



# WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: What's up my friend. How are you? Welcome back to the podcast. Episode number 63. We are trucking along here, people. Every week, another awesome, amazing podcast. I love doing them for you. You know, I am a musical theater buff, and we went last weekend to see Finding Neverland, which was really good. It's the story of J. M. Barrie, who wrote Peter Pan. It's kind of the story about him as he wrote Peter Pan, and the children that inspired that.

It was really so fascinating, because there were four boys in the show, and they were pretty young, and they were fantastic. I mean, dancing, and singing, and lots of lines. They were in the show for a lot of the time. I was so impressed with those kids. I was like, "Wow." To be able to do that night after night, they were fantastic.

But, let me tell you what the best part of the show was. There was a dog in the show, an awesome, amazing, super well-trained dog. I don't know if it was a he or she, but I'm going to go with a he. He looked kind of like a he to me. He was just huge, and big, and fluffy, and so sweet, and obviously super well-trained to be able to be in a live musical theater show night after night. He's seriously just fueled my puppy fever.

We had our first trial dog when we were interns. I say we had her like I birthed her. It felt like I birthed her because she was like my first child. But we got her when we were interns, when we wanted a family but did not have the time to have a real child, so we got our little dog Lucy, and she was a Westie, and she was just the best dog ever. Did she have her faults? Of course, but I choose not to focus on those because I love thinking about how she was so amazing.

So, she died in her sleep almost two years ago, and so after that, maybe six, seven months later, we ended up getting another dog that was a two-year-old dog, that we thought ... I won't go into all the details, but in any case, we thought this dog was going to be a great fit for our family, and it turned out that he really was not a great fit for our family at all. So, we ended up having to give him back after three months which was really sad. We felt a little burned after that experience.

But, lately, I've got puppy fever again. So, we actually have reached out to someone looking for another Westie puppy for this summer, because we're going to be traveling a bit in June, and so we thought, "Okay, when we get back, that'd be a great time to get a puppy."

So if you know anybody who is a breeder of Westies, or has wonderful Westies that they have gotten from somebody, then please let me know, because we are looking into that and want to get one with a really great temperament like the one that we had before. They seriously are just the best. I've got a little picture of Lucy right here on my desk and my heart just sings when I see her. She was such a great dog. Just loved her. Miss her so much.

So, anyway, that's what's going on for me. Let's talk iTunes reviews really quickly. I read the short review and I just thought, "Oh, for sure I'm going to be reading this one." It's titled "Great Podcast" and the author is 7654EUS. She writes, "Just listened to your micro-quit podcast as I was debating with myself whether or not to micro-cheat on my program. Perfect timing. Have readjusted my thinking and recommitted to my plan. Thank you for your motivation."

I'm so glad that I was perfect timing for you. I've gotten a lot of really good response and feedback from that micro quit podcast and I'm glad that that's really resonated with you guys, because it's such a great concept. I love it. I think it really makes so much sense.

So if you don't know, if you're new to the podcast, my goal is to get 500 written reviews on iTunes for this podcast. I'm close. I'm getting really, really close. I need your help. If you have not written me a review on iTunes, I sure would appreciate it if you would. The absolute easiest and best way to do that is just on your computer. Even if you are a PC person, you can still download iTunes and leave a review. If you're a Mac person, it's super easy, just open up iTunes, search for Weight Loss For Busy Physicians, and then click on the image of the podcast, and then ratings and reviews, and you can leave it right there. It's definitely the most efficient and effective way of doing it. You can try doing it through your podcast app. It may or may not work, is basically what we've figured out here.

So, if you could please do that, if you have not had a chance yet, I would so appreciate it. It doesn't have to be long. Just like 7654EUS wrote. Just a couple lines. She literally wrote three lines and that was it, and I so appreciate that. Thank you so much.

