



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Hey my friend. What's up? How is it going? Welcome to the podcast. I hope you can't hear the dogs licking their chops right next to me. I am home alone today. It happens to be a Saturday and I do not work very many Saturdays. But this Saturday I am home alone for the whole day because my husband, a number of months ago, was at some sort of auction and placed a bid on getting some Wisconsin Badger Football tickets.

Even though we are hardcore really committed University of Michigan fans, we thought it would be fun to take the kids and go to a Michigan game because it's only about an hour and a half drive away. We thought it'd be really fun. So he went ahead and got those tickets and he won. That was super fun. Thought that's great. They are playing like Central Michigan or something, not anything super exciting. That was great. We were planning on that. Then the family that donated the tickets reached out to my husband and they had to reschedule things for some reason. Then my husband said, "Well, are you happening to go to the Michigan game?" They said, "No, actually we can't go that weekend. Do you want those tickets instead?" And he's like, "Yes." So we were so excited. I mean, we were dancing the happy dance and we were like, "Yes, we get to go to Michigan game."

There was only four tickets and there's five of us in our family. Of course we were thinking that my six-year-old daughter could just stay home; we'd find someone that she could hang out with for the day and my two sons and my husband and I would go to this game. I do have to say that I really, really do love going to college football games. I had season tickets every year when I was in medical school at University of Michigan. It was so fun. I just wouldn't miss it. We just had the best time. Loved it, loved it. Tom Brady was the quarterback back then and he was not the Tom Brady that he is now. But it was still super, super fun and we just have a lot of great nostalgic memories about those football games.

Of course we thought that my daughter would stay home. Also, we talk about it. We tell the boys. They're so excited and then my daughter was like, "Wait, but no. I want to go." And my husband's like, "Well, no." Saying nice things like, "Well, maybe another time." And she is adamant, "No. I want to go. I want to go." And then I started really thinking, well, you know what? I've been to lots and lots of Michigan games and she's never even been to one. I mean, I probably could just let her go in my place and that would be okay.

But of course we had the whole talking to with her. We're like, "Listen, you're not going to be walking around. You're going to be sitting there and you're going to be watching that game. Okay? And it's going to be loud, people are going to be yelling. You just have to have a good time. There's no complaining. You might have to walk a lot." Making sure that she is really prepped, right? Because, you know how children are? They have this idea in their heads, as do we as adults of course, have this idea in our heads of how something we've never experienced before is going to be, and then sometimes they get there and they're like, "Wait a minute, what is going on? This is not what I thought it was going to be."

But she was adamant she wanted to go. I let her sleep on it. The next day I asked her again. She definitely wanted to go. So I said, "Okay. All right, you go." Then we had the opportunity to possibly have one more ticket for me with some different friends and then that fell through. They wanted to go, and of course they should go, it's their tickets. So, that means that I have a whole Saturday to myself, just me and the dogs, and I got some work done this morning and I'm recording this podcast and I'm just loving life. I just decided I could just rest or I could really bang out a lot of work because next week I am going to have a little bit of a short week because I'm going to be flying to Jackson, Wyoming, Jackson Hole, Wyoming for the first time ever. I've never been there before.

I'm to go on a writing retreat. Have I shared with you that I've made the commitment to write a book? It's a long time in coming and I'm gradually changing my thoughts and beliefs about writing a book. I really, really had this belief that, why would I ever want to do that? But now I really do see why it would be an excellent thing for me to do for so many reasons. I actually do kind of want to do it even though I know it's going to be very painful. I've just kind of decided that I'm just going to be, like being in labor, and nobody signs up for labor, right?

You're like, "No, I will do labor because there's a baby on the other end." Or like nobody is like, I can't wait to do a home renovation. I can't wait for my home to be totally torn up and super dusty and loud and all sorts of random people walking through all day long for months on end. No, you sign up for the home renovation because you want the result on the end of the renovated home. And so, I'm signing up for the writing part of the process of writing a book so that I have a book on the other end. And that book is going to help so many people. And so, I'm really working on staying very connected to that and I'm going to do that.

I'm going to kick it off with a writer's retreat in Wyoming, which sounds amazing. But that means that I need to get myself a little bit ahead this week. And so, this is perfect in getting it done. I am hanging out. I also did sneaker workout end. So that's good. Just going to check some things off my list and it's going to be awesome. They're going to come back and I can't wait to hear all about it. I'm so excited for them and honestly I don't feel bad for myself at all for missing the game because I know that they're going to have a great time. It's a great experience for them.

I don't know. Sometimes as a mother I'm like, reminds me of my mom. I was like, "No, no, you eat my food. I can just go without." Like we were just teaser. But I really am like, "Listen, I have gone to many games. You guys go. You get to have this experience. It's so, so, so fun." So I'm excited for them that they get to do it.

