



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well hello there my friend, how are you? So excited to talk to you again. It hasn't been that long for me because I am actually going through the process of batching a few podcasts. I'm going to be out of town a little bit coming up, and I know that so many of you expect me to be on your walk or on your commute with you every Tuesday, and of course I don't want to let you down and not bring you some amazing content so here I am recording another great podcast for you. Such a great day. I'm feeling great. It's sunny outside, what more could you want? Maybe a little warmer weather but that's okay, we'll deal with it. I'm bundled up, I'm all cozy.

All right, you guys know that I have been working on my goal of achieving 500 reviews on iTunes for this podcast and I'm getting closer and closer thanks to you all coming out and helping me, thank you so much. As you know, I love to read some of these reviews because I think they're so fun and I think it's so fun to see and hear what kind of results people are getting. I think it's amazing just from listening to the podcast. This one, the way I pick these is usually I just kind of scan through and I usually either laugh out loud at one and I'll read that or it just somehow strikes me. This one I literally laughed out loud and that is why I'm going to read it to you today. It's by mom34543212, so I think she was just trying to come up with some sort of number.

The title is The Only Reason, and the actual body of it goes that I remembered, so what she's saying is the only reason that I remembered to write this review is that it was scheduled as a daily task in my brand new Bullet Journal. I've been using the Bullet Journal, which is just a plain notebook and black pen, nothing fancy, which I totally love, mine is nothing fancy at all either. She's been doing this for barely a week but it's already made my days so much more productive and reduced distraction and procrastination, and it seems to be clarifying my goals enough so that I've also broken through a weight loss plateau this week, three pounds down. Awesome, thanks. I think that's so great. I love how you're embracing the Bullet Journal. It literally can be so simple.

I know a lot of people get really overwhelmed by it and that's why I want you to not research anything about it on YouTube or Pinterest or anything like that because you'll see all these amazing artists who do these ridiculously fancy things, and you can do those too if you want to. If that's your thing, awesome, but the most important thing is that you just get your brain content down on something, in something, figure out what you need to do, and then go to work getting it done. Thanks so much mom with a gazillion numbers for your review, I really appreciate it.

If you have not had a chance yet to leave me a review and you would be so kind to do so I would really, really appreciate it because guess what? Once we get to 500 reviews then I'm going to stop talking about it. At least for a little while. We're getting closer and closer, people. If you could please go into either your iTunes podcast app on your Apple phone, or if you could just do it on iTunes on your computer if you have an Android phone you can do that as well. That would be fantastic, I would appreciate that so, so, so, so much.

All right you guys, let's talk today about hunger. I want to talk about hunger and what it really means to us. I want to talk about all of our thoughts surrounding hunger and I've talked about hunger before but just working with my clients I can tell that there's always more that we need to do. Plus I'm going to share with you some of the work that I've recently been doing on hunger.

We know that hunger is normal and expected. We understand the concept that it's just how our bodies let us know that some food would be nice and that it's just a suggestion. We also know that what our fat stores on our bodies are is extra meals that we've stored on our body, even when we're thin already. Even very slender people have probably at least a months worth of food in the form of fat on their bodies, in their bodies, all dispersed in different areas before they would actually starve to death. It's really important to remember this because so many of us have this idea that we are not going to have our needs met and our bodies can always meet our needs. We're walking around with what can meet our needs on an absolute regular basis.

We know that hunger is normal and we know that if we want to lose weight we have to let our bodies eat some of those extra meals that we're carrying around. We understand this conceptually, rationally, and on an intellectual level, but there's still this element for so many of us that's deeper than that, that's more driven by that primitive brain. For sure hunger is much more uncomfortable when you're a sugar burner, and so if you aren't sure what I'm talking about when I talk about being a sugar burner be sure to go back to episode six and seven, that's where I really delve into the science behind this a lot more.

What we're wanting to be is fat adapted, and what fat adapted means is that your body is very comfortable, very happy accessing your fat stores for energy if you're not going to eat. You might be a little bit hungry and you don't eat and your body's like okay, that's cool. I'll just go and access some fat, turn that into energy, and the hunger goes away. It's much less intense, it's much less uncomfortable, and we just go about your business until it's the next time to eat a meal. When you're a sugar burner you feel terrible when you are hungry and you're not eating. In fact, when you're a sugar burner your hunger gets worse and worse and more intense and more intense and eventually you get to a point where you're freaking out, you're hangry, you're like I'm going to die right now, I need food, I need to eat anything.