Okay. Today, I want to talk to you about something that I've worked through with my clients on a number of occasions and I wanted to address it with you here on the podcast as well. That is when you get the realization that a lot of your thinking, maybe the majority of your thinking, is generally negative. Okay? So you might identify with being a glass-half-empty type of person, like the way your brain interprets things typically is more toward the negative. So, as you know, if you've been a listener of this podcast for a while, you know the first thing that I recommend that you do is develop some awareness of what your current thinking is.

The way we do this is we take on that watcher or observer position, where we are watching our brains just pop up different thoughts and then we're evaluating them. We're just getting to know what our brains are offering to us as thoughts, instead of living from those thoughts. Okay? If that makes sense. You're just more observing them. And you're, of course, doing this from a place of fascination and interest and curiosity. You're not doing it from a place of being horrified, being totally disappointed with yourself, being really disgusted by what you're seeing. That's not the way that we approach that.

But, what I've had happen for a number of clients is that they start becoming more aware and they start seeing how they are literally thinking super negatively all the time, that they just want to start feeling better, right? They actually start feeling worse with the awareness, because now they see how negatively they think, and then they feel bad about that. Right? So they're making it worse. They're like, "This is terrible. I do not want to be thinking like this. How can I get away from this quickly?" That is generally the question then, is, "Okay, I see how bad this is, how can I stop? Because I feel like I can't stop, and I want to be thinking more positively."

So they're in a rush and as you know, because I've told you this many times on the podcast, the only reason we ever want anything is because of how we think it'll make us feel. So, in this case, we maybe are not feeling so great, because we already have a lot of negative thinking, and then we realize how we're creating that experience for ourselves, and we feel even worse, so we want to think more positively quickly, so we can feel better.

So, what can sometimes end up happening is that they just start trying to have positive thinking. That doesn't work. So, let me just explain to you why that doesn't work and what I mean by positive thinking. Positive thinking is just having a positive thought, but not necessarily believing it. So, if, say, you're having a vacation that you think is bad. Okay? You had hopes for what it was going to be like, and now it is not happening in that way. Maybe it's the weather, maybe it's a sick child, maybe it's somebody in a bad mood, maybe things have been canceled. Who knows? It doesn't really matter. But, your thinking is, "It shouldn't have been this way, why am I so unlucky? Why do these things always have to happen to me?"

So, then you decide to think, "No, no, no, this is still a great vacation." Okay? Do you really believe that it's still a great vacation? You probably don't, right? So that's just positive thinking. So you can think, "This is a great vacation, this is a great vacation," but if you don't really believe it it doesn't have any meaningful impact. It doesn't change your experience of your vacation. What you really want to happen is for you to truly start believing that you're still having a great trip, even though this thing didn't happen the way you expected it to, or this thing didn't happen the way that you had hoped it would.

So, we want to stay away from just regular positive thinking. Sometimes people feel like affirmations are just positive thinking. An affirmation is basically where you just repeat a line to yourself over and over again. One popular one is, "I am happy, healthy and wealthy." Well, what if you're not really happy or what if you're really not wealthy, or something like that, right? Now, some people find that they repeat that over and over to themselves and eventually their brains start thinking that way, but a lot of people just go, "Yeah, but it's just not true. But I'm not happy. Saying I'm happy isn't making me happy. How do I actually get happy?" And that's what we need to talk about here, today. How do you actually change this?

But, before we get into that, I want to talk to you a little bit about why you may think so negatively. This is a common thing that comes up. "What is wrong with me? Why do I think like this?" For most of us, it's likely just a habit. I think for a lot of people this way of thinking was modeled to us when we were children.

So if you come from a long line of pessimists, a long line of high-strung people, a long line of people with negative thinking, then that was what you absorbed when you were, you know, a child sponge. Right? You were looking to your family to help you to understand and determine how to think about the world, and so, the way they talked about things and modeled their opinions of these things to you became the way you started thinking about it.

