



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Hey, friend. How are you? Welcome back to the podcast. I am super excited to talk about the topic that I have for you today. I think it's going to be so great. It was really just from an idea from one of you guys. A listener of this podcast sent it in and asked for some help, and I thought, "You know what? I'm totally doing a podcast on that."

Don't forget, you can always, always, always send me your suggestions. One of the best ways to do it is to just leave a comment for the specific podcast. You can go to katrinaubellmd.com/ whatever the number is of the episode, so this one will be /121, or you can just email hello@katrinaubellmd.com, or even on my website there's a little contact page. If you have an idea for a subject that I haven't covered, I am always looking for ideas of things that can really help you. Definitely keep that in mind.

This is what I received from this listener. She wrote, "I am down 24.2 pounds." I mean, let's just pause for a moment. What? That is amazing. So, so, so great. Super proud of you. Such great work. She goes on to write, "I'm ecstatic most of the time, but yesterday was Easter, but I struggled that still NO ONE," in capitals, no one, "has noticed. How do I use the thought model to stop needing or wanting validation from others?"

This is so good. I coach on this all the time within my Weight Loss for Doctors only coaching group. I was thinking, "Have I never talked about this?" I guess I haven't. That's the thing with 121 episodes. You kind of start wondering, "Did I talk about that? I thought I did, but I don't know which episode it would've been," but anyway, I wanted to make sure that we really cover this.

Here's what's really interesting. Some of us really want others to notice and comment on our weight loss, and others of us really want people to never say a word to us about our weight loss. I coach clients on both situations all the time. I'm going to talk about both actually today as well, wanting and liking the attention and not wanting and not liking the attention, but here's what's interesting is even when we usually think we don't want the attention, a lot of times, it's that we don't want the attention from people that we don't know that well or from some random people, but ultimately, we still do want the comment or for it to be noticed or validated by people who are really close to us, like maybe just our husbands or our best friends or somebody else that's very, very close to us. We still want that validation, at least in a small way, so I think this is going to apply to pretty much everybody.

As you know, I love looking up words in the dictionary, and I looked up what validation means. I got three definitions, and all of them apply here to a certain extent, so let's delve into that quickly. The first definition of validation is the action of checking or proving the validity or accuracy of something. The action of checking or proving the validity or accuracy of something. This is interesting because what we want others to do is to notice that we've lost weight, the accuracy, the validity of something, like, "Hey, I want you to notice I've lost weight," basically to reinforce for us what we already know as a fact. We already know we've lost weight. We know it, but we want other people to know it sort of as a way to make it seem more valid or to confirm that accuracy, which is just so funny because we already know we've lost the weight. We don't really need other people to know.

Next definition of validation is the action of making or declaring something legally or officially acceptable. This is a good one too. Deep down, we all want to know that we are good enough and that we're loved. It's what it all comes down to. By wanting that validation from other people, we're looking for external evidence that we are acceptable because that validation is the action of making or declaring something legally or officially acceptable. We're looking for the external evidence that we are acceptable, that we are good enough. Interesting, right? Of course, we want this validation.

Then the third definition is recognition or affirmation that a person or their feelings or opinions are valid or worthwhile. Recognition or affirmation that a person or their feelings or opinions are valid or worthwhile. So many of us look to others to determine whether we're worthy and worthwhile or not. We want to know that we have worth so that we know we have value. This is so important. Of course, we want validation from others if this is the paradigm that we're living in where other people help us to determine whether we're worthy and worthwhile and of value or not. Now, you have to understand that this is not top-of-mind, this listener, when she was at Easter, was not like, "I'm feeling a lack of self-worth right now." She's like, "What's wrong with people? When are they going to notice?" Then of course, she's struggling there.

