



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hello there my friend. Do I ever have a treat for you today? I am seriously so excited for you. This is such a great episode. Please listen all the way through. I know it's a longer one than we normally we have, but please listen all the way through. I decided to have some of my amazing physicians who have worked with me and lost weight with me come onto the podcast to talk about their experience in losing weight.

Now I do want to let you know that this was actually the idea of one of the group members. She actually asked if I could do more of these episodes, and I thought rather than picking and choosing people, I asked my clients who might be interested in coming on as a podcast guest to sort of like pitch me, to come on the podcast, to basically tell me why they thought that their story would be compelling to you, my listener, why somebody would want to listen to them, and what they'd like to talk about.

A handful of these most amazing women put their hand up. They raised their hand. They said, "Yeah, I want to do it, and this is what I want to talk about, and this is why people will care." And I'm telling you what, these are the best. They're so good. Now we all love to hear someone's story, right? We all love to hear how they struggled, how they overcame their struggle, what they're still working on now, how things have changed for them.

And that's exactly what you're going to hear today in my interview with Brenda Burns. She is an emergency room physician up in Canada. She is absolutely amazing. She has really dug in. But I don't even want to spoil it, because she tells you all about herself, so I'm just going to let her tell you. But I do want you to know that before she signed up for my program and worked with me in my coaching group, she actually was an avid podcast listener and she really got a lot out of this podcast.

I do just want to mention that yes, it's my program and I am guiding my clients, but I want you to listen to how Brenda describes how she showed up for herself, how she is the one who really decided that it was time to make a change in her life, and exactly how she did that, and how she continues to do that, because she really is just a remarkable example of what's possible, and I know that you're going to be able to learn so much from her. So please enjoy my interview with Brenda Burns.

Hi Brenda, thank you so much for coming on the podcast.

Brenda Burns: Hi Katrina. Thanks for having me.

Katrina Ubell: I am so excited. As we were just talking about, you're the first one to do this, so you're the brave first comer. I'm so excited for you.

Brenda Burns: I can't even believe I'm doing this.

Katrina Ubell: We're going to have a great time. It's going to be good. Brenda Burns: I'm so excited.

Katrina Ubell: Okay. I want to have you start off by telling us just a little bit about yourself, your background, where you live, what kind of physician you are, all that kind of stuff.

Brenda Burns: Sounds good. My name's Brenda, I am 40 years old. I just turned 40 this year. I actually live just outside Toronto, Canada, and I work just outside Toronto, Canada. I am a full-time emergency physician working all shifts at all times of the day, even on Christmas. I've been married for 14 years, to the same person.

Katrina Ubell: We shouldn't make assumptions. That's great.

Brenda Burns: Yeah. No, same person, same guy. I have three children, two boys, eight and seven, my daughter is five. We have a home, and we have a two-year-old dog, who adds a little bit of extra chaos to the life.

Katrina Ubell: Right, definitely.

Brenda Burns: My husband's a stay-at-home dad, which is incredible, and yeah.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, okay, cool. All right, good. What I would love for you to do now is to tell us a bit about kind of your past story with weight, like just your struggle from whenever it began up until about the point where you kind of decided, "Okay, that's it. I'm going to handle it this time."

Brenda Burns: My struggle with weight has been my entire life. Both my mother and my grandmother were overweight, so from a very young age, I thought I was just destined to be overweight. I remember at the age of seven, my mom telling me she has to shop at a big girl store to find clothes that'll fit me, and I don't really know what that mean. She wasn't being negative. She was just stating a fact. In grade four, I weighed over 100 pounds, and by the time I graduated from grade eight, I was 190 pounds at a five foot stature, so BMI morbidly obese right from the get-go.

Weight was always a struggle for me during high school, but I didn't really do any drastic measures. I was encouraged to watch what I eat. My parents always provided healthy food, but I found ways to sneak food. I worked in a fast food place as my part-time job. I had a stash of chocolate under my bed and another one in my closet. I'd trade my brother's Halloween candy. They got the gum, I got the chocolate. There's lots of memories like that.

Both my brothers are normal weight individuals, but right from the start, I knew that I shouldn't be eating it, yet I craved it in mass amounts. I was always aware that I was overweight through high school, and then when I went away for undergrad to university, I became much more aware because nobody wanted to date me, or that's what I blamed it on, was my weight. And that's when I started doing things like Slim Fast diets and Weight Watchers, and you name it, I tried it. But no pills, except for the Slim Fast shakes, and no injections.

