



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Hey, my friend. How are you? Welcome back to the podcast. Glad to have you here. Happy September. Kids are back in school. I'm actually recording this in August, and my kids are actually already back in school. Today was the second day of school. And it's going great. First, second and eighth grade, and they are loving life. Things are good. It's always so nice knowing that the transition is smooth, everything's okay, everything is good. My kids go to a Montessori school, so for my eighth grader, he's been in seventh grade obviously last year. So seventh and eighth grade are together in junior high. And then first through third are in what's called lower elementary. So my second grader, same teacher, kind of same kids, pretty much just a little bit of a shift. But my little one, my little girl, she started lower elementary. She's a big first grader now. And that's kind of a big deal. And she's kind of really excited about it, so we're very excited for her.

It's all good. She actually has real homework now. Which by the way, a friend of mine who is an educational researcher. Basically educational ... She has a lot of Master's degrees. We'll just put it that way. She was just telling me that all the research shows that homework doesn't help until high school. That it literally doesn't help. I'm like, "Why do we have to do this then?" it's the reading out loud, I'm telling you, right? When you have multiple kids who have to read out loud to you, it's how much time can you devote? How many 20 minute increments can you give them? Sometimes honestly, I'm just cooking dinner and I'm only half listening. I'm going to be totally honest with you. And then my ear just kind of will pick up that word that just wasn't pronounced properly, or something like that. And I honestly don't even know what they're talking about. But it's okay. I'm like, "Wait, what was that word? Let me look at it. Okay. Yup. That's how you say that one." It's kind of funny. Hey, I'm telling you what. BMIs work. I'm screwing it up right and left. And I'm okay with that. They are going to be fine regardless. I know that for sure.

Okay. So let's dive into today's topic. I want to talk to you today about self care. And this is a topic that a lot of people are confused about. And I think a lot of people are confused about it, but they also have a lot of strong opinions about it, even though they're kind of confused. Most of us don't really know or understand what it means. When this word first became kind of like a thing, self-care mostly meant pampering yourself, like taking a bath or a long hot shower, or getting a mani or pedi or a massage, or a facial, or a haircut. It's things like buying yourself flowers or getting a new outfit. Maybe taking a walk if it was nice outside, or something like that. Now all of these things are great. And they are a way for you to take care of yourself.

I don't want to take away your ability to use these to care for yourself. There's definitely a place for all of these activities in your life if you want to do them. But many of these things can feel a bit self-indulgent for many of us. It can seem like you're only taking your own needs into consideration. And ultimately we can feel like we're being selfish if we're taking part in self-care. So for example, if your kids are screaming and tearing the house up, and you're home alone with them, taking a long shower may not be in the best interest of everyone in the home right in that moment, right? It might be nice to get that break and clear your head, right? Sure. But it's not a great idea. And none of the things on the list that I gave you are going to be something that you can do when life is getting stressful and overwhelming, and you have a million and one responsibilities right in that moment.

So what you do to feel better and to comfort yourself is to eat something. You eat some chocolate, you eat some nuts, eat some of the kids' snacks, eat some of the food you're preparing for dinner. Maybe you crack open the bottle of wine and start on your first glass, right? You name it. For so many women physicians, every day feels like that. The million and one responsibilities you have at any given moment, and feeling like you're messing up on at least half of them, right? And then you use food to feel better in the moment. And what we do is we push off our wellbeing to the future, thinking that once things slow down, once this big project or deadline is done, once the baby gets older, once the kids are back in school, once the kids are out of that house, then we'll have time to do something nice for ourselves and actually take care of ourselves.

But not today. For today, the food or the wine is what's available to make us feel better. And what's always so funny to me is I'll look out on my calendar a couple of weeks out, and I'll be like, "Oh my gosh, see? It's going to be so much better. Look how clear everything is. There's all this white space. That's when I'm going to have time." Except when that week comes, it's totally filled up too just like every other week, right? So we constantly are pushing out that wellbeing, feeling like, "Oh, we'll finally have space to breathe when we get there." But that day never comes, right? Then if your job requires you to take call, you have your post-call time where you have to decide what you're going to do, right? So many of my clients will forgo sleep post-call in order to run errands or clean, or do something else that seems more productive than sleep. Even though they know that sleep is one of the best things they can do to support their bodies while they're losing weight.