Ultimately, what I'm talking about here is the deeper stuff underneath why we struggle when nobody says anything about our weight loss at Easter, because who cares that nobody said anything about weight loss at Easter. That's not really what this is all about at all. Not at all. Nobody making a comment about your weight loss is the circumstance in this model. Ultimately, this really is just a neutral fact. It's actually just an omission. It's a vacant space that was filled with conversation, but that conversation did not involve any words spoken in regards to what your body looks like or how it might have changed recently. You can see how that's totally neutral. That's not a big thing at all.

But then we have a thought about that, and that thought is the meaning that we assign to this neutral fact, this circumstance. The omission of a comment about weight loss now means something to us, and in this case, for this listener, it means something negative. I don't know exactly what she made it mean because I wasn't able to ask her, but here's some things that we sometimes make it mean.

"I'm so big, nobody can even tell I've lost weight," and then we might have thoughts of, "That's so humiliating. It's so embarrassing. I'm a terrible person," onward and onward. Here's another one. "Everyone here cares so little about me that they don't even notice I've lost weight," and maybe something like, "Everyone here is so self absorbed that they can't even tell that I look good."

These thoughts make you feel a negative emotion, some sort of bad feeling, maybe feeling ignored, insignificant, unworthy, frustrated, or angry or something else. These feelings, remember the model, your thoughts create your feelings and your feelings then drive your actions. These feelings can lead to actions like having a tantrum in your head, being really upset, maybe eating off-plan, but definitely blaming others for not following our manual for them because, ultimately, this is partly a manual issue. If my rules are that if I lose weight, you have to make a comment about it, and if you don't make a comment, then I get to be mad about it, then that's a manual issue.

For those of you who aren't familiar with the manual, I did just describe it again in the last episode, but very briefly, our manual is just this invisible set of rules that we have for other people in our lives that people should do things a certain way, should say things a certain way, they should not do things a certain way, and they should not say things in a certain way, and if they do, the opposite of what it says in our manual, then we get to be upset about it.

Of course, we have not typically communicated that with anybody, but yet, these are our invisible rules. In this case, we are upset that people haven't noticed the 24- pound weight loss, and our rules are, "Hey, if I lose that much weight, you should notice and make a comment." Whenever we blame other people, we're in emotional childhood. In emotional childhood, we're giving other people or other situations the power to determine how we feel, which emotions we experience. We think that it's the people and the situations that are creating our emotions. When that's the case, when that's what we're believing, then we're in victim mentality, which always feels awful because it's so disempowering.

In this scenario, the reason the listener was struggling in Easter was because everyone there was the villain and she was the victim. When you're in victim mentality, the only way you can feel better is for the villain to change. The villain has to change. These people need to make a positive comment about her weight loss in order for her to feel better, in order for her to not feel like a victim and not blame them anymore. The only reason she's experiencing the struggle is because of how she's thinking about it, and it's not because of what they're saying or not saying. This is really, really important. Whatever other people do is not the problem. It's what your thoughts are that create the problem.

In this case, her manual is, "When I lose weight, you should make a positive comment about it because then I get to feel really good about myself," and then, of course, that's why she wants them to make a positive comment. But feeling good about oneself is totally available to her already, and she even said that most of the time, she's ecstatic about her weight loss. Why does she feel ecstatic about her weight loss? Because of her thoughts about it. All that changed at the Easter get-together was her thinking, her thoughts because she could've been feeling just as ecstatic at Easter as she feels the rest of the time, most of the time. That's all available to her.

Rather than deciding that her worth and value was 100% from the second she was born and nothing can change that, no matter what, and especially no matter what shape her body is, she instead outsourced that to the other people at the Easter gathering. When they didn't offer it to her, she got to struggle in exchange. When we do these things, the result for us is that our own validation of ourselves suddenly isn't enough. If we're constantly chasing approval from others, then we'll often feel less than, not valued, and of little worth. That's because we're outsourcing our own job to other people.