So I was aware of it very much during university and undergrad, and I kind of yo-yo'd with about the same 20 pounds. I'd go from 190 down to 170 back up to 190... I don't know. Countless times. At least 20 times between grade nine and undergrad. Then when I finished undergrad and went to medical school, I moved to downtown Toronto and lived by myself, and then I really started eating for comfort and stress, to deal with what I perceived were challenges of medical school and loneliness.

I never was over 190 pounds, but just fluctuating with the same 20 pounds. I'd go on this exercise bender and exercise every day for three months and get down to 170 pounds, and then the food would sneak back up, because there's always an excuse not to exercise and not watch what you're eating.

Katrina Ubell: And when you're younger, you can exercise it off. Like a lot of people will find that they can moderate their overeating with exercise, but then as they get older, that doesn't work anymore.

Brenda Burns: Absolutely. And depending on which rotation you're on in medical school...

Katrina Ubell: Right. You don't have so much time to do that.

Brenda Burns: ... you're just shoving your face full whenever you can. Then when I finished medical school, I was probably about 175 pounds. I started residency, and probably stayed about the same weight for the same first year, and then I started dating my husband, and we went out for dinner a lot. A lot. We ate out a lot of restaurants, we had a great time. He had a job, so we had an income and it was fantastic, and I was back to 190 pounds before you knew it. But we were engaged within a year of dating, so over the next year I proceeded to lose weight, and with the motivation of a wedding, I weighed 160 pounds when I was married and felt amazing, just by diet and exercise. But not doing any deeper work than that.

Then I gained it all back within the next year after that, and then my brother got engaged, so then I lost weight again, and I was my lowest weight ever on his wedding day in 2017. I was 151 pounds. And two weeks after my brother got married, my husband was diagnosed with MS, so that was life-changing for both of us, and changed a lot of our dreams that we had preplanned. And a year later I was back to 190 pounds, because wine and junk food was my chosen way to deal with that. Then my weight just kind of fluctuated and then I had three babies, and we got up to 229 pounds with my middle guy, Joel. And believe it or not, I did not birth a 30 pound baby.

Katrina Ubell: Don't you hate when that doesn't happen?

Brenda Burns: I know.

Katrina Ubell: You're like, "Damn it."

Brenda Burns: I swear I had a 30 pounder in there, or triplets, but one seven pound baby came out, and the other 43 pounds were mine. That happened three times. Then in 2017, October, my middle guy went to kindergarten, and my daughter asked me to play outside with her. She wanted to play soccer, and I couldn't keep up with my two-year old, and it really hit home that the boys were getting older and I can't play soccer with them and I can't get up and down off the floor, and I'm saying no to all sorts of things that I want to do with them. I want to go swimming with them, I want to go to a waterpark and wear a swimsuit and not be covering my whole body the whole time. And I also want to be proud of my own body to teach them. So September 2017, I said, "That's it, I'm done," and I literally woke up one day and decided, "I'm done being fat. Today's the last day." So that was not a good day. I ate all the Reece Peanut Butter Cups I could find. All the stashes were eliminated, even the secret stash was eliminated. And I started my journey.

Katrina Ubell: Amazing. Let's just go back really briefly to growing up with an overweight mother, overweight grandmother. What were the messages that were, pardon the pun, fed to you about food and just what the purpose was of food, because you mentioned that there was always healthy food to eat, you were fed healthy food. But then there was obviously something else going on. So how do you think that that was initial solidified for you?

Brenda Burns: Yeah, so scarcity is something that was built into my childhood. My grandma and grandpa had six kids during the years when they struggled, so you never wasted food, you always ate your food. You conserved, you ate what was on your plate. You didn't argue about food, which was perfect in the 1950s. My mom has always been overweight. She struggled with her weight. So growing up, she always cooked very healthy meals. Meat, potato, vegetable sort of was our standard. We didn't have pizza or chicken nuggets back then because I'm so old.

Katrina Ubell: Right. They didn't even exist. Me too.

