



# WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with *Katrina Ubell, MD* —

Katrina Ubell: What's up? What's up? Welcome to the podcast. So excited to be talking to you today. It has actually been a while. Remember I told you that I was going to be away and we had some other things going on and I was batching my podcast? Well, I'm back and I'm ready to record for you. So excited. I've got so many ideas. As you know, I live my life, I learn things and read things and experience things, and then I come to the podcast and go, "Hey, listen, you need to know about this." Today's episode totally is one of those things. I think it's actually been sort of brewing in my brain for a while, but then this trip that I recently took kind of really solidified it for me, and I was ready to come back here and talk to you about it.

So I a couple of weeks ago, went with my family and my parents to Germany and Austria for a couple of weeks. We did some family visiting and just some kind of tourism stuff that was really fun too. I don't know if many of you know this, but I am a first generation American, so both of my parents are from Germany and they, interestingly, actually met in America. They both came over for their own separate reasons, and they met here and ended up staying here, so it was so interesting when I was in Germany because even though my brother and I were both born in America, apparently my parents' plan always was to move back to Germany when it was time for my older brother to start school.

Then it kind of never happened, and they've of course been living in America way longer that they ever lived in Germany, but it's kind of interesting, for me, as I'm in Germany looking around, going, "I seriously could have been raised as a German." Even though I would have had American citizenship, how different might I be had I been raised here, and not better or worse or anything. Just knowing that it would have absolutely completely changed the whole trajectory of my life. It's just kind of fun to think about what parts of me are part of my heritage, what parts of me are just a product of growing up in America and being a true American.

So what's always really interesting to me to think about is that kind of first generation mindset and how it really can be different than people who are not first generation. Before I lose you, if you are not a first generation American, let me just tell you, though, that I think you're still going to be able to get a lot out of this podcast, okay? Because here's the thing. Unless you are 100% Native American, which I'm honestly not even sure that anybody is anymore, then everybody has some immigrant blood in them in America, right? So for some of you there might be some first generation mindsets that have actually been passed down from generation to generation, to generation, to you, so you might really actually identify with some of these things that I talk about.

So I really think that what I talk about is going to apply to everyone at least to some extent, but for those of you who like me are first generation, then I think you're really going to understand this. And if you're not first generation, you might be zero generation, you might be the one who actually came over, I think you're going to get some insight into what's driving you as an immigrant, and also if you have children, maybe what they might be considering or going through.

For sure there are some amazing qualities that immigrants have, and we should definitely take note and keep those and notice them, and they're amazing. For many of us, though, we were also exposed to some of the kind of downsides of being raised by immigrants in the sense that sometimes there might have been a strength that was maybe dialed up a little too high. Or maybe there's just some components to their upbringing that actually drove them to leave wherever they were from and come to America, and that has sort of continued on and we've taken that on too. So I'm going to delve into all of these.

For sure many of the things I'm talking about are things that I've experienced myself, but many of them are also things that I've just learned from working with my clients, from having many friends my whole entire life who are first generation Americans, and just working and knowing lots of people who've gone through this kind of upbringing. So not everything applies to me, but I think some of it will resonate with all of you.

The first thing that I think is so just uniform in immigrants is this belief in themselves. What they really believe is that they can create a better life for themselves, right? Or they would not take the risk of leaving wherever they are, and why our parents came to America, there are so many different reasons, right? It might be some sort of persecution. It might be some sort of financial thing. It might be just looking for better opportunity and some financial goals. It might be educational goals.

It could be so many different things, but you can't really downplay the kind of guts or really balls it takes to just leave your whole entire country and everyone you know and your whole support system, and move to a foreign country, often times where you don't speak the language. You really have to have some fundamental core belief in yourself that you can make this work, because the people who don't have that did not leave. Those are the ones who are like, "Why would I do that? That seems ridiculous. I'm just going to stay here and hang out and just keep doing what I've always been doing."

So that belief in themselves is something that we can really take note of. Now, I feel like I have a lot of belief in myself and I pretty much always have. I kind of look at myself as always being sort of the perpetual underdog, not in like a negative or victim-y kind of a way, but things didn't always come very easily to me. I was not the person getting the top grades always, but I for sure had a belief that I was smart person and I could figure it out. I never had this belief that I wasn't as good as somebody else. I mean, sometimes I needed a little pep talk to advocate for myself a little bit.

I remember my dad telling me in college, when I was nervous, to go talk to a professor. "He puts his pants on one leg at a time like everybody else," and I really listened to him. I was like, "You're right. He's totally just a person like anybody else. I'm going to go talk to him."

