



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Hey my friend, what's up? How are you? Welcome back to the podcast today. I am going to be talking today about time scarcity. This is a concept that I've "created." Air quotes created, it's obviously been around, but it's a term that I want to have you guys start thinking about because so, so, so, so, so many of us struggle with this, but physicians in particular, big, big, big time because of the way that our lives are and the way that we think. Of course, it always comes back to the way that we think.

Many, many, many of us feel like we have very little time. We just go around our day, our life thinking that we're pressed for time. There's not a lot of time. We're running out of time. We wish we had more time. There's just so little time that when things don't happen exactly as we want them to, we get upset. It's almost like we have a manual for time. You guys have heard me talk in the last couple of podcasts about the manual. I mean, we're like, "Listen, this is how the world needs to work so that I have the time that I want or else I get to get mad if it doesn't work out that way."

Here's what ends up happening is we feel very entitled to having life work out smoothly for us the way we think it should because we believe our own story. We have created these stories. We don't even realize they're a story. We just think that this is the truth, and we're just telling the facts. We believe this story that we're really busy and we have a lot on our plates, and some of us even deep down have a little bit of this, "You know, and what I do is important, and I'm important, and I'm saving people's lives," and have a little bit of that going on. Not all of us with some of us do.

Then we think that we don't have time for this, that, and the other thing. I actually looked up the definition of entitled because I was just curious what it was. I was like, "Oh, that's a good one, super good." Guess what the definition of entitled is. It's believing oneself to be inherently deserving of privileges or special treatment. That's almost like the epitome of some doctors, right? I was like, "Ooh." When you think about a caricature of a doctor, believing oneself to be inherently deserving of privileges or treatment. So many doctors have this reputation.

Now, I am not saying all doctors by any stretch. I think that a lot of us don't even want to be that person, but I think a lot of us can think of someone who's like that, who's a doctor for sure, at least some of the time, and if we really are willing to be vulnerable enough and open enough about it, we can find that within ourselves a little bit too.

There is such irony in that, where you think about the doctor who is mad when they have to wait at another doctor's office to be seen when that doctor's patients are regularly waiting for them in their office. It's like, "Wait a minute. So when you go to the doctor, you're not supposed to have to wait, but when people come to see you, then it's no problem for them to wait."

This would happen for me. I'm sure many of you can relate to this. I would be just huffing it, seeing patients and really trying to be on time and getting stuff done and trying to be efficient, and then one of the staff would knock on the door, and they'd say, "There's a doctor for you on the phone, or doctor so and so is on the phone." I'm like, "Oh great," because either I've been waiting for it or it's not what I've been waiting for, and they're like, "Yeah, just come on and get on this call."

Of course, I don't want to leave this doctor waiting, so I excuse myself right in the middle of what I was doing and go out and get on the phone. I'm like, "Hey, it's Dr. Ubell." They're like, "Oh, please hold for the doctor." Then I'm put on hold. I'm sure this has happened to you. You're like, "Are you kidding me right now? Like, you just pulled me out of a room, and now I'm on hold. Like, what's happening?" Most of the time, the doctor just hops right on, but sometimes it was the ER, I'd have to wait awhile because it's the ER and they get busy, and that's all fine.

Of course, before I knew this work, I was so entitled. I was like, "Listen, if you're going to pull me out of the room, then be on the phone. Like, what's wrong with you?" It's just so classic, right? We're just so time scarce. We're like, "Listen, now I'm wasting time being on the phone waiting for you to come, and I don't know how long I have to wait for this doctor. Like, they should be on the phone if they're going to call me." I think so many physicians feel this way. I mean, just when I have been on Facebook groups for doctors and things like that, just seeing the way people think about things, how they write about things.