Brenda Burns: Right? I'm just so old, there was no chicken nugget option. So the message always was, though... was that my mom was always trying to lose weight. I specifically remember she would go to something called TOPS, and I forget what the acronym stands for, but it's like women meeting to lose weight, and the theme of the week was chewing gum whenever you're hungry. I remember we had like packs of trident gum all over the house, and I was like, "What's with the gum?" I was probably 10, and I was like, "What's with all this gum?" And my mom said, "I'm just supposed to chew it when I'm hungry," and I'm like, "That's weird. Why don't you just eat food when you're hungry?"

Katrina Ubell: So the message really was being larger is bad. Like this is a problem that needs to be solved.

Brenda Burns: It was more like being larger is more difficult. It wasn't like it was bad or shameful. It was never that. It was being larger is more difficult. It is harder.

So never, ever was I shamed for my weight, or my mom never talked shamefully about herself, but it was more like, "It's harder to buy clothes if you're larger-sized," or, "You can't get a box of hand me downs if you're larger-sized," or, "You don't really join the soccer team if you're larger-sized." It wasn't really said... there was no shame in it, or no

Katrina Ubell: And how did you interpret that then? Like, "Well, I want to be on the soccer team, so I should be thinner," or you're just like, "Great, then I won't play soccer?"

Brenda Burns: Yeah. No, I was like, "Well, I guess I'm not playing soccer." But it was kind of interesting, because I didn't really let it bother me. I thankfully did not develop an eating disorder or anything, or self-cutting or anything like that. But I remember shopping for my grade eight graduation dress, and no way could I go to the stores that the other girls were going to, right? I would just go with my mom and we'd go to the plus size store and I'd wear something that a 50-year-old lady would wear. Not what the other kids were wearing. So

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Did that bother you?

Brenda Burns: Yes and no. It bothered me, but I became self-protective and said, "Well, I don't want to wear that anyways, because it's too short or look at... It's too low-cut, or that's not my style anyways. I wouldn't wear that." But to me, growing up, I think being larger my whole life, it was just normal. Never was there a time when I could wear that, so it wasn't like, "Well, I used to be able to wear that, so I should stop eating so I could wear it again." To me, it was just normal. My mom, my grandma were both big, I'm big, this is how life's going to be.

Katrina Ubell: This is how we are, right.

Brenda Burns: Yeah. It was like, "Maybe I can be a little smaller, but I'm always going to be... Maybe I could get out of the plus store and wear a 16 or an 18." It was never imagined that I would be in a regular sized clothing.

Katrina Ubell: It sounds like it really kind of became more of a "problem" for you, something that you wanted to do something about once you went to college, when you went to university.

Brenda Burns: Yeah. Then it became more like, "Okay, I really want to be 160 pounds. That's a good number for me. It's still in the BMI overweight range, but I feel like I could wear size 16 clothes forever and that would be my destiny and this would be great."

Katrina Ubell: Right. Isn't it so funny how we think like, "It's that weight, that number on the scale or that size of clothes?" Like, "Then I'm going to be golden."

Brenda Burns: Yeah. Then as soon as I'm 160 pounds, I'm going to be golden. Actually, one thing that happened with the gaining and the losing of the weight was I felt like every time I lost weight for a while, bad things would happen, so

Katrina Ubell: Oh, interesting.

Brenda Burns: So then it really became challenging with you to go beyond that number, because I'm like, "Something really bad is going to happen, because every time I get down to this number, something..." I don't know. Which doesn't make any sense, and I've done all my thought work about that. But like every time I get to 160 pounds, something bad happens, so maybe the universe is saying, "You're not meant to be 160 pounds," and then I gained all the weight back, right?

Katrina Ubell: So interesting, right? It's like, "Well hey, the universe wants me to be this weight."

Brenda Burns: Yeah. The universe said, "You are destined for this." Okay.

Katrina Ubell: Yes. So interesting. That leads us into this time. So you woke up, you were like, "That's it. I'm done." You ate through all the stashes, so there were no more even super, extra super duper secret stashes.

Brenda Burns: Yeah. They were all gone.

Katrina Ubell: Then what happened from there?

Brenda Burns: Actually, something totally amazing happened, and I believe it happened for a reason. I was sending a message to a girlfriend on messenger, and all of a sudden this ad popped up for Facebook, which it randomly does, and I actually don't even go on Facebook, so I didn't understand how it worked. But it was a Busy Mom's Boot Camp, and it was at our local Crossfit Gym, only about 15 minutes away from my house, because I live out in the country, so nothing's actually that close. It was a six week program, and you worked out three times a week with a group of other moms, so nobody was a fitness expert. Everybody was a mom with a toddler or baby.