How do we feel valued? How do we feel self-worth? How do we feel like we're enough? It's not by changing the circumstance and finding some people to pay us a compliment. It's not by trying to get people to follow our manual and then getting upset when they don't follow it. The way we feel anything is by thinking a thought that makes us feel that way. This is very important. You may know this intellectually, many of you do, but you have to really let this sink in for a minute. It is your thought, your thoughts, the way you decide to think, the meaning you assign that determines how you feel about yourself and which emotions what you're experiencing, not what somebody else is doing or saying or not doing or not saying.

But here are some other things that someone not making a comment about your weight loss can also mean that are just as possibly true. You have the same scenario. You've lost 24.2 pounds. You go to the Easter gathering, and nobody makes a comment. What else could your brain have decided to make it mean? I mean, there's infinite possibilities, but here are some suggestions that are just as true as the other ones.

"Everyone here understands that the shape of our bodies is the least important or interesting thing about us, so they just don't even pay any attention and would certainly never make a comment about it." Totally possible, right? "Everyone here knows that I've struggled with my weight in the past, and they don't want to bring up a subject that they know has been hard for me. Just trying to have a good time, trying to make it a positive experience for me. Everyone here knows that people can be sensitive about what their bodies look like so they just make it a personal rule for themselves to not bring up body size or weight loss."

I have known multiple men who have a very hard rule for themselves that they don't ever bring up that a woman might possibly be pregnant until she's brought it up first. She could be literally about to go into labor, and they're quite certain she's pregnant, and they still will not make a comment because they've put their foot in their mouth some other time where they made a comment and the person wasn't pregnant, and it was so embarrassing for them and so uncomfortable that they just have this rule. They just don't say anything. They just don't comment on people's bodies. Simple as that. It doesn't have to mean anything about you at all.

But here's what's actually really funny. We want people to make comments when we lose weight, but imagine what thoughts you'd have on the flip side if you'd gain 24.2 pounds and they made a comment about that. It's so funny. We want to be praised for the weight that we've lost, but if we gain weight, we want everyone to act like they have no idea and couldn't tell at all, even though, of course, we could tell, and we know. It's so ironic.

All of this is an issue because we want other people's approval so that we can feel good about ourselves. Even their lack of a comment, if we gain weight, is a form of approval. Like, "I know that I've gained this weight, but if nobody says anything, then maybe it's not as bad as I'm making it be in my head."

Ultimately, your work here is to approve of yourself, to believe deep down that it's what you think about yourself that's what's most important. For so many of us, our beliefs about ourselves have been so bad for so long, and we're so in the habit of seeking approval from others in order to feel better about ourselves that we can't even imagine it being any different at all. That's what you're going to have to practice. You'll have to find new thoughts to believe and practice thinking them until they become a belief. Here's some suggestions, some ideas of thoughts.

"The only opinion about myself that I care about is my own opinion. Regardless of the shape of my body, I am 100% valuable, worthy, and lovable. What other people say in regards to my body and what it looks like is 100% a reflection on them and has nothing to do with me. When people pay me a compliment, it's about them. When people don't pay me a compliment, it's about them. The compliment doesn't even have anything to do with me." I'm sure you can come up with some others that you maybe like better, but that is your real work because all this other stuff is just nonsense. It's not even what it's about at all. It's really about what you think about yourself.

Now let's talk about not liking the attention that you might get when you lose weight. This is how I am. I don't particularly like it when everybody is paying attention to me. This is why I got married on the beach in Hawaii with just my immediate family members around me. The idea of having everyone looking at me walking down the aisle of a church made me very uncomfortable. I don't particularly like it when people make comments about weight loss to me.

But here's the thing. The reason we don't want people commenting on our weight loss is, again, only what we make it mean because what they say is a neutral fact. Many clients have told me that when someone comments about their weight loss, like a positive comment, like, "Oh, you look amazing. Oh, look at you. Oh, my gosh. You've lost so much weight," they report that it feels like they're being judged, like what the person is saying, they don't mean to be judging in any way, but what the client, the person who got the compliment, or the comment, is making it all mean is that they're being judged by this person for being overweight in the past. Then they're offended that they seem to be only earning this person's approval now that they're thinner. Then they think that that isn't right. So fascinating, right?