For a lot of people, any requests for their time, whether it's a meeting to discuss something or their child's school asking the parents to help out with something, they just interpret it as an imposition. Their thought is like, "Don't these people know that I'm busy and I don't have time for that? Like, why are they always pestering me for this?" It's as though the world is coming at them constantly. They don't understand the world, how important I am. That's that entitlement there, and they feel so time scarce that if somebody else is asking for more of their time, they're like, "No, no, no, no, no. I'm not going to share any more of my time because I already don't have enough."

I even recently worked with a client who said that she had rearranged her schedule weeks in advance to be able to attend a meeting, or she wanted to ask a question and get some more information, then at the meeting, they ran out of time before her question could be addressed. She was upset because she thought, "Well, if I go through the whole hassle of rearranging everything, then I should definitely be called on at this meeting." Then she made it even worse for herself by telling herself that had she known she was going to be called on, then she could have been doing a whole list of other things.

It already was upsetting to her that she wasn't able to get her question answered, but then on top of it, her brain's like, "Yeah, and had I known, like, then I could have been making things so much better for myself in this other way." She really allowed her brain to create a dramatic story that actually prevented her from being able to pay attention during the meeting to see if someone else was actually asking a similar question to hers so she could get the answer that she needed, but she just basically ran away with her brain instead of managing it. I think we do this so often. We get so up in our story and so up in our heads, we can't even see it as a story. We don't even realize it at all.

I'm going to blow your mind a little bit for some of you here. Some of you are going to be like, "What?" What you need to know is that time is a mental construct that was made up by human beings. It's just made up in our heads. We came up with a 24-hour system. Not all civilizations had 24-hour system, the number of days that we have, the number of days in a week, in a month, in a year, all about time. I mean, even how long a second is, all of this stuff is a mental construct. That means that it's created in our heads with our thoughts, and then our thoughts assign meaning to them.

We don't typically think that a second is a long time, but if your child isn't breathing, a second feels like an eternity, or if your child is seizing or something. Sometimes, an hour feels like it will never end. Other times, an hour flies by. How is that possible? It's because our experience of it is through our thinking. This is actually really similar to money. Money is a total mental construct made up by humans. In America, we said, "We have these bills. They're green. They have dead presidents' faces on them, and here we go. This is what you can get."

This is the relative value of that, but it's all in our heads. It's just an agreement that we all have. Similar to our time scarcity, many of us have a lot of money scarcity thoughts too. Lots of people have just as many scarcity thoughts about time as they do about money. The same way that when someone's asking for money, if you have a lot of money scarcity, you're like, "No, I'm not going to share my money." It's the same way when you have time scarcity. Like, "No, I'm not going to give you another half hour of my time to sit at the meeting. No way."

So what most doctors are doing is running around like a crazy person. Even if they don't outwardly look like they're a crazy person, in their head, they're a crazy person thinking that they have very little time, but of course,, they actually have the same amount of time that everybody has. I'm sure you've heard people say this, "We all get the same 24 hours in every day. It doesn't matter who you are. All you get is the same 24 hours." I think that's really true, but I don't think that thinking about it that way is always super impactful for us. I want to offer to you a different way of thinking about it that I think is very, very useful.

What I want you to think about is this. For the day for tomorrow, so you're listening to this on whatever day you're listening to it, for tomorrow, I'm going to give you \$24,000 for you to spend. How are you going to spend that money for your day for the next day? What are you gonna spend it on? Think about that in terms of you buying elements of your life the way that you spend your time. How much money would you spend on sleep? If you want eight hours of sleep, and it costs you \$8,000, are you willing to spend \$8,000 on a good night's sleep?

How valuable is sleep to you? How valuable is your free time? How much would you spend on some free time? How much would you spend on work? How much would you spend on commuting, on running errands, on spending time with your kids or your spouse or other important relationships in your life? When you start thinking about like, "Okay, I've got \$24,000 in cash in my hand. I don't know. Do I want to spend this money on commuting? Maybe I want to actually spend that money on my relationships, and I'm gonna think about how I can reduce my commute or make it different in some way."