Three times a week workout, and you also got to meet with a nutrition person, and I thought, "Well, who needs that? I already know how to eat. I'm a doctor. Of course I know how to eat." And it cost more money than I had ever spent on myself. So I signed up for it. I just signed up for it. I didn't even ask my husband or tell my husband. I just signed up for it, and then 10 minutes later I was like, "Wow, that was really dumb. Like why would I do that?" I was like, "This is terrible." I'm like, "I work shifts. I have a daughter who's at home. How am I going to make this work?" Then 10 minutes after that I walked over to my calendar and I wrote down the times, and I switched my shifts and I switched my husband's appointments so he could watch my daughter, and I went to every single one of those classes and

Katrina Ubell: Just figured it out.

Brenda Burns: I figured it out, because I said yes in that moment, and I never looked back. I'm like... I spent the money, and thank god it was nonrefundable, because that crossed my mind for one second. Then I'm like, "No, you're going to go to the calendar, you're going to figure this out. Your sub-conscience is leading you to this, and you're doing being fat. So this is how it's going to work."

So I started Crossfit. That was a very hard day. October 2nd, 2017, I walked into a Crossfit gym wearing double XL pants and a T-shirt that were skintight, nervous and scared because I couldn't even do one pushup or one jumping jack for that matter, and I thought, "I'm going to walk in there. Everybody's going to be so fit." I had this big story I told myself about how awful it was going to be and how I would be the outcast.

And you know what? I was the biggest person there, and I didn't leave. I went back the next day. And after two weeks, a group of 20 women went down to four women, and I was one of the four, and I stayed every day. I made it work. Even post-midnights, I'd finish midnights and I would go to the Crossfit gym because I said I would.

Katrina Ubell: Wow.

Brenda Burns: And I did it. Then when I finished, I signed up for the next six weeks, because I said if I stop now, the weight's going to come back on. I'd only lost six pounds in six weeks, but I felt so much better knowing I was doing something. Then it occurred to me, "Hey, why don't I meet with the nutrition lady?" They kept me sending me emails and I was like, "No, no, no, I'm much too busy for this." I met with her, and she was telling me about calories and macros and all this stuff, and I'm like, "Yeah, yeah." She didn't know I was a doctor, so I just sat there politely, and then she said, "So I want you to eat high protein, high fat, low carb," and I was like, "What's that now?" I was just like blown away by the fact that I could eat cheese and bacon if I gave up bread, and I was like, "So there's..." And I used My Fitness Pal, but she gave a breakdown and I actually felt full on the food that she recommended.

I forgot to say, the very first day I walked into Crossfit, I made a promise to myself that I would only eat food that I liked. I would never again eat things I did not like. I do not like watermelon. I have not put watermelon in my mouth for two years, even though on Weight Watchers it was this big awesome thing. I'm like, "I don't like it. I'm not eating it." I only food I like because it fills the body.

Katrina Ubell: 100%.

Brenda Burns: And I still do that.

Katrina Ubell: Amazing. Yeah, I don't think I'm going to eat cottage cheese ever again.

Brenda Burns: I never have.

Katrina Ubell: I don't like it.

Brenda Burns: I don't eat fish. I have a whole list of things I don't like.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, and you just don't eat them.

Brenda Burns: I know, right?

Katrina Ubell: Right, yes. You started eating the way she recommended.

Brenda Burns: Yeah.

Katrina Ubell: And working out still.

Brenda Burns: And working out with My Fitness Pal. And actually I wrote this down. I joined in October, and by mid-March I had lost 30 pounds and I was feeling amazing, and I was so motivated. I'd even signed up for regular Crossfit. The bootcamp part was over. And you know what? I went every day, and I sucked at it, big time, and I still went back the next day, because people were very kind and could see that I was dedicated to doing that, and all that big story I told myself was all in my head and not actually factually-based in the least.

Katrina Ubell: As it always is, right?

Brenda Burns: As it always is. My brain is very sneaky. It's like I still can't do a pull-up two years later and no one cares.

Katrina Ubell: No one cares.

