



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Hey, what's up my friend? How are you? So I have not recorded a podcast and a little bit of time. I was traveling for a bit this summer. I went to Europe for a little bit, for a conference and a little bit of fun time too, and I'm just getting back into the groove. It's amazing how you just get right back into it. I've been thinking about all of you, the entire time I've been away, as I do, and thinking about new things that I can bring to you on this podcast. Always. It's always something that's really top of mind for me. I have little notes scribbled all over the place. In fact, my husband just found one recently that's like podcast idea, and then some some scribble there. I'm like, Oh yeah, that's going to be a good one. And you know what's so funny is for a long time I didn't really listen to my podcast, but lately I've been listening to them, mostly because I find them to be very useful for me.

You would think that you don't need to listen to your own podcast, but often it's the exact right thing that I need to hear right in that moment. I'm like, "Gosh, that's good, that's really useful." But here's what's really funny. I usually listen to myself on one and a half speed and I don't know if you know that you can do that, but if you ever find a podcast is too slow for you or too fast, honestly, you can turn it down to half speed, but that would probably kill me. You can go up to one and a half or two x speed. Two x speed I think is too much. You can't retain anything that they're saying. But I often listen to podcasts at one and a half speed. So, I'll listen to myself at one and a half speed. Sometimes I'm like, wow, was I energetic?

Listen a moment. I'm just like on speed. Then like right cause that's not actually what I sounded like when I recorded the podcast. So, the other day I listened to one at regular speed just because I thought it'd be good for me to hear what it really sounds like, and it felt so slow. I couldn't believe it. I'm generally a pretty fast talker, but I think I slow myself down on purpose because I have gotten the feedback from people that I speak so quickly on a podcast. So that maybe I would just let you know that if I talk too fast for you, you can slow me down. And if I don't talk fast enough for you, you can speed me up. And if it's just right and you know goldilocks, right? Like you purchased right, then you just keep me right where I am. But anyway, just so you know that is available to you to change that speed.

So let's talk about your imagination, and imagination is something that we usually think about in terms of children, right?

When you think about imaginary friends and imagination, like I immediately go to children in their imaginations and sometimes we think that people in more traditionally creative professions have good imagination, like people who are in the film industry or in creative writing or the visual arts or something like that.

With our children, we encourage them to be imaginative. We praise them for their creativity. This is something that we think is very important. We give them plenty of outlets to develop their imaginative abilities, and then we become adults. And being imaginative seems kind of childish and kind of unnecessary because I mean we have real grown up things to deal with you people. Who has time for imagination, right? We're adulting here, but we all have an imagination. In fact, for most of us, it's a very strong and very robust imagination that's used every single day. So, you may question me on that and you may think that you're an exception, that you're not really that creative. You're not really that imaginative. But, I promise you, you very likely use that beautiful imagination of yours all the time. Let me give you some examples, some ways that I bet you use your imagination.

Number one, worrying about the future. Number two, judging other people. Number three, judging yourself. Number four, telling yourself stories about what other people think about you. Number five, comparing yourself to other people and then deciding what that means about you and about them. And that's just scratching the surface. It sounds pretty familiar, right? I used to think that I wasn't a very creative person in general, but I was totally wrong. My brain is very creative. It is able to spend a tall tale and have me believing it in a hot second. You too? In fact, in my imagination is so well developed that I have to be really aware of my thinking to be able to differentiate what's actually factual and what my brain has ever so creatively concocted out of thin air. And I know your brain is the same. The reason I know this, is because you are a human being too. Our brains, as humans, are wonderful and magnificent and incredibly imaginative.

Our brains power can be put to use creating amazing change for the better. I mean, one of a million examples is just think about how much medicine has changed and moved forward, even in the last 10, 15, 20 years. That is all because of the power of a human beings brain imagining something better. A better solution, a way to a cure, a different way to do things that results in fewer side effects. There's so many examples. Remember they would tell us in medical school, at least half of what we teach you by the time you retire won't even be true anymore. And that felt so weird, right? But things are changing constantly. Our imaginations cannot be stopped. You're not either a creative person or an uncreative person. You, for sure, are creative. The difference is whether your directing your imagination to create something that you want in your life or you're not.