And from then on I never had any trouble approaching a TA or a professor for any help, and honestly that's probably one of the reasons that I even got into medical school, like that I even got the grades I got to be able to get into medical school, because my undergraduate program was so intense and so difficult.

So that belief in themselves is something that for sure we want to keep adopting, and if your family came over many, many years ago, you can maybe just think about who those people were. Like, maybe they came over as pilgrims or something. I mean, from a long time ago. Really think about what kind of belief you have to have in yourself to have the guts to get on a ship for months to come to a foreign country looking for a better life. I mean, that is amazing, and that is in you. That's why as Americans we're kind of like our own little microcosm of people. We're composed of people who had this incredible belief in themselves and really looked at life in a different way, so for sure that's one we want to keep.

The next one is being a hard worker, having an absolute phenomenal work ethic, being really reliable, being really responsible, and not complaining. Right? Like, "I'm here. I know that you consider me less than, and I don't even care because I am just going to get the work done." I love it when I can hire somebody who has a fabulous work ethic. It's one of my favorite things to do. I've told you guys about how I decided to hire someone to help us with our laundry. Well, I also decided, and I'm like thinking I decided ... no, I've known this for a long time. I really hate yard work. I don't like doing it, but I love a beautiful yard. I also didn't want to hire a lawn service because that's what my kids and I think it's important for them to contribute to the things that need to happen around the home, and mowing the grass is for sure something that they can do.

So my oldest son has been doing that for a number years, and I don't want to take that away from him. That is something that I think is important, so I really just wanted like a gardener, someone to come in, and pull weeds and do the trimming and deadhead the annuals and just spread mulch and all these things that I just really don't want to do, and my husband doesn't want to do it either. So through a couple of connections I ended up finding one, and he is amazing, for real. I got him on the phone and he's like, "Yeah, I can come over right now." I was like, "Fabulous. Come over right now." This is somebody who wants to work, right? He's not like, "Well, I don't know. Maybe I can fit you in later."

He's like, boom, at our house, so great, happy to do anything, really looking to just create a business of his own and provide incredible value to his clients. He even told me, "Well, I can come on this day, but I really am taking English language classes because I'm really trying to learn to speak better, and so if it's okay with you, I won't come that day." I was like, "That's fantastic, Wan. Don't come that day, please. Don't come and don't worry about it." Right? That's the kind of people that we come from.

My mom, she has got this unbelievable work ethic. I mean, it's unbelievable. We kind of joke, my brother and I, like she's driven by a motor even at well into her 70s. She just, give her a task and she will do it. This is just ingrained in who she is, and that is exactly what makes us fabulous doctors, right? We get there. We're reliable. We show up on time. We do what we say we're going to do. We're totally responsible. We have a great work ethic.

All of those things we have absorbed and adopted as first generation Americans, and we can see how that's helping us so much in our lives. It's so amazing.

The next thing is the immigrants, they really take massive action through fear, so I think this is really important to point out. This does not mean that immigrants are fearless, right? Like, oh, they have this belief in themselves and they're just like, "Whatever, I'm just going to go over to this new country and make it work." They do it anyway through the fear. They're scared to death. They don't have a plan B. They're like, "I've got to just make this work, and if I can't, I don't know what's going to happen. I have got no fallback plan." Right? So that level of massive action is what allows them to come here and start businesses and really have the American dream, right? Really move up within whatever field they work in and being able to create a life for their family that they would not have otherwise been able to create back in their homeland.

So I think that this is something we can really tap into as well. I think about it like during a code, especially when you're first learning how to do code. Right? You're scared to death, right? What's the first rule of a code. Take your own pulse, right? You know? You're scared to death, but you're like, "Okay, I've just got to do this and I've got to take massive action. This person is trying to die and I need to help them. This is not time for me to be all up in my fear. Yes, I'm afraid, and I'm going to just do this anyway." So this is absolutely something that so many of you are going to be able to identify with, and this is such an amazing quality that we want to take on as well.

Now, where this really isn't always applied is in weight loss, right? We're like, "Oh, but I'm afraid I'm just going to fail, and then gain it all back again and then some, so maybe I shouldn't even try." No. How about you take massive action even though you're afraid that that might happen, and you just do it anyway? Right? Through the fear. You go, "Yeah, I am afraid, and I'm a badass, so I'm going to do it anyway." That's what we need, and same with the good work ethic and being reliable and responsible and not complaining. Apply all of that to your weight loss journey. So important. And then that belief in yourself, right? And belief in yourself that you can create a better life for yourself, belief in yourself that you can create a different body, a healthier body than the one that you're living in right now, all of these are these qualities and skills that we can apply to what we want.