Brenda Burns: Nobody. That's okay. Then mid-march 2018, a girlfriend just randomly said, "Hey, have you ever heard of Katrina's podcast?" And I'm like, "No, what's a podcast?" Because I'm not the most technologically-inclined person. Then she loaded it onto my iPhone for me, the podcast app, and I of course didn't listen to it. Then about two weeks later, the same girlfriend sent me a message on Facebook, and it was about your podcast again, and it was a group on Facebook saying, "Katrina's podcast can really help with weight loss." And I was like, "Well, I'm doing so great. I might as well try listening to it. It's already on my phone." So I drove to work one day, and I listened to your first podcast, and I balled my eyes out.

Katrina Ubell: Did you really?

Brenda Burns: I really, really did, in the parking lot at work. I'm not even a crier, and I'm like, "How is she in my head, and how are all my secrets on this podcast? Because I am clearly this special flower that... the only person on earth that has ever been through my journey, and why is she talking about them on this podcast?" On the way home I listened to two more episodes, and like the next day I was up to episode 12 or something, and I was hooked immediately.

In your early episodes, you talked about way back in the day you did one-on-one coaching, and I was like, "How am I going to get me this?" Then I don't know. I let that go, because I was really listening to your podcast and thinking, "These are so helpful, this is so great." But of course I didn't do any of the things you said to do, I just thought about them in my head.

So I did it in my head. I had a bullet journal in this side, and I had a food journal in this side, and I said... Like for real. I was like, "I don't know why she needs to write this down. Like my head is so good that I can just keep it all in there." So I did that. Then I was listening one day in June, and I had caught up to you then, and you said you releasing a new group. And again, it happened. I signed up, and then I was like, "I don't know what I just did."

Katrina Ubell: That's good, though. I think it's good to have that little bit of, or a lot of that little panic kind of like... It kind of takes your breath away a little, right? You're like... "What do I do?"

Brenda Burns: Right in the moment I'm typing in my name and my credit card number, and I'm all calm, and like after I go to the bathroom and then I come back and I'm like, "Who did that? Who moved my fingers in such a way that I signed up for this?" But then I just thought to myself, "This is clearly your next step." I never, ever thought about backing out. And I actually counted down til the start date in September.

Katrina Ubell: Oh, fun.

Brenda Burns: It was incredibly motivating to know that I had September coming up, and it was actually perfect. I committed in June, I started in September. So I just kept listening to your podcast all summer, kept on track. Yeah, and it was great to have... That sort of timeline really worked for me.

Katrina Ubell: Did you like having that time... like you knew it was coming. You were kind of like preparing yourself with the podcast, because some people like to deposit, and then they know they have time, and then some people sign up right when it opens.

Brenda Burns: Yeah. I think everything happens... the way it happened for me worked out. But if it had started the next week, I would've been all in for that too.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, either way.

Brenda Burns: Yeah, either way, the point I was in my journey, starting weight loss on my own and then finding you and knowing instantly it was the right thing, I felt like I needed to do it. So if you had said it starts tomorrow, I would've been all in, and if you said it started in a year, I'd be like, "Okay, well I'll just wait then."

Katrina Ubell: Okay.

Brenda Burns: So there you go.

Katrina Ubell: Let's talk about a little bit... You were working out, you were working with the nutritionist, you were following all of that, you were getting great results. So what was it that you felt like was missing that you heard in the podcast, that made you go like, "Oh, and I need that too."

Brenda Burns: Right. I lost 30 pounds with the... It was only a two time meeting with the nutritionist, so there was no ongoing support. It was My Fitness Pal, which quickly I grew bored of, because that's boring and time-consuming. I had reached a plateau. I had lost 30 pounds relatively quickly, and then I kind of was at the same weight for a month, and doing... We went on vacation a couple of times and I'd come back and be 10 pounds heavier, and then I'd motivate myself to lose the 10 pounds. But it was very much what I'd already done before.

Countless times in my life I was able to rally and lose weight and I knew this time was different because I'd really committed to myself and had the motivation from within myself, so there was no external factor like, "Your wedding's coming up, your brother's wedding's coming up." There was no timeline. I'm done having babies. It wasn't like, "Get skinny, so you can get pregnant." There was none of that. It was just lose weight for yourself so you can live life the way you want to be.