And to support their brains in thinking thoughts that actually support them, right? And serve them. And if you have older children, you might be up half the night just worrying about them. Or maybe your spouse snores terribly, or has restless legs syndrome and your sleep is always fragmented and not exactly restful. So how do you take care of yourself when for the majority of your day, day-in and day-out, you're taking care of others or doing things to help make your family's life run more smoothly. When you're chronically sleep deprived and don't see an end to that anytime soon, how do you do this? What does self-care really mean? And are you even doing it? Do you have time for it? Or is it just a selfish indulgence for people who don't really understand what it's like to be a doctor? So I went to the dictionary and I looked up the definition of self-care. And here is what it said.

"Self-care is the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's own health." And then I had a secondary definition, "Also the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own wellbeing and happiness in particular during periods of stress." Sound like every day? For most women physicians, every single day is a period of stress to some degree. There's very few times in our lives where we aren't experiencing some sort of stress. So self-care is actively creating, managing and protecting your own wellbeing and happiness. Eating and drinking to feel better is absolutely not self-care. Okay? Eating a healthy meal that's fuel for your body is self-care, but eating to neutralize your emotions and feel better never is. If self-care is taking action to preserve and improve our own health, then emotional eating is the exact opposite of self-care. And here's the thing, we know this to be true deep down.

There's this little part of you deep down that hears me say that and knows the truth in it. Sure, the cookie or the glass of wine offer a little relief in the moment. But they only compound the stress and frustration in your life in the long run. Eating and drinking doesn't make you happier. And it does not improve your wellbeing. So therefore it is not self-care. So what creates your own wellbeing and happiness? Is it getting your nails done and your eyebrows waxed? I mean, that can help. But that's just temporary. How do we create meaningful long-term wellbeing and happiness? A lot of the time, what generates long-term wellbeing and happiness is not something that will make you feel better in the moment. Gratification in the moment does not lead to gratification later. So think about it. How often are you so glad you had those three glasses of wine at night four days after the fact, right?

Four days later you're not going, "That was so great. I'm so glad I did that, especially when I didn't plan it." How often are you so grateful to yourself later that you over ate that frozen yogurt you got with the family last weekend? Never, right? Back when I was overeating, I was only ever remorseful of the overeating I did in the past. And sure, I have lots of excuses for why I did it. But I certainly wasn't ever glad I did it. I wasn't ever thanking myself for doing it. If anything, I'd beat myself up in my mind wondering why I couldn't be more disciplined, why couldn't get control over my eating. And then I would just vow to never do it again, which as you can imagine, lasted anywhere from a few hours to a couple of days at best. We have to find a different way to live our lives, one that actually supports us so that we create the body and life we want moving forward.

You can't just wait for this to happen to you. Okay? Remember that the thoughts and feelings that you thought in the past drove the actions that resulted in your current overweight body. In the past you were not taking your future self, who is you today, into consideration. So you created who you are today. If you keep thinking and feeling the way you always have and you keep taking the same actions, you will continue to create the result of an overweight body and continued crazy brain chatter around food in the future as well. This will not just go away on its own. And it makes sense that all the massages in the world don't seem to solve your weight and food issues, right? A bubble bath is not going to fix this. It might feel good, but it's not going to create the wellbeing and happiness that true self-care does.

So wellbeing is created by two things, making choices today that support your future self, and managing your mind. So let's break these down. Somewhere along the line, many of us were raised with the idea that spending any time on yourself as indulgent and selfish, and is taking time away from the truly quote unquote, "Important people in your life.

If you're a mother, then you should be spending as much time as possible with your children, particularly if you work outside of the home. And then any time, including time at work where you aren't with your family, even if the money you're earning supports or family, is self-indulgent. And you should feel guilty about that." What guilt means is that you're doing something wrong or bad. I know for myself, I was raised with two conflicting ideas. The first was that you should never rely on a man to support you.

You should always be able to support yourself and your family. And the second was that the best way to raise children was to stay home with them. So if I take on both of these beliefs, then I'm always doing something wrong. I've set my life up so that I can't ever win, simply because I took someone else's thoughts and decided to believe them. If I was at work, then I wasn't doing a good job as a mom. If I stayed home as a mom, then I was too reliant on a man. Either way, for sure I was doing it wrong. Right? I know that so many of my listeners were raised with similar conflicting beliefs that simply result in us feeling guilt. So you probably have them too. That guilt surfaces from my clients when they think that doing the work to lose weight and manage their minds is self indulgent and selfish.