That wasn't something that you intentionally chose to do, but it just happens because this is what we do. Right? Many of us have beliefs, like you should eat all your food on your plate. Where do we get that? From our families growing up. From people around us. So is it true that some people are more prone to negative thinking than others? I think so. I think some people are just naturally very positive, for whatever reason, and some of us are naturally more negative. I am naturally more negative, for sure. My brain always tries to go to that bad place, or, the more negative place. It's so interesting. It's gotten a lot better since I've learned all these tools and I'm actively applying them, but I can still see my brain do it. All the time. Just all the time. Then, I just work to get myself out of it. I don't go and live in that place.

But even if you're somebody who has that negative thinking tendency, that doesn't mean that you cannot change it or break this habit. So what I really want you to take away from this podcast is that if you're a glass half empty kind of a person, you have to understand that you are the only one who actually has the pitcher of water. You're the person who determines how full the glass is. This is really, really important to recognize, because you have all the power. Nothing else needs to change. Just your thinking.

Since you're completely in control of your experience in life, of your interpretation of your world, that means that you are deciding if the glass is half empty or half full, and if you're that half empty kind of person, it's just a habit to look at it as half empty. This is really, really good news. Right? Because, we can change habits. There's lots of evidence that we can do that. There's all kinds of habits that we can change, but that doesn't mean that's necessarily easy. That's what I want to talk about today. Especially if you've been thinking a certain way, and have been immersed in people that think that way for decades, it's going to take some effort, and that's what I want to talk to you about. How to do that.

First, you have that awareness of this habit of negative thinking in so many areas of your life. You have to spend time noticing. "Look at that. Look how I'm interpreting that negatively. Look how I'm interpreting that negatively." This recently happened to me. This is such a silly thing, but I'm going to share it with you just so that you know what's still going on in my brain for myself. So, the other day my children had a concert at school, and it started about 45 minutes after drop-off. So, I thought, "Well, I could hang out and just wait," but then I thought, "No, there's actually a Trader Joe's just down the street, you know, what I'm going to do is I'm going to drop them off, run down there, whip through Trader Joe's and get my grocery shopping done, and then I'll go back to school and go to the concert." And it was cold enough here that it was okay to leave the groceries in the car. That was my plan.

So, I got to Trader Joe's, got through there, I was so proud of myself, I was literally in the checkout line within eight minutes of them opening. I was like, "Bam. Look at me. Excellent." I still had a couple minutes, and there is a Starbucks right there.

I hadn't had coffee yet. I thought, "Oh, you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to go through Starbucks and get an Americano, and then I'll drink that during the concert. This'll be perfect." So, I pick up my coffee, I go to school, park, walk all the way in with my drink, haven't even had one sip, I'm walking into the gym and there was a teacher standing there who says, "Oh, sorry, there's no food or drink in the gym."

You can imagine my thinking. My thinking was not like, "Oh, okay, great. Thanks for letting me know." Outwardly, I was like, "Oh, okay," and she said, "You could put it in this room," so I put it in that room. My brain is like, "Stupid rule. That's ridiculous. I mean, it's a gym. Something spills, you just clean it up. What's the problem here? This thing is brand new and warm and fresh. When I come back and get it, it's not going to be very good."

So I'm in there, waiting for the concert to start and my brain's like, "I'm not even going to go back and get it. I mean, that's just ridiculous. I should just leave it there to prove a point." Like I'm proving some sort of point. I mean, come on. Who are you kidding, right? It's so funny how our brains are having fits about the dumbest things. It's some coffee. Who cares? It's not a problem.

So, I just want to let you know that if your brain does things like this too, that is normal. Even when you're a life coach, things like this happen. But, what I have the ability to do is recognize within a few minutes, "Okay, you're being ridiculous. You just want to drop this now? Or do you really want to be upset about this?" Because the point is, you can't drink the coffee, so you can either leave it there or you can take it home and warm it up again or you can drink it tepidly. It's up to you.

But anyway, what I wanted to let you know about is how you change that habit of thinking to a new way. So the first thing you need to really understand is where you want to go. Right? So you've got this awareness, you know you're ready to make a change, you've decided, "Okay, my thinking is so negative, I really don't want to think this way, I really do want to create a more positive interpretation of my life. Now what?" Now, you need to know where you're trying to go. What is your goal way of thinking? How do you want to feel?