What my clients tell me is that they're tolerating the hunger and this is even once they're fat adapted. When I have my clients sign up with me in a coaching group we, first things first, start working on getting fat adapted. They're fat adapted or working toward it, very close to being there, and they say I am tolerating the hunger. I feel hungry sometimes between meals and I just let myself be hungry and it's not that big of a deal. Then many of them still have an element of resistance to this hunger.

They're kind of like yeah, yeah, yeah, it's certainly not as bad as it would have been in the past when I was hungry, but they still are using an element of will power to overcome that hunger, they're clinging for dear life. I always just think of fists being clenched, you're just like I can muscle through it, it's fine I can wait until the next meal, it's only an hour and a half from now.

There's this resistance to the hunger and then it requires will power to overcome that. The resistance is I shouldn't feel hungry, I don't want to feel hungry, I don't like feeling hungry, this sucks that I'm hungry. I wish I could eat but I can't so I guess I'll just let myself be hungry. That's way better than oh my God I'm going to chew my arm off. It's certainly not that intense, but there's still this resistance to what they're actually feeling. They're feeling hunger and then they're thinking they shouldn't be feeling it, and so then they are forcing themselves to do what the opposite of what they actually want to do. They want to eat and they're forcing themselves to not eat until the next mealtime.

Again, it's not like a hangry freakout moment, you're not stuffing anything you can find in your face, there's much less self-pity here, but there's still not a true acceptance of the hunger and there's still not a belief that nothing is going wrong if you're hungry and you don't eat. I have recently actually done sort of what I call the next level of work on the subject for myself. I had obviously worked with a coach and I improved on this so much, but then I was noticing some trends that were going on for me and I decided to spend some concerted effort working through sort of I feel like it's the cobwebs. I've dealt with so many things but there's still just the little bit of work to be done. I recently spent a lot of time on hunger, what my thoughts were about hunger, and my experience of hunger in general I mean really, basically all the time is not that intense. Yet I still would find myself avoiding it, or resisting it, or telling myself stories about it. I really worked on that and I want to share some of that with you.

There would be times when I would be hungry and I would let my primitive brain take over and I'd still have a little bit of self-pity. Sometimes I would react, I wouldn't be that patient with my kids, I would just be kind of in a funk, in a mood because I was hungry and I wished I could eat something in that moment and it wasn't really time to eat yet, and I knew I didn't really need it. This is what I decided to do. I decided to get really close and personal with hunger. I decided to become super intimate with it. I wanted to become friendly with it. That was a great word that I would always focus on. I want to become friendly with it, not necessarily friends with it, I think being friends with it is fine too, but I liked more of the word of being friendly with it, approaching it from a friendly place. I wanted to get to know it even better than I did already.

What I found is that when I felt hunger and moved toward it really with an open mind and an open heart, it would basically shrink away. It was so fascinating. It became much less intense and it usually would go away. It's the opposite of what we think. We're like I feel hunger if I get too close to it or really get to know it more it's going to just overcome me, overtake me, it's going to be so intense what am I going to do? It was actually the opposite that happened. I really decided to become friendly with it, got to know it, and then it would be gone. I'm like oh, it's gone, that's really, really interesting. The reason for this is because very often the hunger I was feeling was emotional and not physical.

We shouldn't be feeling such intense or such problem seeming hunger if we're fat adapted, which I am. It took me a while to figure out the difference between emotional and physical hunger and I've been working on it for actually a couple of years in the sense of really getting to know that difference and figuring out how it's different in my body.

Just to review, physical hunger is solved with food right? Any food. If you are hungry you will eat. I always think of, this is a little bit of a sad comparison but back in the day when I'd work in the peds ER, there would every now and then be some kids who would be picked up by Child Protective Services and brought in. They'd be picked up for neglect, they'd be brought to the ER for a physical exam before they were placed with a family, a foster family. Pretty much always these kids were so hungry, and so we'd be like what can we find? Of course a lot of times it would be late at night, what can we find to feed them? It was always so interesting. I mean those kids would eat anything. It didn't even matter what it was, they were hungry, they would eat.