Okay. In this episode, I want to talk to you about what your most important job is in your life. I just recently was coaching a number of my clients, and these are my master's clients and it was interesting there was kind of a theme to the call and there tends to often be a theme to calls, like everyone's kind of struggling with the same thing at the same time or they're reaching out for help at the same time. I kind of feel like it was that way in practice too. Like I remember, I think there was one day where I did eight 15-month-old checkups in one day. And the reason why this is important, all you pediatricians are going to be like, "Oh God, hell no."

The reason why, if you're not a pediatrician, that this is important is because at 15 months is when children just hate you. They don't want to be touched. They don't want to be messed with. They don't want to leave their mother's lap. They are just mad about everything. They don't want to be there. They're over it 100%. And so, it's just generally not that fun of a visit for the doctor because there's just a lot of screaming and crying. They're just upset and then you have to hold them down to examine them. It's kind of like a whole thing. Sometimes I'd be like, "Wow, there's such a theme." But then I'd remember, "Oh yeah, we had a baby boom 15 months ago and they're all just coming in on the same day year."

But anyway, there was a theme on this coaching call. The theme was what was most important in someone's life? One of the clients even said, "Well, being a mom is my most important job in this world." She has said that when she first became pregnant, she was like, "I really don't have a lot of experience with babies. I'm not really a baby person. I haven't really spent a lot of time around children. I'm just going to figure this out." And then once she had her child and then had another, she started telling herself that this was her most important job in the world.

It sounds like a really good belief, like a really good thought, right? You're super dedicated to your children. It's your most important job. But what she was finding was that by believing that being a mother was her most important job, she was actually not showing up as the mother she wanted to be. And so, years into this now, she's in this cycle of believing this is the most important thing that I'm doing. And then she interprets how she is mothering as though she's failing. And so, then she uses that as a way to beat herself up, to be really angry with herself, to berate herself, to just hate on herself.

What she then found is that it's so interesting how, when she feels that way about herself, she ends up directing it toward others too. We often identify this because of the anger or rage that we have for other people. And we're like, why am I just so angry all the time? And then when we really start digging in, we realize, "Oh, actually that anger is toward myself and it's so uncomfortable that in order to release it, I direct it toward other people."

This was such a great example of asking her, when you think the thought, being a mother is the most important job that I have, how do you feel? She feels totally stressed out. Totally pressured, panicky. She feels awful, right? This is how doing your thought work is so powerful; because so many people would not dare to argue with you if you said your most important job in the world is to be a mother, right? They're thinking, yes, that sounds so noble. It sounds amazing. And you start thinking, this is a good belief. This is a good thing. I should really be thinking this.

Now, I want to say that if your thought isn't about being a mother, then it very much can be about something else. Your most important job in this world is to be a partner to your spouse or your life partner, or your most important job is to be a dedicated daughter and to help your parents in the later parts of their lives, or your most important job is to be the best doctor that you can possibly be. That sounds so noble. It sounds amazing, right? But how does it make you feel?

And so, when I took my client through this, she feels panicky. What does she do? How does she act when she's feeling panicky about being a mother and how she's connecting with her children. She acts not like how she wants to act. She's totally strict with them, much stricter than she wants to be. She really tries to start controlling them and micromanaging their life. Trying to control everything so that they can get some sort of result that she can believe is good so that she can then think that she's doing a good job as a mother, which is very important to her because it's her most important job in this world.

Can you see how when you start thinking that that's your most important job, at least for this client, she actually does a worse job. I started to explain to her how I approach parenting, where I really have decided that I am a guide for my children, that my children's journey in life is 100% owned by them. This starts even when they're little, even when they're toddlers. This is their life. They make their own decisions, their own choices. I'm here as a guide to offer them support, to offer them the things that they need. The basic needs that they have, like food and shelter and education. And then what they do with that is really up to them.

When I approach it like that, I believe it's an important job that I do those things. But when I approach it like that, I'm not trying to control them. I actually show up as a more supportive mom. I'm actually much nicer to them and to me than I was when I used to think, I agreed with her, right? I used to think that being a mother was the most important job that I had. I would research different systems and different mommy bloggers and all the different things that they did and all these great activities that they would do and how they were building this strong family network. I should be doing all of that.

All it did was make me feel bad about myself. Or I finally get it together and maybe do one of these activities and then it was very depleting for me. I was glad I did it, but then it was just the next thing that I should be doing. What's the next thing that I should do to change the way our family interacts so that I can finally feel good about it?

This client was saying that one of her other thoughts is that she just really wants to be connected to her children and her oldest child is starting to disconnect some. We were talking about how that's a normal part of the developmental process of a child. They're incredibly dependent on you and connected to you in the beginning and then they go through a process over many, many years of disconnecting, of becoming their own whole human being who takes care of themselves and runs their own life. And so, it's a natural part of the process that children will disconnect gradually.