Here's the best questions really to ask yourself. How much do you want to spend on scrolling through social media or catching up on the news or gossiping and complaining about things to people who can't change the situation you're complaining about? How much do you want to spend on judging yourself and other people or just watching TV or internet shopping? We spend a lot of our time doing that. This is people who are time scarce. We don't think we have enough time, yet we're spending our time, we're spending our \$24,000 on gossiping and complaining and mindless shopping and TV watching and social media.

We're spending our valuable time on things that are not that important to us, and really ultimately time is the most valuable resource that we have. It's more valuable than money because we can make more money, but we can't make more time. Since time is a mental construct, if you believe you don't have enough time, that will always be your experience of it. I think by now if you've been listening for a while, you have figured out that your thoughts create your results. If your thoughts are that you don't have enough time, your results will always be that you didn't have enough time. You will always be living in time scarcity.

Similar with money, there are people who have tons of money, but they have a scarcity mindset with money. It doesn't matter how much money they get, they still feel like it's not enough. They'll never, ever, ever have enough. We do this with time with our relationships, especially with our children. I see this all the time in my clients who are thinking about spending time with their kids because of course they have a lot of thoughts, many of which create guilt for them about being away from their kids a lot.

When you don't even know how much is enough when you're living from a place of time scarcity, it doesn't matter how much time you spend with your kids. It's never going to feel like it's enough. A few podcasts back, I taught you guys about how you determine whether you're being successful or not. It's the same thing with parenting. How do you know you're being successful? Is it the number of hours that you spend with your child? Is it the number of events that you attend with them? Is it the number of bedtime tuck-ins? How do you define that for yourself?

If you really want to find it that way, then make sure that you do that. If the definition of parenting success is, "I tuck my child in three nights a week," then that's on the schedule. That's part of your time allocation. You're happy to spend your \$24,000 on that, but make sure you're doing it. Don't just wait for it to show up like it's just going to happen, because this whole time thing, since it's a mental construct, what that means is that it only exists in our minds in the form of our thoughts. Truly, it's just our thinking. We think we need more time, but that's not it.

This is where most of you are getting stuck or mixed up. You think that it's a fact that you don't have much time. You have a long list of things that you do every day and then an even longer list of other things that you think you should be doing as well, that perpetual to-do list that never ends. Then your brain interprets that as though you don't have enough time. Thoughts like these then create emotions for us, and many of those emotions are feeling pressured, stressed, worried, anxious. Then when we're living our lives from those emotions, what are the actions that we take? We're just running around like crazy people.

We're acting very entitled. We're not kind to people, strangers and the people that are important to us. I know when I'm running around like a crazy person rushing, rushing, rushing, I'm definitely not kind to my kids, to anybody. It's like, "Come on. Let's get going. Get in the car. Why do I have to tell you so many times? Why aren't you ready yet? You know, get in the car. Get in the car. Get in the car for hundred times." We just think we don't have time for anything that might seem like it's like "wasting our time," like a poor use of our time.

We also tell ourselves stories about what we're missing out on that we would rather be doing than that thing that we're spending our time on right then just to make the experience that much more uncomfortable for ourselves. Then the result of this is that we don't complete things, or we do but our experience of doing it was awful. Then what do we do when we feel so bad? How do we cope? First, we have a snack or a glass of wine of course. It's like, "Where's the chocolate? I need some ice cream. Where is the bag of chips and a glass of wine of course."

After that, what we think we need to do to make this better is we think we need to change this circumstance. We think that we need to do less. We need less to do and we need more help. We need other people to get out of our way and have fewer expectations of us. I mean, think about that in work. Like, how you need patients to show up on time and you need the nurse to not interrupt you and not to be annoying and to only ask good questions, and you need your partner to always be able to take call when they're supposed to. It's such entitlement, and we're like, "No, I need to manufacture this experience of my life so that I don't have to feel so bad."