I always think back on that. When you're really, really hungry you will eat anything. Food is the solution, but emotional hunger is solved by foods that give us a dopamine hit. The classic examples are foods that contain flour and sugar, but what I noticed with myself and what my clients noticed too very often is that once we get off flour and sugar then we get a little sneakier. Then we start solving our emotional hunger with more unplanned foods, things like fruit, or nuts, or cheese, or nut butters, things like that. What I started asking myself was a few questions. One question was would a cold, dry, plain chicken breast solve this right now? Would a room temperature can of green beans solve this right now? How about some cold, uncooked, and unseasoned, unflavored tofu? Would I eat that right now? Because here's the thing, if I really were that hungry I would eat those things, for sure I would eat those things. If not, which is going to be the vast majority of the time, then you don't need food. What you need to do is manage your mind.

Just review those questions if you want to steal these, borrow them, and use them for yourself. Would a cold, dry, plain chicken breast solve this? Would a room temperature can of green beans solve this? Now if you happen to love green beans that are canned then maybe that's not a good solution. Think of some other canned vegetable that maybe you think is gross like peas or something. The other one is how about some cold, uncooked, unseasoned, unflavored tofu, would that solve this problem right now?

The thing about this, recognizing this, is that this is such excellent news because it's just a simple question you can ask yourself. Would these foods solve this right now? Once you have the answer then you know exactly what you need to do. If the answer's yes then you know what? You probably need to go get some food or you need to add more fat to your meals prior so that you can last longer. I promise you that the vast majority of the time it's going to be so much more emotional than actual physical.

Then what you need to do is manage your mind and maybe get a glass of water because if there's one other thing that I've noticed with so many of my physician clients is that you don't drink enough. Now this is typically not been a problem for me. I'm this ridiculous drinker of water, so I don't usually worry about it that much, but every now and then that means that I do need to get some fluids in and it probably does for you as well.

If you're really feeling hungry and you've been running like crazy and you haven't been drinking for sure go get yourself a huge cup of water, suck that thing down, refill it, and keep working on that. It's going to help a lot. It's just going to make you feel better all in all. What we used to always say in the ER is like anybody would feel better if they got a liter of normal saline infused into their blood stream. Everybody feels better when they're extremely hydrated, so definitely make sure you're doing that too.

It's so interesting, if you stay up too late and you get hungry, I'm sure that's happened to you. For me it's like if I stay up until 11:00 or later and I'm hungry again but I don't need to eat. Even if I actually am feeling true physical hunger it's still an error in my brain. I don't need food, what I need to do is go to sleep. I don't need a fourth meal like Taco Bell calls it. What I need to do is go to sleep. I need to let my body access my fat stores for energy while I'm sleeping and let my body rejuvenate itself and not focus on digesting a bunch of food while I'm sleeping. Even a little snack, that's not what our bodies need to be doing while we're sleeping. If you ate lunch and now it's 4:00 pm and you're really feeling hungry again please drink some water, but then also recognize that nothing is going wrong. It's okay to be hungry at 4:00 pm, you're going to eat your dinner when it's dinnertime, and in the meantime how are you approaching this hunger?

Are you frustrated by it? Are you annoyed by it? Are you irritated by it, disappointed by it? So many of my clients report that they have many of these emotions. They think they shouldn't be hungry at 4:00 pm, especially if they're like, "But I thought I was fat adapted, why am I hungry?" They think they shouldn't be hungry and then that thought creates the feelings of frustration, annoyance, irritation, and disappointment. The thought is I shouldn't be hungry, or I'm doing something wrong because I'm hungry, or I can't possibly be fat adapted yet because I'm hungry. Even extremely fat adapted people will feel hunger. It's just not a big deal unless you have thoughts that make it mean that it's a big deal.