But here's the deal. Many overweight people are very judgmental of other overweight people, particularly themselves. They take the terrible thoughts that they have about themselves and then they just apply them to other overweight people. They're very judgmental of what their body looks like, and then they're very judgmental of other overweight people's bodies, and if they're not judging other overweight people, then they're believing that other people, no matter what they look like, are thinking those kinds of judgmental thoughts about them. They'll have thoughts like, "Well, if they think that about me now," something positive, "what did they used to think about me? How horrible did I look before?" Then they feel awful, and they feel humiliated and embarrassed because they're judging themselves so harshly.

Someone making a comment then about weight loss just further affirms to them that other people are evaluating their bodies and judging them for what they look like, which is exactly what they're doing to themselves and other people. But again, it really has nothing to do with that. It's all just words that someone else said, or didn't say, which is your neutral fact in the model. You get to decide what and how you want to think about this.

As someone who doesn't particularly like having all the attention on them, I just want to share with you how I handled comments when I lost my weight. Truly, what's so funny is so many women are so terrible at taking a compliment. I read a Seventeen magazine way back in the day... I don't think I read Seventeen magazine when I was 17. I was probably more like 13 or 14 or something like that. I remember reading this article that talked about how so often, girls because this is a girls' magazine, will not be willing to take a compliment. Someone will say, "Oh, you look so nice." They'll be like, "Oh, this, I just... It looks terrible. I couldn't get my hair looking good today," or they just will always point out some other flaw.

This article just suggested that you don't do that, that you just say thank you and let them give you the compliment and you just receive it. It's so funny that some rando article in Seventeen magazine from a gazillion years ago, like probably like 30 years ago, informed such a big part of my life. But seriously, when people just pay me a compliment, I just say, "Thank you." People would say, "Oh, my gosh. Look at you. You've lost so much weight." "Yes, I have. Thanks for noticing," or just, "Thank you," or, "Yeah, I did." "Oh, my gosh. You look so great." "Thank you." "Oh, my gosh. That must've been a lot of hard work. Wow. You just... Good job." "Thank you."

I just don't make it a big deal. Well, now people don't comment anymore, but back when they did, I would just say, "Thank you," and I would just leave it at that, even when I felt the urge, the impulse to comment or to try to change it or to somehow soften it in some way or turn it against myself. No. I just said, "Thank you," and I want to suggest that you do that too because all of the drama here has to do with you and your own brain. It's your own inner work. There's no drama in what other people say to you about anything. If someone says, "Hey, I like your new glasses," nobody's like, "Ugh, can you believe them?" because we like our new glasses too. We're like, "Yeah, they're awesome, right? Thanks." It's only when we've had these terrible thoughts about ourselves that this is such an issue for us.

If you struggle with either of these scenarios, which, very likely, most of you do in one way or another, then your work is in deciding what you want to think and believe about yourself. All this stuff about other people and what they're saying and not saying is just a distraction from the real personal work that you have to do on yourself. This is exactly what I help my coaching clients with. It is the best work you could ever do for yourself because it literally changes everything.

That's why weight loss is so amazing. Does it matter what size your body is or what size your clothes are? No. It doesn't at all. It's the work that you have to do to lose the weight, to not use food anymore to make yourself feel better, it's all the personal work that you have to do on yourself that ends up creating the best-possible life for you. Once you've done this work on weight loss, then you've just extrapolated to every other goal, every other part of your life, and it just changes everything. It's so, so, so worthwhile.

I want to definitely encourage you to spend a little time thinking about this. Someone makes a comment, just see if you can notice your little bristles going up on edge and just spend some time later thinking about what is that even all about, what was I making that mean, why was that offensive to me, why was I upset about that, why am I struggling, or when people don't make a comment, what are you making that mean? So, so, so good.

All right, have a wonderful week, and I'll talk to you next time. Take care.