, are overweight or obese. So many people don't think they are. Right? So many people are like, "Oh, yeah. I could lose a couple pounds." But really, technically they're overweight.

So our brains will pay attention to what other people do because we're always comparing ourselves. We're always judging what they're doing, comparing ourselves. And it's going to automatically average out what we see and think that that is normal. Right? We see all of these people eating and how they operate around food, and we think that that's normal, except that the vast majority of people are not physically normal. Right? Because being physically normal would be to be in a normal BMI range. So this really is a problem. This is why our thinking is so skewed. We really think that what's normal is what's going to keep you thin, except what's normal, meaning what's average, is what gets you overweight or obese.

So this is this cognitive dissonance that we have. We see all these people who seem to be indulging and having fun and eating all these different things and drinking whatever they want and beers all day on the weekend and whatever. And we think that that's normal. But that doesn't give you the result of a normal body. If you want a normal body you need to eat truly like a normal person. And so I'm going to explain to you what that actually is, because the vast majority of us don't have this straight in our heads.

So eating multiple courses at a restaurant is not normal. Now if you go to a restaurant where they give you these little micro-meals, so that really by the end it was a normal amount of food, now of course that's normal. But that's not the case at most restaurants. Right? You order an appetizer and then you get a salad, and the salad is really pretty big. And then you get your entrée, and that was probably enough food, plenty, more food than you needed for the whole meal to begin with. And then if you still order dessert, even if it's just a little sorbet or a little bit of ice cream or whatever, it's still more than your body needed. And that is not normal.

Eating small meals multiple times a day is not normal. It's not how our bodies are best able to function. It's not normal. Eating frequent snacks throughout the day and into the evening and into the night for some of us, is not normal. Okay? It's not normal to just be grabbing little bits here and there and a little piece of candy and a little break off of a cookie and a little crumb of this. That's not normal. So the way normal people, in air quotes, normal eat will make us overweight. And so we don't want to emulate them. They are not who we should be striving to be like. We think we want to be normal, but that is not what we want.

And I want to point out how there are other areas too where we just think things are normal and they definitely are not. The prime example that comes to my mind is the schedule that a lot of doctors have. Not every one of us, but many of them. Right? It's not normal to have to be woken up multiple times a night and not even just be woken up. You have to think clearly and make sense, and actually give advice. So even when you're woken up multiple times a night when you have a newborn or you have a sick child, for the most part, for the vast majority of us, we're not really even needing to wake up that much. You get up, you change a diaper, you feed the baby, you put him back down. Your brain is not operating on full cylinders. Right? You are really just kind of getting it done, trying to stay as asleep as you can or as out of it as you can so you can go right back to sleep again.

And when you're on call and you get woken up, that's not the case at all. Right? You have to actually wake up quickly and you have to think, and you have to give good advice. And sometimes you have to go in. That is not normal. It's not normal to work all night long or work super long stretches at a time days on end where you're barely sleeping at all every night. It's not normal to have sky high stress levels at work day in and day out. Right? Having your cortisol levels be just super, super high, that's not normal.

So like I said, when we say we want to be like normal people in quotes, that's actually not at all what we want. And so what I want to offer to you ... I think I mentioned this before on the podcast, but we're really going to dive into it today. The truth is that for a woman who's over 40, you just do not need that much food. Okay? It really is disappointing and you're going to see a lot of women over 40 who are eating a normal, quote-unquote, amount of food. But they all want to lose weight. Right? If you ask them, they all think they at least have five or 10 or 15 pounds that they can lose.

So we like to get all worked up over calories and how many calories we're consuming every day and is that enough and what's that doing to our metabolism and all these other things. And I wanted to offer to you that that is the absolute wrong approach to this. Okay? And this is why. As you have heard me explain before, calories are not what is important. The way your body processes different macro-nutrients is different. So a calorie of fat is processed extraordinarily differently than one calorie of sugar is processed by your body.

So when you're looking at your overall calories, it really doesn't even mean anything. Right? The way your body is processing your food is totally variable based on what is in those calories. Honestly, in my opinion once this whole calorie thing took off a number of decades ago, it completely wrecked us, as evidenced by all the people who have weight issues. Right?

It allowed us to basically ... The word that comes to mind is dehumanize, like dehumanize the food, even though food is not human. Of course, you know what I mean. It basically is not letting us look at the food and go, "Is this food good for us?" What it's doing is it's completely just breaking it down into a unit of measure, of energy, as though they're all the same, these calories. And they're not.