But when she has the belief, I just really want to be connected to my kids, then she's all up in her child's business and all in the details in, why isn't she sharing things with me? And creating all this anxiety and worry because of this belief that she's not doing a good job unless she's connecting with her child in the way that she thinks she should be.

And so, I was thinking then about, what is your most important job in this world, right? What is your most important job? It can be whatever you decide it to be. Here's the thing. Somebody might decide that their most important job is to be a mother and it makes them feel amazing. And their actions are that they show up exactly the way they want to be. And the result is that they are just in love with themselves as a mother; day in, day out, all the time and it's working great for them. If that is you, then please keep thinking that, that is working awesome for you.

But what I have found, taking care of patients and talking to a lot of moms as a pediatrician for over 10 years and then now coaching hundreds of women physicians, is that it generally doesn't tend to result in that. For most of us, it tends to make us feel worse about ourselves. And so, I would like to propose to you that your most important job in this world is: to love yourself, to learn how to manage your mind, to learn how to be an adult and model that to everyone in your life, not just your children, right?

And not modeling with like, see, I'm doing it right. You should take a lesson from me. Just modeling it as: this is someone who is doing adulting, who is feeling her emotions, who is not overing something, not overeating, over-drinking, over-shopping, over yelling at everybody, overworking, right? Who is really feeling her emotions, who knows how to manage her mind, who takes full responsibility for her emotions and doesn't blame others. That is your most important job to move towards that person.

And as you move toward that person is how you lose the weight, right? Because when you're willing to feel is when you don't need to overeat anymore. When you're willing to really tap into yourself and figure out what it is that your body really needs and your brain really needs, it's not extra food, like ever. It's important to recognize that, right? We're like, "No, no, no. I just need more energy." No, you really don't. You can create energy in other ways. Extra food is not the answer.

And so, your most important job is to get to know yourself, to love being in your own company, to want to be with yourself, and really having your own back. Like being your biggest advocate, supporting yourself in that way. Imagine if you could convey that to your children so that they grow up to become emotional adults. Will their life be better or worse than if they stay in emotional childhood where they blame other people for how they feel and the results of their lives, right?

When we work on controlling other people or trying to make it so that our kids have a certain opinion of us so we can feel good about ourselves, we're modeling to them how to be emotional children. They don't even know how to do that. They don't need help. What we want to be doing is modeling how to do adulting in the best possible way and that includes screwing things up all the time, apologizing for what you're messing up and moving on and working on doing better and better. That, gosh, can you imagine growing up with someone who is really working on that? That's how you really show children the best way to do this, right?

And this is the same thing. Will they take this information and actually run with it and change their lives and grow up in love as emotional adults? Maybe. Maybe not. We are not in control of that. Same as if you are helping your aging parents. Are they going to change? My guess is probably not. That's, I think, a strong hunch. They're probably not going to change. But what you can do is create your own experience of being with them, of helping them, of knowing that whatever they say and whatever they do is about them.

Same for your patients, right? When your most important job is to be an excellent physician. Well, who decides if you're an excellent physician? Then you're hanging all of your opinion of yourself on patient reviews and referrals and what people say to you. Instead, you can work on going, you know what? I know that I'm awesome regardless. Even if I just never worked another day in my life, I know that I'm awesome regardless. But I come to work and work as a doctor because I love it and I want to provide value to other people in this way that I can, this way that most people can't, right?

That's coming from a true giving heart. That feels good when you go to work and you're working as a doctor. then you don't need the M&Ms to make yourself feel better because even when people are mad at you, you know it's not about you. It's about them. It's about their fear. I want to encourage you to think about these thoughts that we have that we don't realize are thoughts. What I find is that we often realize, well, no, I know that's just a thought. Okay. Intellectually we get that. But deeper down we often really don't get it. We really, really think that the most important thing, our most important job is showing up in our life in a certain way.

I really want to encourage you to question that and to run those through models to see what the result is for you. You might be really, really shocked as to what result is created for you when you believe those thoughts. Once you recognize that this isn't really working out for you, you get to decide how you want to think instead. I personally think that my most important job is to evolve as a human being, to grow as a person and then to contribute in any way I can. And that contribution includes: how I show up in my job, how I show up as a mother, how I show up as a daughter, how I show up as a wife, how I show up as a friend, right? When I keep it all focused on what really is most important, then all the other things just take care of themselves.

Have a think about that. This is so, so, so important because we really think it's all about the food and I'm telling you it's not. It's about stuff like this. The food becomes so irrelevant to you when you've really done this work. And when food's irrelevant, guess what? Weight loss is super easy. Super, super easy. This is what I always say. If you really didn't want food that much and you weren't really very hungry, would it be hard to not overeat? No, right? It would be so easy. This mental work is exactly what you need to be working on to be able to bring yourself to that place where you're not looking to food and possibly alcohol to make you feel better.

All right. Have a wonderful, wonderful week and I will talk to you next week. Take care. Bye bye.