If you're not sure how you want to think, you can probably tap into how you want to feel. I mean, it would be great if you were blissful and joyful and elated all the time, but that's probably not going to be very realistic for us as humans. So, you might think that you would rather be content and appreciative, maybe grateful, maybe motivated, maybe accepting of how things are. That might be much more positive than being upset about things, and going into that worst-case scenario all the time.

So, when you know how you want to feel, you can even determine what your actions would be. Like, if you felt that way in your life, how would you respond? You probably wouldn't be so resistant to your thinking. You probably wouldn't need to eat to feel better. You probably wouldn't snap at people or have tantrums inside your head as often, right? And then you can determine what that result would be for you, and that's, of course, taking your feeling through that model. Then you can determine, "What are thoughts about my life?" And maybe you're going to do this about specific things that you know are issues for you, like certain work circumstances or things at home or things like that. What are thoughts that genuinely create those feelings for you?

So, you're creating the models that you want to be living by. You're already aware of what your current models are. You want to decide what your new models are going to be. Even though they aren't your current way of thinking, that is what you're trying to accomplish. That's what you want to have your goal be. Now you know this, now, I do also want to mention, if you have trouble figuring out what those thoughts are, if you know some people who are genuinely happy, cheerful people, you might want to talk to them a little bit. Maybe just observe how they interpret things, how they say things.

There was this residency program director when I was a resident, and he was a PICU attending, and it did not matter what was going on, he literally could be coding a child who was trying to die, and it's like, "Hey, how are you?" And he'd be like, "Couldn't be better." Always, "Couldn't be better," was his response. So interesting, right? He was not just like, "Oh, I'm okay, I'm doing all right." "Couldn't be better."

You can pay attention to people who are like that. How do they think? How do they interpret things? This thing happens. They don't seem to be upset. I wonder what they think about? If it's someone you really know, you might even ask them. "Tell me, what are your thoughts when you see that? Because these are my thoughts, and they don't feel so good. How do you think about this?" It's kind of like naturally thin people. They'd be like, "Uh, I don't know. It's just how I think about it." But they'll be able to communicate it better to you.

So, now you have your new models. You are currently on one side with your current models. You're trying to get to the other side with your new models. This gap in between, in the coaching world we call this "the river of misery". What a nice name, right? The reason it's called the river of misery is because it's a tough river to cross, but it's really the only way to get to the other side. So, when you're trying to change your thinking, and it's not going very well, or you're falling back into your old way of thinking very frequently and you're trying and you're working at it and you're doing all these thought downloads and models and you're really trying to get over to that other side, and it's not a very pleasant experience, just know that you are in the river of misery. Nothing is going wrong. You are just swimming, and you keep swimming.

What I often tell myself is, "Okay, I'm halfway through the river of misery. Am I literally going to turn around and go back to the other side? Or, am I just going to keep swimming and go to the side that I'm trying to get to? Because it's going to be the same amount of effort at this point." So, that helps me to have some compassion for myself, some compassion for the process, some patience, some grace. Like, "It's all fine. This is happening exactly the way it needs to be happening."

Now, another way of thinking about this river of misery is as though you buy a factory and this factory makes Ataris. So if you're too young to know what an Atari is, you're probably too young to even be a doctor, right? So, super old video game, right? So you have this factory and it makes Ataris, very, very well. And that's fantastic. You can decide to just get production for Ataris up and running and see if people want them, or you can determine ahead of time, "You know what? People really like the Xbox better."

What I really need to be doing is manufacturing Xboxes, because my business can actually be successful if I'm producing Xboxes. Way more successful than if I produce a whole bunch of new Ataris." Although, there are people who are into the Atari, but they can buy the old ones off eBay.