But the going on vacation and coming home, that very much resonated with me. Like that's going to happen again when I grow bored of Crossfit or when there's too many Sangrias at a party. So it just felt like I was keeping it together, but I was corralling like wild dogs, and one would get out this way and one would get out that way, and I'm like, "How am I going to keep them all in this pen?" Then on your podcast, it very much was what I was missing, and the one that really hit home for me was scarcity. That was a very early one that really hit home, and then food waste was another huge one. Even in my head today, I'm like, "It's either wasted in the garbage or on your body. You pick." I'm like, "Well, I don't want it on my body, so I guess it's going in the garbage."

But I think the little quotes stayed with me and the thought work, and immediately, I knew that keeping it all in my head was not going to work, because the layers build on each other and you can't reflect... It's like, "What was that quote I came up with four days ago and it's gone?" That part's gone. Or, "What was that really awesome thing that that other person had in their coaching?" It's just not referenceable. So that's the part that was really missing, as well as... The thing that's benefited me the most is having people understand my thought process, and me being able to share that in what I call a comfort zone.

So me saying that I work shifts in emerge and I get home at 1:00 AM and I eat... Well, I don't anymore, but I used to eat whatever was left over from dinner because a baby died at work. Well, I don't have to explain that to this group and to you, right? I don't have to... People are like, "A baby died at work," and I'm like, "Yeah, I know, so I ate all this food." And they're like, "Yeah, you should totally eat all that food."

Katrina Ubell: Or they're still back on like, "Oh my god, the baby," and it's like, "Yes, but here we're talking about me."

Brenda Burns: Right. And I'm like, "Yes, the baby died, but that is so independent from what goes in my mouth." I felt really comfortable with a group of women doctors who knew what residency was and know what losing a patient is and having a difficult patient encounter and having challenges in their marriage and children with learning disabilities and also being on the same intellectual level with you and the group, right? It was a huge bonus. I don't need a 20-year old telling me how to use My Fitness Pal. I'm like, "Okay, good. I could probably watch a YouTube video on that."

But having a group of women who have similar issues and similar things they want to talk about has been huge. I've learned just as much from other people as I have directly inciting into myself.

Katrina Ubell: Your own self, yeah. That's so amazing. So you went through six months of the

Weight Loss For Doctors Only program, and then at the end of those six months, what were your results in terms of weight and other benefits that you noticed?

Brenda Burns: Absolutely, I'm so excited to share this. I started Weight Loss For Doctors Only September 24th, 2018. I remember the exact day. And I weighed 145 pounds, which was my all-time lowest weight ever. And the day I finished I weighed 124 pounds, which is just phenomenally unbelievable for me. I wear size six pants. Not a 16, a six. And I'm a small medium top, which is absolutely amazing. And I'm still that weight, if anyone wants to know my current weight. There you go.

But with that number came... I'm not going to say that came easy, because it came with a lot of thought work about... not my weight. I love my husband, I've always loved my husband, but pretty much every day I thought about not having to deal with him. There was a lot of thought work, relationship work, all sorts of stuff we coached on, and now we're partners again. It's not me, it's not him. We're partners. So I'd say my marriage has completely turned around. Not that we were ever actually going to get divorced, but you just wake up and you're like, "Don't talk to me. Don't even talk to me today."

Katrina Ubell: Did you expect that kind of a result when you signed up for the program, or were you really just thinking, "This is just going to solve the weight issue for me?"

Brenda Burns: Not even close, no. I really just thought it was going to solve the weight. I really thought we were just going to coach on weight and what I was eating and how I was working out and my personal thoughts about things, like worldly things. It never occurred to me that it would be actually relationship coaching, and so specific, right? Like actually really useful things that I could employ in my daily life, my personal situation, right? I didn't have to work a nine to five job and have one child with a live-in nanny to make it work. It's like no, it applies to everybody.

On top of my relationship with my husband, my relationship with my children is phenomenal now. It's absolutely U-turn, 100% different than it was a year ago, most noticeably with my eldest child. He has a severe learning divisibility, and I took that upon myself, both in terms of teacher role and mom guilt role, and I think we probably coached for like two months on that.

Katrina Ubell: I mean, what I want to say though is that this was not like I offered you a little tidbit, and you're like, "I'm cured." Like you dug in, and it was hard.

Brenda Burns: It was

Katrina Ubell: You really worked hard.