How do we create emotional hunger? How does this happen? From our thoughts. Remember, if emotional hunger is a feeling because it's an emotion, that creates the feeling in our bodies of hunger, what always creates our feelings? Always our thoughts. Often when we're feeling emotional hunger it's because we're not accepting reality, we're thinking that things should be different than they are. We often think that the resulting hunger that also makes other emotions so much harder to deal with. It's like, "Well I'm already frustrated and annoyed and now I'm hungry too. This is ridiculous. Nobody should have to live like this." It's our original thoughts that are creating the emotional hunger in the first place.

We are creating the hunger then having thoughts that the hunger is ridiculous and we shouldn't be feeling it, which actually makes us hungrier. It's so fascinating how we create this loop that makes it so much harder to open up to that hunger and let it be there. Then there's many of us who still have this fear about possible hunger that might come in the future. Working through this some more was also part of the work that I decided to do on myself in regards to hunger. This was so much better for me than it was in the past, but I still would notice sometimes where I had a lot of chatter about should I eat or shouldn't I eat. Where it usually came up was when I ended up having a late lunch and maybe a little bit more filling of a lunch than I had expected to have, and then a few hours later it's dinnertime and I'm definitely not hungry, but what do I do? Do I eat then even though I'm not hungry? Do I wait and eat later? Do I just skip this meal?

I would spend a lot of time kind of spinning around with what should I do? It was even a little bit more drama filled because I actually have gastroparesis and acid reflux so if I eat late I tend to wake up with heartburn even though I take medication for it. It's a whole complicated thing. If I'm not hungry at dinner and then I eat later then I don't feel great, and if I eat when I'm not hungry with a family then I'm eating when I'm not hungry, and if I just skip dinner altogether, which I totally could do, then I was worried that I was going to feel hungry and then what? It's so interesting. I was afraid of that potential hunger that I might have later and this really is grounded in scarcity mentality, to worry that I won't get my needs met with food when really this is the reality.

If I got that hungry later I could always just eat something, but I wouldn't give myself the opportunity to try it out, to experiment with that because I was so afraid of what that hunger might be like later. It's still looking at it like somebody else is determining what the rules are and I'm at the mercy of them, rather than recognizing I'm creating the rules, I can do whatever I want as long as I like my reasons, and as long as I'm going to like my reasons later too.

Really what ultimately the best thing to do is to not eat. My body was saying I had enough at lunch. I don't need more. When you're feeling hunger, take a moment to determine what emotion you're creating with your thoughts about the hunger. You've got the thoughts that are creating the hunger or you have the physical hunger, and then you have thoughts about that hunger. Make sure you work through those thoughts first, that's what I really had to figure out for myself was okay, I'm just so worried that my needs aren't going to be met, I'm totally in scarcity mentality here, which is not surprising because this is totally one of my trends that I have in my thinking. Now I know okay, I'm just in scarcity, everything is fine. I've worked through those thoughts and recognized that they really are a thought error. My brain is telling me I won't be able to meet my needs and something bad's going to happen that just is simply not true at all.

Then you choose a couple of new thoughts that you can intentionally think to get yourself into the mindset that serves you when you're hungry. One that I like a lot is my brain is just very confused, it thinks that food is a good idea right now. Whenever I have the thought my brain is just very confused it automatically just kind of softens everything for me. First of all it's true, but it helps me to release that resistance that I have. Another one that I've often thought when I wanted to eat between meals is snacking is always an emotional event and it really is. We don't need that food in between meals, so if that's the case and I don't want to emotionally eat anymore, which I don't, then eating something is just off the table as a possibility, it's just not something that I'm going to be doing.

The next time you're hungry I want you to determine whether you're just tolerating the hunger or if you're truly relaxing into it, getting to know it better, approaching it with fascination and interest and curiosity and love for yourself, building up that relationship with yourself going this is interesting, I'm having this experience. Let me get to know it better and I promise you your experience of hunger will be so much more comfortable when you take this approach instead of immediately thinking that something's going wrong, that this needs to be handled, and this hunger needs to go away.

All right, I hope that this is super helpful for you. If you could please leave me an iTunes review if you haven't already I would appreciate it. Maybe you just need to put it in your Bullet Journal like our reviewer today, that's a great idea. All right, thank you so much for listening. I will talk to you next week. Have a wonderful week. Take care, buh-bye.