We're trying to change that circumstance, the neutral facts of our lives so that we can think different thoughts, then feel different feelings, then take different actions, and in that way, we change our results to something more pleasant. That's how we want to do it, but that's really the long way around, and it really doesn't work long term. It's not something that is really going to solve this problem for you as evidenced by the fact that you are still struggling with your time scarcity after probably years and years and years of thinking this way.

It's not getting more help with things or having more assistance or less on your plate that's actually going to be the solution here. Life happens. We get in traffic jams. The doctor's running behind. There's a long line to checkout at the store. Our child gets sick. The baseball game has a rain delay. The EMR goes down. We don't get our charts completed. We don't get our question answered, and we have to schedule another meeting. Then we get to decide how we're going to think about it.

What most of us do is we get all perturbed. We're all annoyed. We think we're wasting time. We're not going to get all these other things done. We'd rather be doing something else, but truly, we decide what meaning we want to assign and how we want to interpret what is happening as it relates to our time. We don't recognize that as an option in the moment. Our brains just go to like, "Bad things are happening. Let me show you all the reasons why. The whole array is right there and available to you."

Since time is a mental construct, any issue you have with time originates in your brain. It is not external to you in the world and your surroundings. Let me just repeat that. Any issue you have with time has nothing to do with other people, with the world around you. It's 100% how you think about it. I want you to know, and some of you are going to be like what? But I want you to know that you really could get twice as much done every day if you simply manage your mind around time. So many doctors, well, pretty much everybody completely resists this at first. Like, "What? How dare you? No way. There's no possible way that I could do that," but I am telling you, just try me and see how much you can get done.

When you create so much stress for yourself regarding time, then you are more likely to use your time to eat to feel better, and then to neutralize your negative emotions with other things that are masking themselves as rest and relaxation like watching TV or shopping online. We think, "Oh, but I need... I'm so exhausted at the end of the day, and I'm so wiped out, and I need this time to just unwind," not realizing that the reason we're so exhausted and we need to unwind is because of all the stress and the pressure that we're creating for ourselves because of the way that we think about time throughout the day.

Of course at the end of the day, you're going to feel physically tired, but the mental exhaustion is the optional part. That is how you get twice as much done when you skip that whole part. When you're creating abundant thoughts about time, you get your work and your other tasks done, all the things you need to get done for the day, and then you just skip the whole part where you're stressed out and pressured. That's not a requirement. Then you get to truly relax instead of trying to buffer, neutralize to feel better.

As you guys know, the main ways that we're buffering is overeating, overdrinking, spending too much money, working too much sometimes, watching TV or internet researching, stuff like that. How do you create more time? You create more time by thinking abundant thoughts about time. I can just envision some of you being like, "What?" You might need to listen to this episode a couple of times. This is a perfect opportunity for you to really apply this. Remember a couple episodes ago, I helped you to understand how to get the most out of this podcast. This is one of those opportunities for sure.

You have to think abundant thoughts about time to create more time for yourself. This is so important. Here are some examples of abundant thinking about time, because I think a lot of us are like, "How would you even do that?" Here are some examples. There's always plenty of time. There's always plenty of time for what's important. There's always plenty of time for what's essential. There's always plenty of time for what's meaningful. So many of us think that there's not enough time for us to have meaningful interactions with our kids or our spouse or whoever. Always plenty of time.

You can just decide that. It's just as true as thinking that it's hard to find time for what's meaningful. I mean, it's literally just the way you're thinking about it. Here are some other examples. There's always more than enough time. I am always in control of how I spend my time. What I do in the present moment is how I create time for myself. I create my time. We so often think that we're at the effect of our schedulers or people like that. No, you create your time. I am the only one who can decide how I spend my time at any moment.

I love this one. There's no wrong way to spend my time. We're so judgmental of ourselves and how we spend our time and how other people spend their time. I see that a lot. My clients are constantly judging their children, their spouses or friends like, "Well, if you didn't just sit there and watched TV and watched sports for so long, then you could be doing X, Y, Z." There's no wrong way for anybody to spend their time. Now, I want you to think about the idea that those "time wasters" might actually be perfect. Like, what if that traffic jam is perfect, and you legit believed that?