So then we go, "Oh, my God. I didn't eat enough calories. This is a problem." But it's not necessarily a problem if the way you were fueling your body was with calories that give your body the nutrients it needs. So it's so, so, so hard for so many of my clients to drop this whole calories thing, especially if they've had a experience of it working for them in the past. But of course, when they hire me, it's not working anymore. So here's the thing. If you're doing calories and counting them and it's working for you and you're happy, please be my guess. But my experience is that the vast majority of people who are doing that don't keep up with the weight loss and maintenance long term unless they're very, very compulsive and very obsessed with it. If that works for them, great, but the majority of us are not. Right?

So what ends up happening is it just doesn't work anymore, and we have to figure out something else. So what we do need to do is get our bodies functioning like they should, as you heard me say, as a human body should, so that our hunger and satiety signals are accurate. That's the problem when you're eating a bunch of flour and sugar. You're overly hungry and you can't trust your body to tell you when you're full. So you can't trust your body to tell you when you're hungry and you can't trust your body to tell you when your full. So then what? Then we start relying on use of vitriolic calories, which are the exact opposite of what we need to be doing.

So when we let our bodies function like they should so that our hunger is dialed in and our body really is only asking for food when it needs it and knows how to access our fat stores when it's not a good time to eat, and we feel full when we are actually full, that is when we start getting the results we want. We have to let our bodies consume the multiple extra meals worth of fat that we have on our bodies in order for us to lose weight and keep it off permanently.

And this is what I want you to know. Even at a mid-BMI goal weight, so even when you're maintaining there, which for so many of you you're like, "Oh, my God. This was before I was even in high school that I weighed this much." People get really hung up on that like, "I was in seventh grade." It doesn't matter. I weigh less than I did in ninth grade. I don't even know if I weighed myself in seventh and eighth grade. But I do remember getting on the scale at the doctor, and I weigh less than that.

So even if you're at a mid-BMI goal weight, you have at least 20 to 30 extra pounds of fat on your body that your body can use to sustain itself if needed. So you are definitely not in danger of starving or wasting away when you learn to trust your body and stop counting all the calories and all of that other nonsense. Your body always has enough energy on it in order for it to keep itself up, unless you are literally attempting to starve yourself or living in a place where there really is a famine or something. Which those of us who live in America, especially those of us who are doctors, are not experiencing.

So at this point in your life your body just doesn't need that much food. So everyone worries about metabolism going down, and here's the thing. It will go down, because your body doesn't have to lug so much extra body fat around day in and day out. Okay? So this is not a problem that your metabolism is going down. You're actually doing your body a favor. It doesn't have to work so hard to keep you alive, because you are lighter. It doesn't have to work so hard to profuse and fuel all of these extra fat cells. So it won't need as much energy to keep your smaller body alive and well, and this is not a problem at all if you're not that hungry and your desire for food is in check.

I think that so many of us think that, "Oh, my God. My metabolism will go down," and then we equate that with being starving and not being able to eat anything, like ravenously hungry and miserable. Because that's been our experience of dieting in the past. And what I want to offer to you is what if it didn't have to be like that? What if you really were not hungry the vast majority of the time? And what if your desire was so low that you just didn't really care? Sure, when it was time to eat, sure it looked good. You ate it. You enjoyed it. You got pleasure from it. But then that was the end of it, and you moved on. If that was a possibility for you, would it matter how much you're eating as long as you're sated? It really wouldn't.

So many of my clients will tell me that they're worried they're not eating enough when they get to their goal weight, and they're worried that they're damaging their bodies in some way. But they're only worrying about this because of what they think is normal, which is comparing what they eat to what they see other people eating, or maybe just some idea, some story they've created in their head about what normal people eat. But again remember, the vast majority of those other people out there are overeating.

And the reason I know this is because their bodies are overweight or obese. So literally 30% of people are eating in a way that honors their body. And depending on where you live, like what state, it might even be less than that. If you live in Hawaii or California or one of these places where people are super active and healthy, it might be maybe 40%. But for some of us who live in these states are more of that issue. It's a very small number of people to actually be emulating, wanting to emulate.

