



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Hey, my friend. How are you? Welcome back to the podcast, so excited to have you here today as always. Hope your summer is going well, things are ... party's starting to wind down, kind of crazy. But this is how it goes, right? Summer's flying. Hope you've had a good time, maybe done a little travel with your family or just had some fun, enjoyed the nice weather. Maybe you've gotten out into nature, just all those amazing things that come with summertime, just love it, right?

So, I just before I started recording this checked on the website that tells me statistics about this podcast. I don't usually go on there very often at all because I think a lot of people get worked up about statistics, but statistics don't always really mean much at all, right? Much more interested in focusing on how to create the best content for you, my listener, than wondering how many people are listening. But you know what I did see? It caught my eye that I thought was so interesting is that this podcast has been downloaded in 167 countries. Isn't that crazy? You are the first person I'm telling. I literally haven't told anybody else. I just think that's so fascinating.

I was flipping through all the different countries, and there's places like Mauritius and all these ... Myanmar and all these places that people have downloaded this podcast. And I think that's so amazing. So, if you are not in the US or Canada and you're listening, a big hearty hello and welcome, and I'm so happy to have you here. That's so fun and so cool, right? I love it.

Okay, so many, many, many people tell me that they want to lose weight, and they just don't know how to get motivated. They just think it's just something that happens to them, "I just can't get motivated, but I do want to lose weight." And so, on this podcast today, I want to offer to you a different way of motivating yourself. I've talked about motivation on this podcast on a couple of other episodes. And there's lots of ways of doing this. But I think for some of you, you've just found that that's just not enough. Like, it's not working, you're not doing what you know you should be doing or you want to be doing. And you maybe are finding yourself maybe sticking to your plan or doing what you should be doing for a day or sometimes just the morning. And then all of a sudden, before you know it, you've lost that motivation and you're back to your old ways, and you just don't know how to get yourself out of that spin.

And so, again, I have just this suggestion for you, something for you to try that I think will actually be really, really useful for some of you. For some of you, you might be like, "No, I'm good. I don't really need that."

But be careful if that is your thought about this. If your thought as you listen is, "Oh, I don't need to do that," probably if you're thinking, "I don't need to do that," then it probably means that you do need to do it, okay? So, just catch yourself in that kind of thinking, "Oh, this doesn't apply to me," or, "This isn't something that would be that useful for me." It probably will be. In fact, what I would suggest is that you just do it regardless and see what comes up for you because it might be way more impactful than you could ever imagine, just by looking at it.

It's kind of like one thing that I learned by working with a personal stylist at Nordstrom, which by the way, if you have Nordstrom, really working with a stylist is so great. It doesn't cost anything and it really cuts down on time for you. And they just pull out great stuff for you that works and it's amazing. But anyway, one thing I really learned from the stylist that I worked with for a long time is that you cannot tell by looking at a piece of clothing hanging on a hanger whether it will look good on you or not.

I used to be the kind of person who was like, "Oh, that won't be good," or, "Oh, this or that." And I just learned from her, you know what? You just can't tell. So, you just need to put it on. And I think one of the reasons why I never really wanted to try it on or I thought, "Oh, that won't be good," is because I wanted to spare myself the negative emotions that I would feel when I put on clothes that didn't fit me well. And once I learned to shift that to being like, "It's not me that's the problem, it's just the clothes don't fit me well or it's not a flattering cut for me," then I was so much more open to just trying things because you just never know.

So, the Nordstrom anniversary sale was recently and I did the same thing. There were a couple of outfits that I thought, "There's no way," or, "That probably won't be good." Put it on. I was like, "Oh my gosh. That is actually cute. I can't believe it," right? So, that's what I want you to channel here, just going, "I can't tell on the hanger if this tool is going to really help me or not, so I should probably just try it on and do it and see what the result is from there."