Brenda Burns: ... hard. I kept coming back at it with different thoughts and different angles, and I think I asked you for coaching literally every day on ask Katrina for literally like a month when it was really bad. Then slowly, it changed, and it's still there, but not even close to where it was a year ago. And my son and I have fun and we have conversations, and I'm still his mom, I still set the rules.

But life has honestly changed, because I cried at least once a week before with how am I going to

guide my son through this, how did I cause this, how is his life going to be because everything is so hard for him? And a lot of scarcity about how his life is going to turn out, and then me turning into scary mommy, who's like telling him how awful things are going to be.

The relationship with my entire family is completely different and the way I exist every day in my own life and show up for myself is completely different. And having had the time losing weight before Weight Loss For Doctors Only, I can see now I would've gained it all back because I made the dietary changes and the food changes. And maybe I wouldn't have gained it all back, but I probably would've, but there's no way I would ever have reached my current weight or my current life satisfaction score, because I should also mention work was not my favorite thing either last year.

That was the first topic I tackled, because of course it's all work's problem and I just need to find a new job, so I looked at every specialty known to medicine to think what I could switch from in emergency. Then I quickly came to reasons why I didn't want to switch for each one, and then I reached out to you for help, and you said, "Here's what we're going to do, and here's your action plan and how we're going to guide through this." And I was like, "Well, I don't think it's going to work, but I guess I better do it."

Katrina Ubell: I love it, because that has always been my brain, when I'm being coached. I'm like, "That's never going to work, but I mean, all right. I guess, fine. I'll try it."

Brenda Burns: "Katrina, like really? I could have thought of that by myself."

Katrina Ubell: If only it were that simple.

Brenda Burns: Yeah. Obviously you've never been to an emergency room, but I guess I'll try it this one time. Because when I started WLDO, as you know, I was 100% dedicated. Anything you said to do, I did it. I still do it in masters. It's not even questionable anymore. I gave up questioning you. But even right from the start, I'm like, "Okay, well she says to do this, so do it," and I show up to work every day with a smile on my face. I have raving patient reviews, raving resident reviews. My colleagues notice a huge change, not only in my weight but my attitude.

And that doesn't mean I go in all Pollyanna, happy, everything's happy. "Oh, you just stepped on my foot and my foot's broken. Yay, this is okay." It's like no, I still get upset and angry, but I own those emotions and feel them, and I don't walk around wanting to quit my job every five minutes, which is huge. Really every aspect of my life changed.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, that's so great. And I think I can say it enough times where I'm like, "Listen, yeah, we do the weight stuff, but it's everything else." It's so great to hear it from someone else, right?

Brenda Burns: Absolutely.

Katrina Ubell: I feel like I say it all the time.

Brenda Burns: You know what? At first I didn't believe you either, because I was like, "No, it's just about the weight, because if I weighed 140 pounds, work would be good, because I'd be wearing

smaller scrubs."

Katrina Ubell: "I'd have nothing to complain about."

Brenda Burns: The world would be magically better if I was in size medium scrubs. I'm like, "Wait, that doesn't even make any sense." When you step back and think it's like, "No, brain. That's not how it works." But

Katrina Ubell: And honestly within the program, I mean we mostly coach on things outside of food, especially at a certain point. Like sometimes I'll be thinking like, "I haven't talked about food in a while," which just proves the point even further, how it's so much more than just about the food, right? If it were just about the food, then focusing on macros and My Fitness Pal and all of the thing... then that would solve the problem. And for most people it doesn't.

Brenda Burns: Absolutely. Yeah, all those other weight loss programs would work if it's just about the food. Then you start Weight Loss For Doctors Only, the first month you're all up in your head about what can I eat, what can I not eat, and then you quickly realize that that's unimportant, because we're all intelligent physician females. Like you already know what to eat.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, it's not hard to sort that out, yeah. Then it's like, "Okay, now I got to really dig in." What's recently been going on, because we had a new group start, is they're like, "Wait, why am I feeling all of these emotions?" Right? Like, "Wait, is this who I really am?" And that's when we start digging in on all the other things, like all the reasons why you are angry or frustrated or all the other emotions that are there.

Brenda Burns: And it's interesting because your automatic assumption, and mine too, was it's the negative emotions. But I remember one of the big aha moments for me in the first two months was, "Wait a minute, I don't just eat for the negative emotions. I eat for the positive emotions too." And that was huge, and

Katrina Ubell: I did too, big time.