So let me just tell you, even women who have been naturally thin their whole entire lives and have never had to worry about their weight at all notice that between the ages of 40 and 50 or for sure once they hit menopause, whenever that is, they have to start paying attention to their food. Okay? So some of us have this idea that naturally thin people, people stay at their goal weight their whole lives, don't ever have to think about food. And I'm here to tell you that that is not the case. Maybe it was when they were 20 or 25 or maybe even 30, but they notice at this point that if they eat the way they did when they were 25 or 30, they will gain weight.

Now here's the thing. They don't have a drive to buffer their emotions with food. So it's a little bit easier for them to just change up their eating, because it's just not so emotionally charged as it is for us who have a history of emotional eating. Right? But I want you to know that what's normal is that a naturally thin woman who is over 40 does pay attention to what she eats.

So what do they do? They possibly limit their alcohol consumption. They skip the bread basket. They don't over-order at a restaurant, and then they do stop eating when they're at a comfortable plus four, when they've had enough food. And what I mean by they don't over-order is I mean they don't order again, the appetizer, the salad, the dessert, all this food, because they end up not eating it. They get full too early.

So you may have noticed if you've gone to dinner with somebody like that ... I used to be like, "Oh, sure. You want to share an appetizer and I'll have a salad and I'll have this," and they're like, "Oh, I'm just going to have this entrée." And then I'm like, "Oh." Right? That was my thing. It was like, "Oh. I wish I could do that, but I want all the food." Because my desire was so high. So these naturally thin people, they've never eaten when they weren't hungry, so they just continue that habit. And then they don't even consider the dessert menu, because they're already at their stopping place. They're already at their plus four, and their desire for sugar is so low, and they also don't want to gain weight. Right? They're just like, "I just don't eat the bread or the dessert barely ever, because it's just not a big deal and it doesn't give me what I want."

So think about little old ladies and how we say that they eat like a bird. Right? Think of a little old lady who eats like a bird. She's thin, even though she's aged so much. Right? So many of us believe this and we have evidence because we see it all around us, that as you age you gain weight. But there are these women who haven't, and how is that possible? Because they eat like a bird. And so what we need to do is get our bodies to the point where they feel amazing when we're eating like a bird. Right? We don't need so much food, so we're not wasting it every day when we eat it and then store all this extra on our bodies as fat. So we just don't need to eat that food.

So here's the other thing, though. The little old lady just is probably like, "Why would I eat cake? I'm not hungry?" She just doesn't even care or think about it at all. And when she's having negative emotions she doesn't use food to make herself feel better. So this is just so clear, what we need to work on. Right? Managing our emotions, not using food or alcohol to buffer our negative emotions away or to try to make our positive emotions more positive or more intensely joyful. And we need to keep our desire low and our hunger in check. So good.

So what is a normal way of eating? Let's talk about this a little bit. So two or three meals a day, no snacks, very little flour and sugar. If any alcohol, small amounts. Truly normal eaters don't think about food all the time. They have other things in their lives that they focus their attention on, and they don't obsess about their next amazing meal or what they're going to eat on their next vacation or what food tour or wine fest they can go to. They just don't care about the food the drug rep brought in or that the nurses brought in. It's just irrelevant to them. And they get a normal amount of pleasure from consuming just the right amount of fuel for their bodies. And they get the rest of their pleasure in other ways.

So if you want ideas for other natural pleasures that serve you, check out last week's episode, episode number 57, which you can find at katrinaubellmd.com/57. That's where I talk all about artificial versus natural pleasures. You can even just read the transcript there if you want to see that list. So what I want you to do is to rewrite what eating like a normal person means for you.

What do you think that means, that phrase, eating like a normal person? And if you want to eat like a normal person, make sure that the idea of what a normal person eats that you adopt, will give you the results you want. Because if you think that eating like a normal person means that you'll be able to eat and drink all the things all the time, you are not going to get the results that you wanted, that permanently thin body.

And what will end up happening is you'll lose the weight and then you'll be like, "This sucks." Like, "Who thought this was going to be a good idea? I thought I was going to be happy." And that's not what ends up happening if we don't change our thinking. So this is truly the mental work of weight loss. The food part is really so simple. You decide what to eat, and then you only eat that. But working through and managing all of the things that come up when you only eat what you previously decided on is that missing piece for so many people. Once we get our thinking and our beliefs all straightened out, that's when we're on the path to that naturally thin body that we want. Okay? This is super, super good stuff. Can't wait to hear what you guys think. If you would be so kind to leave me an iTunes review, I'd appreciate it so much have a wonderful week and I'll talk to you soon. Bye-bye.