Okay, so negative emotions are much more impactful than positive ones. And I have lots of examples of how this is the case. For instance, many years ago, probably maybe 11, 12 years ago, I went out with friends to one of those Brazilian steakhouses, you know where they walk around with big swords of meat and they cut it off on your plate as you go along, and you ask for this kind of meat and that kind of meat. And it was a wonderful meal, it was super delicious. We had an absolute amazing time. And I was driving home with my husband and I started feeling worse and worse and worse on the drive home. And I was super sick that night, just very much needed to empty my stomach. It was really, really uncomfortable.

And I remember calling the restaurant in the morning and saying, "Hey, I think there ... I'm just letting you know, I got really sick from eating your food." And it was so interesting their response. Instead of being like, "Oh my gosh, thank you for letting us know, we'll look into that," they just abdicated responsibility. They were like, "Oh, you probably just had an allergic reaction. Sometimes we use some ingredients some people aren't used to." And I was like, "I don't know. I'm not allergic to anything. I'm pretty sure it wasn't that. It didn't seem like an allergy. And I am a physician, just letting you know." And they're like, "No, no, no."

But here's the thing, because I had that one bad experience, I've literally never eaten at a Brazilian steakhouse ever again. And I have no desire to. I have seen them, people talk about how amazing they are. I'm sure they're great. But I'm really done. I just don't need to eat that anymore because that one bad experience was so deterrent for me. A similar thing happened for me with Brussels sprouts. I know so many people love them and they always say, "No, you just haven't had them in a way that tastes good." I've heard that so many times. I'm like, "Listen, I've really tried."

First of all, I did not like them growing up. I always was forced to eat them. I did not like them. Then, as an adult I thought, "Okay, well, these are making a comeback, everybody thinks they're amazing. I'm going to really try." And so, it was one ... I think it was around Thanksgiving or something, I made some Brussels sprouts with pancetta. I followed this amazing recipe. I'm like, "Certainly I'm going to like them." And they were okay, certainly nothing that I needed to have again and again, but I did eat them. And then something similar happened. I got a terrible, terrible stomach flu. And I don't think it was because the food was bad because everybody else ate it and they were fine. I think I just picked up a virus or something like that. But I got super, super sick and actually ended up in the hospital needing fluids because I passed out, I got so dehydrated. Like, it was a whole thing.

So, after that, I was done with Brussels sprouts, like just done. Done and done. They are a no, right? Lots of little bad experiences, then one very bad experience, and that really, really made me not want to eat them at all. You may remember me talking a while back about The Gottman Institute and how they study marriages. These are psychologists who study marriages, positive healthy ones and ones that end up either resulting in staying together and being miserable or divorcing. And just by observing people in marriages they've come up with what they call the magic ratio for marriages.

What they found is that for every negative interaction that a couple has during a conflict, those who were in a stable and happy marriage have five or more positive interactions. So, for every one negative one, you need to have five plus positive ones in order for the relationship to be stable and happy. Right? So, it takes a lot to counteract that one negative interaction, right? It's not like it's a 50-50 thing.

It's the same thing with friends or colleagues. I don't know if you've ever gotten off on the wrong foot with someone. That happened to me. This was years ago. I had a friend, I really liked her. And then I met her husband and just kind of got off on the wrong foot with him. And I just did not really like him for a long, long time. It took many, many positive interactions with him for me to start changing my opinion about someone, right? Or think if there's someone that you like, you're like, "Yeah, that's good." Then they do one thing wrong and you're like, "I don't know, I might need to write them out of my life," you know? Those negative experiences are so strong.

So, how can we use this to our advantage? Basically, how can we use this to get ourselves motivated to get off of our butts and start losing weight and to keep going with it, right? For some of you, you're able to start losing weight just fine, it's the keeping going that's the problem, right?

So, as you can tell, after eating that bad food, I'm very motivated, even many years later to not eat at that restaurant anymore or to not eat Brussels sprouts. I don't care how good people say they are, I just don't eat them. I don't like them. I don't want to eat them. I don't want to repeat that experience.