If you're not directing your brain intentionally, your imagination will still be there doing its thing. It's just a question of whether your imagination is being supervised or not. When your imagination is not being supervised, it creates doom and gloom stories. These stories are filled with all of the things that are going wrong in your life and in the world, or have the possibility of going wrong in your life and in the world, right? Raise your hand if you know what I mean. They are tragedies, these stories. They're all about how you won't be able to do something you want to do, and how you're never going to be good enough or loved the way you want to be loved.

They make sure you're aware of every aspect of yourself that could possibly be perceived as a flaw. They paint incredibly vivid pictures of what other people are thinking and saying and doing when you're not around, and it's never very nice.

No what I mean, I know. You know what I mean? Your imagination is so strong and convincing that these stories feel incredibly real. We often even actually believe them as though they are the truth. I see this all the time with my weight loss clients. Their imagination created a story that they wouldn't be able to lose weight and keep it off, and they believe that story. Just their imagination created it, and then they'll use evidence from their past to back up the story and belief, and then they think it's true. So does that apply to you too? Do you also believe that. Then when I come along and suggest that not only can they lose weight and keep it off, but it doesn't have to be a super painful, awful experience. They're afraid to believe me. They think it's not possible because they've been believing their brain's made up story for so long. And then we have to really work on dropping that belief so that they can start losing weight.

Such a great example of how your imagination is doing what it does, and it will prevent you from creating what you want. When you worry about the future, by worrying about your kids, your marriage, your patients, your parents, the government, and who leads it, the environment, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. You are letting your imagination run wild with all of the bad things that might happen. They aren't actually happening, but they might happen. It seems very important. When your brain thinks these imaginative thoughts, you will feel the negative emotion that's associated with those thoughts. You feel worry, fear, anger, frustration, disappointment, helplessness. The reason you feel those emotions is because every thought you have will create a feeling for you. It doesn't matter whether the thought is a completely made up imaginative one or one that is based in fact. You will feel that feeling.

So in this case, you're feeling negative emotions now, for things that might happen in the future, but often don't. In fact, most of the time they don't happen. So you're feeling negative emotions in advance. Then when we get the message from marketers and advertisers that we just need this food or that drink or this other thing that we can buy in order to feel better in our lives, to feel more positive emotion, of course we want to go for it, of course are going to consume it. We're experiencing so many negative emotions because of our imagination, that we want an escape. I'm telling you that ice cream cone will definitely help, right? And maybe a glass of wine later. In the moment, it really feels like a good solution.

Except as I've taught you before, eating the ice cream and drinking the wine may take the edge off in the moment, but what they do is they create weight gain in the future, or they prevent the weight loss that you're aiming for and that's just more fuel for your imagination to create a negative story for you about what's possible for you. When your brain judges other people and judges herself it's just your imagination creating a meaning. A meaning about you and about them, the other people. But notice how that meaning is very rarely something along the lines of, I'm awesome and everyone else is awesome. I love that we all support and encourage each other so much. No.

Instead, your imagination creates an imaginary hierarchy of worthiness and importance and influence, which makes you feel bad about yourself. It doesn't matter whether the story is that you're better than other people or that they're better than you. The negative outcome is the same. The best ones are when we compare ourselves to other people and create a story about what other people think about us. I have totally done this and I'm sure you have too. Pretty recently actually something happened with a friend and it was fascinating watching my imagination offer up all kinds of possible meanings and consequences, all of which were negative, of course.

I mean to the point where my heart rate was up, like I was feeling it, right? When we say our thoughts create our feelings, they really, really do. They create the emotional response, the emotional experience we have in our bodies. My imagination created what seemed to be a very plausible explanation of what was going on. Then I found out what was really going on and my imagination was dead wrong. Of course, totally off track, as imaginations tend to be. And all of that negative emotion was created unnecessarily. It was really, really interesting to watch that. So our imagination is working all of the time, whether we supervise it or not. And if that's the case, which it is, then why not ask it to imagine things that will actually serve us. So often if ask someone what their dreams are for their life, they have no idea.

