



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well hey there my friend, welcome back to the podcast. So glad to talk to you today. Did you know that today is just an amazing day? It really, really is. If you are driving home from work and you have just had a day, like so many of us do, I just want you to know that life is great. Life is amazing, everything is going okay, it's all going to work out, I promise you, okay?

I know there's going to be somebody listening to this, that this is really going to hit them in the heart and they're going to be like, "I needed to hear that. Thank you so much." Don't we just sometimes really get caught up in that idea that it's not okay? We're not okay, everything is a problem, nothings going right, and we just need someone to be like, "Listen, everything's going to be okay." Then we're like, "I know. Okay, you're right. I know, I get it. Okay, yes. You're right, you're right." I just want to be that person for you today. If you woke up on the wrong side of the bed and you're on your way to work, or you're walking because you had to get out of the house before you screamed at somebody again, or whatever it is. I just want you to know, life is amazing, everything is going great, okay? All of it's going to be okay. I just want you to know that. Just a little PSA for you there.

Okay, let's start talking about hunger. I want to talk to you today about how to deal with hunger. When I work with my new women physician clients in my weight loss coaching group, that is seriously one of their biggest concerns. They're really worried about feeling hungry, they are upset that they might feel hungry, they're upset in advance, they're already anxious about being hungry, they're overeating in advance of the group even starting, because they're so worried about the hunger they may feel, and they believe that hunger is associated with restriction, and deprivation, and it's just so difficult. They have lots of thoughts like, "What will I do when I feel hungry? If I feel at all hungry during a case, I won't be able to think or do a good job. What will I do in the middle of the night if I'm not able to have a snack before I have to go in to run a trauma?" Or, whatever.

"Hunger makes me feel so anxious." Some even say, "I'm not sure what hunger feels like. I've been afraid of feeling hungry for so long, that I make sure I eat before there is any possibility of me being hungry." And, they can't remember the last time they were hungry, so that might be your experience too. Physical hunger is a normal part of being a human being, and living a human existence. Oh my gosh, and I say that right as my stomach just growled. That's hilarious. The irony.

But listen, I know you know this on an intellectual level, but deep down many of us have been so conditioned to believe that something is going wrong when we feel or experience hunger, okay? Of course hunger is a normal part of being a human being. But, I want you to not just know that on a superficial level, I want you to truly take that in as a core belief that you have.

Here's the thing, you might have been raised in a family where you truly went without food, right? Where literally you went to school hungry, went to bed hungry, and this can result in a strongly negative emotional connection with experiencing hunger, okay? If that was the case for you, then of course this is going to be something that you're going to want to work through. Maybe you vowed to yourself as a child that you would never become somebody who couldn't feed their children, or feed themselves. And so, in the process of fulfilling that vow, you overfeed yourself. You don't ever let yourself experience hunger.

Or, you might have been raised by parents or grandparents who had the experience of going without food, and they transferred their fear of hunger to you. Now, I think this is the case for way more of us. Many, many more of us than those who actually went without food ourselves. So many of us, as I've described I did a podcast on being a first generation American, and being a child of immigrants, and what that means. I know those of you who are first generation also understand exactly what I'm talking about. When you are raised by parents or grandparents who really know what it's like to experience that hardship, they want to make sure that you understand that.

It's all coming from a very loving, supportive, well intentioned place. But, it can create this problem for us with hunger where we just are completely afraid of it. We think it's bad, it's something to be avoided. That creates an eating problem for us. The thing is, is as children we look to the grownups in charge of us in our lives, to determine how to think and feel about everything in our lives. That determines how we think and feel about food in particular, right? We're eating at least three times a day, so those opinions, and thoughts, and beliefs about food and hunger, and wasting food, and all of that are really ingrained in us.

It's easy to take on fear, or avoidance of hunger, and to believe that hunger is really bad. Here's the thing, even now I see this all the time. When children aren't behaving well, adults are so quick to assume that the problem is that the child needs a snack. If they're cranky, or crying, or fighting, or stressed, or scared, or whatever. So many parents will immediately assume that the source of their problem behavior is a lack of food, right? So many people believe that these kids will not be able to identify on their own, that they need food. They won't be able to express it. Now, sometimes they're so little that, that would be a stretch. But, even older kids.

And so, whether the kids are hungry or not, food is just shoved in their faces. Like sometimes literally shoved into their mouths. Those of you who take care of children know exactly what I'm talking about. I saw it all the time as a Pediatrician. Someone brings a child in, particularly like a toddler, or a young school age child, and they're upset, maybe because I'm examining them. And so, the parent just immediately rips open a bag of some sort of cracker, or cookie, or fruit snacks, or something, and starts trying to get them to eat the food to calm them down.

I'd always just want to be like, "Listen, it's not safe to put food in a crying child's mouth." Sometimes if I had to lay the child down to check their ears because they were fighting so hard, the child is laying flat on their back, bawling with their mouth wide open, and then the parent's putting food in their mouth. That is not safe, people. Don't do that, okay? It's so amazing, so many adults now cannot stand the concept of their child being upset about anything. They just don't want to lay down, they're a little scared. It's okay, that's part of being a child, being a human. They don't understand that they don't need to make it better. It will be over very soon, and then everything will be better. What we need to learn is to just be patient, to cooperate, and then it's over quickly, right?