Someone who is interested in having that stable and happy marriage is motivated to minimize their negative interactions and maximize their positive interactions once they understand that ratio. Maybe when you interact with a colleague in that negative way, you find that it really takes lots and lots of positive interactions in order for you to change your opinion about them so that you feel like you can trust them, so you feel like you can let down your guard and be yourself around them.

So, where we get stuck is in thinking about all of the positive things that come from eating and drinking all the things that don't serve our bodies, and not focusing on those negative things that can be so impactful. So, some of the things that we think are positive, right? We're like, "I get to have the drink and I get to eat the food," positive things are number one, relief from a negative emotion always. Sometimes it's a relief from an urge to binge. We think it's fun to eat and drink, right? It's a great way to unwind. It's how you manage your stress. It's how you connect with friends and loved ones. It's how you celebrate. Like, all these things that we think are positives of consuming the food and the alcohol now, right? It's the positive we feel now. We're not really connected to the negative net consequence. We just think, "Right now, it really is positive and it helps me."

So, when you think about losing weight and changing your relationship with the foods that don't serve your body, of course you're not going to be motivated, right? You're not going to be motivated by giving up all the positive things, right? If you're looking at them like they are things that really do help you, even if you are connected to the idea that, "Yeah, it doesn't really help me in the long term," if you are mostly having mostly positive experiences with it, then you're not going to be motivated to give it up, even though you know in the long term that it would really serve you.

So, what can work really well here is connected on a very deep level to all of the negative and undesirable things that can happen if you keep doing what you're currently doing. So, here's the thing, this is an exercise that is intended to feel terrible, okay? And that's why I told you in the beginning if you feel like you don't need to do it, you probably do, right? This is how it works, you are going to want to avoid doing it because of how bad it feels, but I really strongly suggest that you do it anyway, especially if you think, "Well, I don't want to feel terrible," then that just really goes to show that you have work to do in learning to feel all of your emotions and allowing yourself to be with yourself when you're feeling terrible. When we want to run away from feeling terrible, it's because we want to resist it. We don't know how to allow those emotions. So, all the more reason to do this.

So, the way to start doing this if you're going to do it the most effective way is to truly set aside some time, like giving yourself an hour or two to do this work. And I want to really encourage you to actually do this.

I actually just read about a woman who recently was saying that she, for her birthday, gave herself the gift of a day to go through all the exercises that were suggested in a podcast. And I think that that is so amazing, right? She's had incredible results because she's actually done the work.

And so, for you, I would suggest the same thing. Find a weekend afternoon where you've got a little space. Maybe the kids are napping or they're off doing something else or you find a sitter, or you send them off on a play date, or whatever it is. You find that time, carve it out, put it on the schedule. And that is your date with yourself to do this work.

So, where you start is by thinking about what will happen if you don't change anything right now, if you keep doing all the things that you're doing. So, you keep your current habits, the way you eat, the way you drink, the way you don't exercise, the way you keep being crabby and impatient, all of it, right? All of your current habits. What will your life look like in 10 years, in 20 years, in 30 years, in 40 years, in 50 years? Depending on your age. And so, it's really important that you are not optimistic here, okay?

So, really allow yourself to think of the worst case scenario. So, you keep gaining weight and the weight just keeps packing on, packing on, and packing on. You end up drinking more and more. And what started out as a glass a night habit turned into more and more and more, and it's beginning to affect your ability to do your work appropriately. Your relationships are suffering. Your health starts to go. You develop type two diabetes and you find that it's really, really hard to manage your blood sugars, and you're on multiple medications that are still not controlling it.

Now, stay with me, okay? Go to that bad place. Don't try to talk yourself out of it or convince yourself that this won't happen. Don't start telling yourself, "We don't really have diabetes in the family. I probably won't get it." Just go to the place where you have it, okay? So, your diabetes gets so bad that you have a heart attack and you become basically a cardiac cripple. You have to get toe after toe amputated. Next, it's your lower leg, and you have to wear a prosthesis. You can't work anymore because you feel so awful from the dialysis that you get multiple times every week, and you're on the kidney transplant list. And there's no family member who's willing or able to give you a kidney.