You're stuck in traffic. What if instead of just being mad and frustrated and slamming on the horn, you could just be like, "This is so perfect. This is exactly how it was supposed to go." Same thing for the long line at the store. Same thing for your EMR going down. Same thing for your question not being asked. When you are open to the idea that everything is happening for you, then this thing that's happening that your brain wants to perceive as a colossal waste of time is actually just a lesson that you're refusing to learn.

I sometimes wonder if the universe or God or whatever you believe in just is like, "Hey, I'm just going to keep bringing this up for you over and over and over again until you learn the lesson." I think a lot of people don't. We're just like, "No, I'm just going to be totally pissed off." It's like every time that happens, we're thinking that this is a terrible thing, and we get to be mad about it, but what if we could just really look at it like, "This is a lesson that I need to learn. This is something that I need to get something out of?"

You could really train yourself to be like, "Oh great. It's a traffic jam." I know sometimes, it's like, "What? Seriously, Katrina," but seriously think about this. What's great about a traffic jam? What's great about a traffic jam is you get to maybe listen to this podcast. You get to maybe just pause for a minute. Maybe you can just turn everything off and actually think and just be with yourself. Maybe you can wrestle with something that you've been struggling with and you just really haven't had time to think about it. Maybe you can daydream. Maybe you can think of bigger plans for yourself, for your life.

Maybe you can enjoy the nature that's around you. Even if it's basically a concrete jungle, you find some cool little shrub that's poking out of somewhere. I mean, there are so many things that can be perfect about a traffic jam, but we won't let ourselves even see it. We refuse to let our brains be open to what's perfect about what we're experiencing. I promise you when you try this, your whole life will change. You will end up having so much more peace and contentment in your life. That's the result you get.

Why do you get that result? Because you're thinking differently and your thoughts create your results. You have so much less resistance and judgment and negativity in your life. When you stop thinking that other people need to change and the circumstances of real life need to change in order for you to feel less judgment and negativity, you're going to be waiting a long time. All that has to change is your thinking. You aren't doing any less. By the way, I just want to point that out. In fact, you're probably getting way more done.

Then at the end of the day, you know you got it done, and you can actually enjoy that amazing feeling of having been productive and achieving that and going to sleep knowing what an amazing badass you are rather than lamenting about how awful your day was and how you didn't get anything done. To start with to apply this to your life, I want you to start with awareness. I want you to start with awareness in yourself and in others. Sometimes, it's even easier for us to start seeing people's time scarcity when we look at other people and how they're talking about their time.

People say that all the time, "You must be so busy. I just don't even know how you do it. Look at their time scarcity. Their time scarcity's about my time. It's so funny, right? Then notice what your thoughts are about time. They will not seem like thoughts. I just want you to know that, because you've believed them for so long, they just feel like facts. You're going to have to spend some time going like, "What do I actually think and believe about time? Is that actually optional?" It turns out it is.

If you're not sure how to find them, just remember that how you feel when you think that will be the hint to you. If you're feeling that pressure and stressed, worried, anxious, guilty feeling, that's probably one to look out. Then choose how you want to work on thinking about time moving forward. I gave you some examples that you can try out. Let it be an experiment. See if you can come up with some new ones for yourself, and just try them out and then just see how your life changes for the better. Once you start seeing it open up, you're going to end up being hooked.

I mean, this was so huge for me when I finally realized the worst case scenario if we're late to school is I have to park the car and walk the kids in. That's it. There's no reason to be a crazy fool about us being late to school. It turns out we end up actually not being late to school that often when I'm not so stressed out about us being late to school. It's really fascinating how these things work out.

This is some really, really important stuff. Time scarcity, I guarantee you have it somewhere. Take a look and start teasing this apart. It's going to be super, super important and worthwhile for you.

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