They think they should be spending more time with their families, because they're already away at work so much. But what I help them to understand is that guilt is actually an indulgent emotion. You don't get a gold star from the universe because you experienced guilt. Okay? Many of us believe that if we aren't feeling guilty for being away from our families when we're at work, then we aren't a good person or a good mom. But guilt is an indulgent emotion, because it never creates anything useful. What I see in my clients' lives is that they feel guilty about not taking more time with their families. So they don't do the coaching work required to get the results they want. But in that supposed extra time that they now have available because they aren't doing the coaching work, they aren't actually more engaged with their families.

They might be in the physical presence of the family more, but they're on their phone or they're mentally and emotionally checked out. They're not actually showing up as a person they want to be. And rather than curiously looking inward to see why they aren't doing the coaching work that they know can help them be that person they want to be, they blame the program or their lives. "I just don't have enough time. I'm too overwhelmed. Too much is expected of me. Now's not a good time. Once the kids are back in school," right? On and on, and on. We just keep pushing it off to the future, believing that our lives will be different and better than ,even if we make zero changes now. And unfortunately it just doesn't work that way. So carving out time to clean up your brain is one of the very best uses of your time.

We don't walk around going, "Listen, I am just too busy to brush my teeth. I mean, I have stuff to do. I have a family to take care of and patients who need me." No, we simply brush our teeth even if it means being away from our family for a few minutes. Doing your thought work is the same thing. When you perform some mind hygiene in the form of a thought download and some models, or watching a teaching video in my program and then doing the accompanying worksheet to apply it to your life, you are taking the steps required to move yourself toward that future self that you want to be.

If you want to be a better mom, what steps are you taking today to make sure that happens? If you beat yourself up for yelling at your kids and vowed to do better tomorrow, you'll get the same result that you get when you overeat and beat yourself up, and vow to do better.

The result is the same. It's that nothing changes. Your wellbeing and happiness do not increase. The way to protect and improve your wellbeing and happiness is by taking steps every day that bring you that much closer to who you want to be. This is the only way you can make this work. If you feel guilty taking time away to do your thought work, the answer should not be to not do your thought work. Okay? The answer is to do your thought work on why you feel guilty when you do it. Do you see the difference? Feeling guilty is not a badge of honor. Nobody lays on their death bed and says, "I just wish I had felt more guilty." Like, "I'm such a good person because I felt so guilty." This is really important to sit with, because some of you are going to have some internal resistance to this based on programming from the past.

When you choose to participate in a coaching program or anything that offers you some self-improvement to get the results you want, you will have to allocate some of your 24 hours in every day to that work. That is a neutral fact. You then get to decide how you want to think about it. Rather than, "This is going to be hard. I'm going to have to ignore my kids and my spouse. I know I should feel good about doing things that support me, but I just don't." Instead take ownership of your own life. You get to decide whether it's hard or not. You get to decide if taking 15 minutes to yourself as ignoring those you love, or if it's the best 15 minutes you take every day because of who you are with those you love once you've done that work, right? You decide what you feel good and bad about.

What's truly selfish is not being willing to work on yourself. Saying that the current status quo, which isn't who you want to be is all that's possible for you. If you really want to give to those you love, become the person that you want to be when you're in their presence. Okay? The way you accomplish this is by working on your mind and making decisions every day with your future self in mind. You may have noticed that earlier this month, JAMA, Journal Of The American Medical Association published an article showing the benefits of coaching. It was titled Effect Of A Professional Coaching Intervention On The Wellbeing And Distress Of Physicians. And it was a randomized clinical trial performed on 88 physicians at various Mayo Clinic sites. And the findings were that those who received professional coaching had a significant reduction in emotional exhaustion and overall symptoms of burnout, as well as improvements in overall quality of life and resilience.

I already knew that coaching works. And so many of you already know this as well. But now we even have data to show it for those of you who are very, very data-driven. I know some of you really are. Now, I know many of you have been listening to this podcast for a while and have lost tons of weight on your own. And I am so excited for you. But I do want to offer to you that participating in a coaching program will up-level your life like never before. I can help you lose the rest of the weight, or you can do that on your own. Ultimately, what's important is that you learn how to work on your mind. I recently met some female physicians who have been listening to the podcast, and thought they were doing thought downloads and models on their own correctly. And they kind of quickly found out that they had a lot of learning and improving they could do to make their coaching work so much more impactful for themselves.

It's like this is what I think of as you think of an onion, and the first layer is learning the model. And you're like, "Oh my gosh. It's amazing. Okay, that's it, right?" No, there's so many more layers underneath that.

All right, have a great one. I'll talk to you very soon. Take care. Bye-bye.