Your vision is going and you aren't able to drive anymore. Your joints are so painful that you can't walk or move around very easily anymore at all. You miss out on multiple family trips and events because of your lack of mobility. You have to use a walker inside your home and a scooter when you go places because your mobility is so limited. You can't travel. You find your brain is slowing and you just can't think the way you used to. Your main activities are eating, drinking, and watching TV. You don't have friends that you have stimulating or fun conversations with anymore. You have chronic pain in your joints and neuropathic pain from the diabetes, and medications don't help and you live in agony every day.

Okay, keep going. Whatever you're envisioning, make it worse. Make it as bad as you can possibly imagine. Your relationships have fallen apart because you never learned to manage your mind. Your marriage has ended because you kept nagging and attacking and threatening, or maybe your spouse couldn't stand the emotional withdrawal anymore and the lack of intimate connection.

Your kids are off living their lives and rarely come to visit. And when they do, you can tell that they're so frustrated with you. They wonder why you didn't take better care of yourself. You are a physician after all. They distance themselves from you because being around you is such a downer for them and such a reminder of what they don't want for their lives.

So, keep going. Make it the worst possible scenario. Let yourself feel the emotions that you'll feel if all of this were to come true, if this all happens. What do you feel? Do you feel disappointed? Sad? Angry? Frustrated? Hopeless? Helpless? Disconnected? Abandoned? Allow yourself to feel these emotions. This is very important. Feel the pain. Let yourself cry if that's what comes up for you and if that feels natural. Let yourself be just torn up inside. And stay in this place while envisioning the agony of your life if you don't make any changes to the way you eat, drink, and think about your life.

Think about The Ghost Of Christmas Future from A Christmas Carol. You may recall Ebenezer Scrooge, right? He has three ghosts that visit him: The Ghost Of Christmas Past, The Ghost Of Christmas Present, and The Ghost Of Christmas Future. And The Ghost Of Christmas Future shows Scrooge what his life will look like if he doesn't make any changes. And it's so, so, so painful for him that he wakes up and completely changes his life around. And you are essentially replicating that experience for yourself. You are going to that future and identifying that worst case scenario so you can decide what you want to do today moving forward.

And once you've stayed there until you've wanted to stop because it was so painful, and then stayed there some more, right? So, really stay with that pain. Then start brainstorming what you need to do now to make sure that this future is not what you continue to create moving forward. So, ask yourself, "What needs to change today?" What will make sure that you never end up on the path that leads to this awful future? How can you invest in yourself now to make sure that you create the future you want? What are you doing now that needs to stop? What do you need to do differently? And how will you do that? Is the food and alcohol today worth creating that future that you imagined? If not, what will you do to change what you consume today? How can you stay connected to not wanting this today, tomorrow, and in the long term?

Now, imagine yourself free of all that pain, both physical and emotional pain. That's what's available to you as well. You really are at a fork in the road today. One path leads you to that horrible future that you envisioned, and the other leads you toward health, love, connection, fulfillment and satisfaction. The decisions you make today will determine which path you walk down. So, remember how painful your life will be if you do nothing. Staying connected to that terrible future can create incredible motivation to change your life.

Think about people who have a health scare and then change how they're living their lives, right? It's because of the negative consequences that felt really real. They felt the fear and the pain and the sadness of what was to come during that health scare. And once they found out that they were okay, they decided that they wanted nothing to do with that. They wanted to change whatever they could to make sure that that is not what their life ultimately ends up looking like. And you can do the very same thing by taking the time to do this exercise.

So, remember, again, I know you're not going to want to do it, but this is so, so, so powerful. I really, really want to encourage you to do it. So, when you have that time, you can put this podcast on again, and you can pause as I ask you these questions, and you can go through it yourself.

Have a wonderful week. Please do this work, and I'll talk to you next time. Take care. Bye, bye.