The whole snacking industry, and yes if you are not aware, there is a whole industry around this. The whole snacking industry has trained us to believe that anything uncomfortable that you're experiencing can be solved by eating some food, particularly snack food. And, foods that are considered snacks are almost always some sort of concentrated form of sugar, or flour, or both, often masked as being something healthy. It's like, this is just dried fruit and nuts. Right, but the amount of nutrition that's in that is not a snack. It's basically half of a meal for an adult. It's a lot of nutrition that we don't need, and excess nutrition creates excess body fat.

Well, here's the deal. Most children do not need snacks, okay? Their bodies are fully capable of eating enough at meal time to last them to the next meal time, even when they're doing sports and are very active, and have run around a lot on the playground, and all of that. But, so many of us have been brain washed into thinking that they still need to eat every three hours like they did when they were infants. God forbid that they experience a hunger pain. They will melt to the floor in a heap, what are we going to do? I'm on a rant today, people.

You can see how beliefs about hunger, and the fear and avoidance of hunger gets passed down from generation to generation. It started with generations that truly didn't have enough food to us, and now we pass it on as, "Hey, food is the solution to any negative emotion that you're feeling." Or, even if you're just bored, or whatever, right? Of course, the positive emotions too.

When this is the case, we don't recognize that our thoughts and beliefs about hunger are just that. They are thoughts, and they are beliefs. We think that it's just the truth about hunger. We think being hungry makes me anxious. I feel like I'm going to faint if I'm hungry. Hunger is intolerable. I can't deal with hunger, I can't think straight when I'm hungry, I can't operate or do my cases at a high level if I'm hungry, I'm mean when I'm hungry. When I'm hungry, everybody better watch out. Everybody knows that if I'm hungry they better stay away until I eat something.

We don't realize that these are just excuses that keep us overeating. If these are true, then you'll never be able to conquer your food issue, right? Because, the result of those beliefs is you continuing to overeat, and not tolerate hunger, and let your body use the excess body fat that you have on your body for energy. Which, is how you lose weight. Luckily, none of these are facts. They are not the truth. But, some of you are going to say, "But, listen Katrina. For real, I am starting to see spots, like I feel light headed, I've got to sit down. I mean for real, I think it's the truth." When that is the case, that's because of the way that your body is setup to process nutrients.

In episode six of this podcast, in really all of the early podcast episodes. If you're new to the podcast, make sure you go back to episodes one through 10, one through 12, because that is where I really lay the foundation of all of this work. But, episode six in particular is where I talk to you a lot more specifically about hunger, and how to deal with hunger, how to use hunger as a tool for yourself. Make sure that you listen to that one for sure.

But, when your body is set up to demand easily digestible sources of carbohydrate in order for you to feel okay, we're in quotes. In order for you to feel good and functioning, then you are considered a sugar burner. That means that your body is not what we call fat adapted. Fat adapted means that when you feel hunger it's not super intense, your body is happy to access your fat stores for energy if you're not able to eat in that moment, or you decide you're not going to eat in that moment.

Yeah, if you're a sugar burner, sometimes it is incredibly intense. Those are the people, sugar burners are the people who find that they start to really feel like they're going to pass out, or maybe you've been told that you actually have blood sugar issues. I've had clients say that, "Well I've been diagnosed as hypoglycemic." Unless you've got a true endocrine disorder, it's unlikely that, that's really the problem. The problem is that you are not fat adapted. A body that's fat adapted functions the way the human body was always meant to function, okay? Be sure to go listen to those first one to 10, one to 12 episodes because those will help to explain how to get your body functioning the way it should so you're experiencing your hunger in a way that the body was made to function. It's just not as intense as what you might be experiencing.

But, here's something that I want to share with you about hunger that I recently was working through. You know I always love sharing my personal work. I've lost my weight now, it's been a number of years. I definitely knew that adding exercise in on a regular basis was something that I wanted to be doing. It was something that I had not really been doing because it's what I don't recommend. There's so much research on exercise and how good it is for you for so many reasons, but one of those reasons is not to lose weight. It really doesn't help you lose weight for lots of reasons. This has been shown time and again in the literature, this is proven, okay? Lots of people try to argue with me, but those are always the people who are intensely exercising, and not losing weight. I just say, "Well hey, how about you try me? You back it off, and you see how it goes for you." Then, they start losing weight, it's amazing.

Even so, I always encourage my clients to lose the weight first, and then start exercising. That's what I've been doing. It's really good for my body for so many reasons that I won't get into here. I've been very pleased with that. But, sure enough, I start exercising more and immediately my hunger was increased so much, like intensely increased. Then I found I had tons more brain chatter around food. Lots of thoughts about, "Maybe I need more. See, I probably do need more, more food than what I've been eating. Maybe I do need to have a snack again in the evening because I'm so, so so, much more hungry before bed than I was before." I just had all kinds of thoughts around the whole thing, and honestly was indulging in some confusing around it, and I was not really seeing how much of what was going on were my thoughts. It seemed so much more factual.