Okay, I still have a couple of other mindsets and qualities that I think are so important. For sure immigrants are willing to sacrifice immediate pleasure for the greater good, right? So they are spending their money on their children's education and things that are really investing in their family, and instead foregoing vacations, right? They're not indulging in a bunch of luxuries and squandering their money in that way. What they're doing is going, "Okay, I'm working really hard and now I finally have some money. Now I'm going to reinvest that in my family and really help my children to have the best launching off period that they can."

That's exactly what happened in my family. My parents came over here and really had barely anything and just built this life up for themselves, and really within a generation completely changed our entire family's trajectory. Me being able to go to medical school, my brother is an accomplished engineer, we would not necessarily have had those opportunities or been able to go to those colleges or anything like that if my parents had not really focused on our education.

When they didn't have a lot of money, they still paid for us to go to a private school because they felt like where we were living at the time that the public schools weren't going to serve us, that that was not the kind of education they expected their children to have.

In doing so, you could see this trickle down effect, how it completely helped to become the person that I am today, and so I think that is the same issue when we need to sacrifice immediate pleasure for our bodies' greater good, right? We need to sacrifice the pleasure of eating the food in the moment and indulging in the urge and the over desire, and in exchange for the greater good of knowing what actually serves our body and what we should be doing. That really actually will serve us and help us in the long run.

Then the final thing is being willing to be an outsider, right? What that means is really being willing to feel negative emotions, because when you are new to a country, I can't even imagine how many times a day you feel like a failure, right? You're trying to figure out this new culture. You're trying to learn a new language, for a lot of people. You might be racially different. You might physically look different. You might be getting negative looks from people, possibly racist or bigoted remarks. I mean, there may be no like-minded community around you. There might nobody of your same religion around you.

It can be very, very obvious to you that you are different, that you are not understood, maybe that you're not even welcomed by a lot of people, right? And still being willing to do anyway, to feel all of those negative emotions and still be like, "I'm all in on this America place. I know it's worth it for my family." So I think about my parents and their stories about learning English. They both came here basically knowing no English at all, and my dad would watch Captain Kangaroo in the morning to just try to learn some basic English.

My mom, because again, they didn't even know each other at this point, my mom at one point had a job as a secretary for an electrical engineering professor at MIT in Cambridge. She just has these stories about how she would just walk around with her English to German translation dictionary all the time trying to figure things out. She said that one time her boss' wife called with a grocery list. She wanted him to pick up a couple of things from the store on the way home, and one of the things he said was lettuce. She was like, "Lettuce? What is lettuce?" Like trying to figure out what is saying? Of course we can laugh about it now because it's so cute, right?

But she was willing to just make mistakes and fail, and just not know anything about anything for a very extended period until she got a grasp of the language. She said she even asked that professor one time like, "Why did you even hire me?" He said, "Well, I knew that you would have a good work ethic because you're German." And it's exactly what she had, right? So people know what to expect when somebody takes that leap of faith to come all the way to this country and just be willing to fail, and just pick yourself back up and try again.

Again, you know where I'm going with this with weight loss, right? Be willing to screw things up. Be willing to think that you've totally got it, you go into some sort of situation, and it does not go the way that you had it planned at all.

And instead of making that mean that you should just quit and you're never going to figure this out, instead you go, "Okay. You know what? I'm going to pick myself up, brush off my knees. I'm just going to get up and figure this out." It's like learning a new language. What is the language of being a naturally thin person? How do I live in this way?

So again, when you're first generation America you know what I'm talking about, right? We've all seen this with our parents, and those of you who aren't, I'm sure you can imagine or think of someone you know who's gone through something similar. This is the same skill. You've already got this. You just need to apply it now to the weight loss spectrum.

Let's now talk about where the immigrant mindset sometimes don't serve us. For sure scarcity mentality is the first one. The thing to remember about scarcity is that you might be able to argue that scarcity was helpful when you have nothing, right? Many of our parents really came from a place where there was nothing. I mean, my parents have many stories about growing up in post-war Germany. You couldn't even buy anything. There was nothing to buy even if you had money. There was nothing. You did not waste. My dad talks about a winter where all they had was potatoes and milk to eat. Right? You're not going to just throw away the potatoes, and so of course our parents came here with the same idea of, you should not be wasting food.

Now, the world we live in now is completely different, right? Throwing away a half a potato, it is okay if no one is going to eat that potato. Certainly you don't need to eat the potato just to not waste it, because you're wasting it on your body. That is one of those mentalities that many of us have really just absorbed and adopted. This is one where we should really question it and go, "You know what? It served my parents at least at a certain time in their lives, but it really doesn't serve me and I really want to change that one."