So for the sake of this description, you understand what I'm saying. You can't just go into the factory that makes Ataris and say, "Okay, start making Xboxes." It's not going to work. The equipment's not there. The people don't know how to do that. They haven't been trained. You don't have the right materials. It's just not possible at all. What's possible and very efficient and easy is making Ataris. That is where you are right now with your thinking. It's very easy and efficient to think the way you're always thinking. You cannot just think automatically and very efficiently and easily about your new models yet. It's the same thing. So, if you want to convert your Atari factory to an Xbox factory, what you have to do is completely overhaul the factory. Right? You're going to have to take away, likely, most of the manufacturing equipment. It's old. It's dated. It probably can't really be modified to create Xboxes. That's all going to have to go.

You're going to have to learn how to make Xboxes, and you're going to have to get the equipment installed to make Xboxes. Then, you're going to have to purchase all the raw materials and source them and get them to all come in in the right amounts, and with the right timing. You're going to have to make sure that your employees are still the right employees who can be trained to create Xboxes, and if they are, then they need to be taught how to do that. Even when they start making the first Xboxes, they're not always going to be that great, right? Their quality might not be great. There might be some mistakes. It might not work very well initially. Things might break and you have to go back and work on that quality and make sure that the product that you're creating is market-ready, right? That this Xbox can get out into a box and to the hands of a consumer, and right away, easy to install, and before they know it, they're playing Xbox games.

This is a whole process. We don't expect a factor to turn over what it manufactures overnight. The same thing happens with your brain. The thoughts that your brain are manufacturing are not going to be able to change overnight, so that you're super-efficient, and that the quality of that thinking is perfect right from the get-go. Okay? So, you're going to have to keep at it. That means picking bridging thoughts, right? Which I described as the monkey bar rungs. If you haven't listened to that podcast, that's one of the earlier ones where I talk about picking a new thought that is believable, that gets you closer to your goal thought, but isn't your actual goal thought yet. Right?

So, you start practicing your new way of thinking. You manage your mind. You keep at it. You do lots of thought downloads so you can keep in touch with what your thoughts are. You can't just say, "Oh, I want this new model," and expect it to just happen without any supervision of your brain or effort, practice, or anything like that. So, when you're doing that, and you're doing lots of thought management, lots of thought downloads and models, what you're doing is you are continuing to swim to the other side of the river. You are taking down all your Atari manufacturing equipment and building up new. That's what you're doing.

So, you know, these metaphors can be helpful when you're like, "Gosh, I'm still not thinking that way. I'm still not thinking positively. Wow, my brain still went to that negative place." That's okay. You're just building up a new manufacturing plant for positive thinking, and it's not ready yet. It's not ready. What it produces is not ready for market yet. And that's totally fine.

Does that mean you just stop and quit? Does that mean you just go, "Oh, okay, now I guess I'm not going to make Xboxes."? Does that mean you just drown in the middle of the river? No. Of course not. Right? What you do is you keep on going. You keep on going. And then before you know it, you're like, "Wow, my experience of my life really is better."

What I find for myself, and my clients tell me this all the time, is that they work at this for weeks and months at a time, and then something happens that's kind of like one of those checkpoints, where they have the response and they deal with it, and then they're able to go, "Oh, my gosh, a few months back I would have, like, totally flipped out," or, "I would have gone through the drive-through on the way home and eaten a whole bunch of junk and had half a bottle of wine." "I would have ..." Whatever it was, to cope and deal with that. "And instead, I actually just took care of it and moved on. This is actually working, oh, my goodness."

I want to share that with you, so that you know that if you're having these moments where you're like, "I don't know, I don't know if it's really working," just keep at it, keep at it, knowing that you're swimming across that river, and the other shore is going to come before you know it. You just have to keep working at it. And this is such great work, right? Because the result is a completely different, more pleasant experience of your life. Who doesn't want that? We all want that. What we have to get on board with is the effort required to get there. It's totally possible, and is something that I think is some of the best work of our lives. It really is the way that you can create that life that you've always wanted.

So I hope that's been helpful for you, and please leave me an iTunes review if you haven't yet. I would so appreciate it. I will talk to you next week. Have a great one. Take care. Bye-bye.