If you sometimes struggle with this as well, this is why hiring a coach and doing a coaching program is so helpful, right? This is what I offer to my clients. It can be hard for you to see it in yourself. I was talking to a friend of mine who's a coach and I was telling her, "Listen, I'm just experiencing this hunger, and it's just so much harder. I'm just really kind of struggling with things." She just goes, "Well, what's wrong with feeling hungry?" I was like, "Well, I mean it just seems so much more intense than it normally does. It just feels different, it just feels harder." She was like, "No."

Don't you love coaches? This is what I'm able to do for my clients too is just like, "No. That's not what's going on." She's like, "Of course you're hungry. When you exercise, you get hungry." She's like, "Do you think any of those people who are super fit are never hungry? Of course they're hungry. They're hungry all the time." I'm like, "Oh, really?" It never dawned on me, it never even occurred to me that maybe nothing was going wrong, right? This is what our brains do. We're like, "There's certainly a problem here, and I'm going to figure out what the problem is." I'm very good at describing the problem, right? But, not getting to that solution.

That's all she had to say. I realized, "Oh my gosh, I totally need to do some thought work on feeling hungry," and that's exactly what I did, and it did not take much thought work for me to work through all of this. Since that time I kid you not, I have felt so much less hungry. Here's the thing, my body's very fat adapted. I have been fat adapted for years. Even so, I felt so much more hunger because of my thoughts around it. So much of that intense hunger that I was experiencing was emotional hunger. It was an intensity of hunger that was created by the way I thought. Yes, there was some physical hunger, and then my thinking just amplified it so much more so that everything felt out of control, and I didn't know what to do anymore.

It's so interesting, right? If my hunger is just a fact, if that intensity of that hunger is just the truth, then how could this be, right? How could I decrease my hunger so much just by deciding to think differently about it? It's so crazy. I learned on a whole new level, how much of the intensity of our hunger is created by our thoughts about it. I want to suggest that you evaluate this too. When you think you can't tolerate hungry, when you think that you can't do a case if you're super hungry, guess what happens? You become that much more hungry. The emotional hunger just stacks on top of that physical hunger, which is truly just a suggestion by our body. It's really not that big of a deal.

Remember that all of us, even those of us with a BMI at a low, low range have more than enough body fat stores to provide our bodies with all the energy that the body needs, okay? The way to deal with hunger is to manage your thinking around it. You have to recognize what's a fact and what's a thought. This is exactly what I help my clients do in my coaching program. If you're afraid of feeling hungry then you need to let yourself become hungry, and then notice what your brain does in response to that hunger. Notice what thoughts it offers up to create a freakout moment for you. Notice the dialogue going on in your mind, about what the hunger means, and what's going to happen. It's always something bad that's going to happen.

But then, this is very important. Be careful. Don't judge yourself negatively for what your brain is doing. Don't think that something is going wrong because your brain is offering you these thoughts. It's not, okay?

Instead, just notice what your brain is doing. Become aware of it. You just need to know what's happening first. Recognize that these are thoughts that your brain is very efficient at thinking. There's basically like a super highway of neurons in your brain that make thinking these thoughts effortless, and that's okay. That's not a problem.

Then, get to know what hunger feels like. When I was recently renewing my relationship with hunger, I in doing my self coaching, wrote about what it felt like to feel hungry. Meanwhile, I've done this work before. But I thought that clearly I should do it again. I turned inward, and I got curious about that hunger that felt so difficult to manage, and I just wanted to learn more about it. Where was it in my body? What did it feel like?

I realized in doing that work that it felt like a little tickle, or like a tingle, or a poke. It really was not as bad as my brain was convinced it was. Then, when I felt that hunger, it didn't phase me. It's just kind of that pokey feeling again. That's cool, I can totally do that. No big deal. I don't need to entertain all the brain chatter of like, "Should I get another coffee? Maybe I need something else to eat. See, because I'm exercising, I need more food." No.

Since that time I've experienced so much less hunger, and I've changed my belief that if I workout, I'm going to have to be uncomfortably hungry, right? I had this idea of like, "Shoot, if I'm going to keep working out it's going to be so difficult." But, honestly it's about the same amount of hunger that I've always felt before. Nothing is going wrong. I know I say that a lot, but I even surprise myself sometimes when I find it to be true. Like, "Wait, nothing is going wrong? Oh my gosh, nothing's going wrong, it turns out." Right?

I do just want to mention that if you are a sugar burner, if you are somebody who is not fat adapted, then I still do recommend that you don't exercise extensively, or start exercising as a means to lose weight, okay? Exercise will not help you lose weight, and for most people it does make them actually hungrier. Unless you've done all of this work, I really recommend that you just hit the pause button on exercise, get the weight off, and then from that point you'll be ready to start creating an exercise routine that serves your body in all the ways that you want it to serve you, okay?

I can't wait for you to do this work on your hunger. I'm telling you it's like, I'm always in awe of the power of coaching, even in my own life. It's so, so, so powerful, and I can't wait for you to have that experience as well I'll talk to you very soon.

Have a great one, bye, bye.