Now, many of you are like, "Yeah, my family came over hundreds of years ago and we still totally have the scarcity mentality." This is exactly what I'm talking about, right? It gets passed down from one generation to the next, to the next, to the next, so for sure that's one where you want to be taking a look. I know for myself it's been something that is an ongoing work in progress, it's how I describe that.

The next thing is overworking, and for some of us, we saw our parents working so hard, working multiple jobs maybe or working so many hours in their store, really just doing everything they possibly could to create a better life. So for some of us, we've then adopted this idea that we need to overwork in order to prove something about ourselves. It's like this amazing work ethic sometimes could be dialed down a little bit, right? Like we're not worthy if we're not completely running ourselves ragged working like crazy people.

And for sure, doctors out there, you know what I'm talking about, right? Where you're just thinking like, "No, I really want to be this amazing doctor. I really want to over deliver. Well, let me just go check on this one person again before I leave for the day. Let me just make this last phone call," when really it's enough. You can stop. You can really work on finding a balance that works for you, your patients as well as your other obligations, whether that's family or other things the you like to do, so you get some rest in your day as well.

The next thing is letting yourself experience some pleasure in the moment that's not just from food or alcohol, right? Again, because so many of our parents worked so hard and, really, just we're so grateful for everything they provided for us, we don't have to then mean that the only way that we can really have some pleasure is by eating because we're working all the time or we're always serving someone else and never taking time to take care of ourselves.

That can look like finding some hobbies or other interests, things that you do just for fun, that you do because you like to, because they feed you. And learning how to experience the joy in life that's outside of work and maybe even outside of family, because many of us have this idea that if we're not working, then we need to be with our family. Then for sure we need to be with our kids. That really again puts you at the very end of your priority list again, and that's what we don't want.

The next thing is continuing to view ourselves as outsiders or different. For many of us, we grew up feeling so different and like outsiders, and we could see maybe how our families were discriminated against or how people just kind of looked at us differently or we were just somehow treated differently. I mean, kids pick up on this, right? Sometimes it's very obvious. Sometimes it's more subtle. But I think it's really easy to go into adulthood to still think that you're somewhat of an outsider or that you're different.

Really, this is just a thought. It really is just optional. We think it's just the truth, but it's not, and so, honestly, you can be totally different from everyone around you and still believe that you fit in, still believe that you're an insider, still believe that you deserve to be there with everybody else. All that has to change is your thinking and your perception that creates your experience of the world. This is literally game-changing stuff. Now, some of you may be like, "Yeah, I don't think that at all," and that's fabulous. I'm so happy for you, but I do know that for some first generation Americans this still filters through.

The final thing that I want to talk to you about is feeling really conflicted between wanting to honor our parents and supporting them and all that goes with it, so kind of that difference. There are definitely cultures where it's expected that the adult children take care of the parents as they age. That is not the culture that my parents are from, but I have had many, many clients and friends as well who do have, are from that kind of a culture. There is that expectation in their family that they take care of the parents, and they feel really conflicted, kind of wanting to do the right thing and honor them, but then actually having to support them and all that goes with that.

What I want to offer to you with that is like it really is a choice, and it might be a choice that you want to make. You're thinking, "Yeah, this is how our culture has always run. I want to do it." If that is the case, then you owe it to yourself and to them to clean up all your thinking, and the possible resentment that might go along with it, and feeling like you're obligated to do it and like you have to, or whatever other negative thoughts and emotions go along with it. Like really just deciding one way or the other. You're either going to support them and have them live with you, and you're going to love every minute of it and it's going to be amazing.

Or you're just not going to do it, and the cycle in the family stops with you. It doesn't mean that you leave them high and dry. You can still have them supported, but maybe not in that same traditional way.

These are those times where it's really important to spend some time really thinking about what you want, and then also either being coached or getting some coaching yourself on yourself, that you do with your own thought downloads to figure out what is really going on for you and where that stems from.

I think once you can see where it comes from and how it might have served your parents or a previous generation, and how it doesn't serve you now, in my opinion it's easier to let that go and go like, "Oh. Okay, I get it. I get why I've adopted this. I know where this comes from, and I never really thought it was a choice because this is just how we roll as a family. This is how we've always been," and then recognizing, "Oh, okay. I actually can choose to think differently about this. I can actually change this for myself if I want to, if it serves me." Now, of course, as I mentioned, there are so many amazing qualities that you probably don't want to change at all, but you just want to learn how to extrapolate those to weight loss. It's the same thing, and you totally got this.

Alright take care. Have a great week. Bye, bye.