They legit are like, I got nothing. They don't dream. They have "real issues" to deal with, right? Going back to that adulting. But dreaming is just allowing your imagination to think about what's possible for you. It's opening up the world and seeing the huge array of options that you could select. It's asking yourself to think of solutions to a problem that up until this point your brain has decided is unsolvable. It's countering the thought. I'll never be able to lose weight with the thought, but if I could, what might that look like? What if I totally could lose weight and the only thing that's been holding me back is the way I've been thinking about it? What then? Right? It's letting that imagination create a different story for you. When you notice your imagination creating stories about the future that create worry for you, you can ask your imagination to create a story about how the future works out perfectly. Even if it's not the way you would have chosen it to be as your first choice.

I've coached many clients on their teens and young adult children who are struggling in various ways and they are convinced that their children are on the wrong path, and that ultimately they know how to live their kid's lives better than their kids do. Who's ever done that before? Right? If those kids were just do what we think they should do, then their lives will work out so great. And we do this with other people too, right? So like pretty much everyone in our lives, including our patients. So I suggested to these clients to imagine their child at age 30, amazingly happy with a wonderful life and \$1 million in the bank. And if that were the future for their child, how would they act toward them now? Like what were their thoughts be about that child now. Once they get their imaginations creating something they actually want, creating a different story, it becomes so much clear how what they're doing now is not going to create the life they want for themselves or their child.

Because none of us want to be the controlling mother who's trying to get them to do something different. We just think that they're misguided because of this imaginative story that we've created.

I recently heard an interview with a teenager who was talking about how he used to have some social anxiety and some social awkwardness, and he'd struggle a bit with his social interactions. And then his imagination of course, would tell him all kinds of negative stories about what those other kids were thinking about him. And all of us have been teenagers and I think all of us can relate with that kind of scenario. And now he had no idea what they were actually thinking about him. If they were even thinking about him at all. Which the way is also the case for us and anybody that we think is thinking about us negatively.

But regardless, he decided to change the way he thought about it. He decided to imagine that when he walked into school and other kids saw him, those other kids were thinking, oh, there is so and so. I love him. And then he thought, well, that's awesome, because I love me too. And it's such a great example of where taking advantage of your imagination can change everything. It's so useful. We have no idea what those other kids are thinking. It's just as likely that they're thinking something negative as they're thinking something positive. So left unmanaged, your imagination will tell you that they all hate you and you're awful. But when you manage your imagination, it can tell you exactly what you need to hear to create the life you want, right? Sometimes we think, well, this is just delusional. It's just made up. Well, so is all the negative stuff.

So if it's all delusional made up, why not, on purpose, intentionally and deliberately choose the story that creates what you want in your life. I used to create all kinds of stories in my head about various family relationships, and I won't go into detail here about those. But my imagination became very, very skilled at getting me incredibly worked up about things that happened. And the same happened when I was in practice as a pediatrician. It didn't take long, and I was so convinced that the negative story my imagination created was true, and I just felt so furious. Now, I can see why I was so miserable. So often back when I was in practice, I thought all these people needed to change. No, my brain was creating the vast majority of what was actually going on. It wasn't even happening. So you might not recognize that it's your imagination just making things up at first. You might be believing those imaginative stories so much that you really do think they're facts.

So at first, just pay attention to what you worry about. Notice your thoughts about yourself and others that are judgmental of them or of yourself. Notice when you're comparing yourself to others and when you're confident you know what other people are thinking about you. Then spend some time diving into that. What is the story that your imagination created? And PS, we never really know what other people are thinking about us. Even if they tell us what they're thinking, they might be lying. So just keep that in mind. So figure out what the current story is, first. It's really tempting to want to leap right away to a more positive way of thinking about it or like, Ooh, girls, I see it, I'm feeling awful, like I just want to think something more positive. But, that will not have a long lasting impact for you.

You first need to understand what the stories are that are creating the negative and painful emotions that you're currently experiencing. Then from there you can ask your imagination to come up with alternative stories that serve you better. So, don't be in a rush. Very important.

Have a wonderful week and I will talk to you next time. All right, take care. Enjoy your summer. Bye, bye.