Brenda Burns: Right? Like, "Yay, I got a promotion. Let's have some wine and go out for dinner."

Katrina Ubell: Yes. I'm like an all emotion eater. I don't discriminate.

Brenda Burns: Yeah. And I didn't identify myself as an emotional eater before, but now I can totally see how I was.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, yeah. So you finished the six months, and then that was right when we were starting the masters program, so continuation program, and for a variety of reasons you decided not to sign up right away, to focus on some things at home, then decided the next time it opened up to sign up. So take us through your foray into maintenance.

Brenda Burns: My foray into maintenance. That sounds so formal.

Katrina Ubell: Because maintenance is really where the rubber meets the road. I mean, this is the

real deal.

Brenda Burns: Yeah, yeah. I was lucky. I reached my goal weight about six weeks before the WLDO program ended, so I had a bit of maintenance there. Then probably for the first month, no, two months, of maintenance on my own, it all went very well. I continued with my thought downloads and ate... but I had this magic thought in my head that I was cured, and I'm like, "Okay, I did this program. I'm all good. This is great. This has been great." Then slowly and steadily, a day got busy and I did not do my thought work that day. And that was fine. I could do it the next day and everything would be fine. Then we went on vacation, and then I didn't do my thought work for like three days in a row, and that was okay, and I didn't gain any weight on the vacation.

Then all of a sudden I'm like, "Well, I just don't feel like it today. I'm not going to focus on myself today. That's fine. I'll just do double tomorrow." Then very slowly my primitive brain fed me more and more talk, so then it became, "Well, it's your birthday, and your grandma made you these cookies, so it's kind of rude not to eat one. So I guess I should eat one, because I could eat a cookie, because I've already reached my goal and now I should be able to eat everything because I did it, right? I beat it. I'm now a naturally thin person."

After that, I quickly realized that my thought work wasn't done, and that I'd peeled away probably the first two layers of the onion, but my onion is never-ending. It's the biggest onion you could ever imagine.

Katrina Ubell: With the thinnest layers, right?

Brenda Burns: Yeah, it's not one of those little cocktail onions, no. No, sir. This is a ginormous onion. As soon as you opened up masters again I signed up that day, and I didn't even have that, "What have I done?" I had a giant sense of relief. Like, "Thank goodness," and immediately that day again... I had about a month before the program started. I started right back where I left off. I don't know what the thought was that exact moment, but I think it was, "I can't wait to get to the next layer of the onion," and the first three months of masters, there has been so much onion peeling going on here that it's absolutely incredible. It's just

Katrina Ubell: Like even when you're at your goal weight, there's more work to be done. And you were just talking before we even started recording... How I was saying to you, "I'm committed to growing myself as a human being for the whole rest of my life." And so if that's part of the deal, then we don't need to be so focused on figuring out the endpoint, like when this problem is quote, unquote solved, necessarily. Like for some people, they do find that they are living naturally like that naturally thin person, and other people are like, "I've got more work to do." When you're not so worried about when the endpoint comes, then you can just dig in and start getting going.

Brenda Burns: Yeah, exactly. And I'm

Katrina Ubell: And find out what happens. By the end of your life, you'll know how this story ends.

Brenda Burns: Exactly. And part of the scarcity issues I've dealt with is the time scarcity, because

there's no point in living every day like you're going to die next year. We don't get to decide that. So I'm now living the best life that I want to live for the rest of my life, and I know in order to keep that way, there's going to be more layers of the onion to peel back. And is the weight thing easy now? No. Is it significantly better than it was last year? Absolutely. Actually, I would change that. It definitely is almost easy now, so there's still challenging times, and

Katrina Ubell: Mostly easy with a few challenges from time to time.

Brenda Burns: Mostly easy, with a few challenges spliced in there. Just to keep me on my toes. My goal is to stay under 130 pounds, and I do that 99 out of 100 days, and whether it's 127 or 126, it doesn't matter. It really doesn't matter. But when it creeps up to 131, I know it's okay, time to dig into deeper, reach out to Katrina, something in my sub conscience is going out there.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. And that's such an important point, right, because the weight isn't like, "Oh shoot, I'm eating the wrong food. Maybe I need to fast in this way or something." It's like, "No, what's going on in my brain..." Like the scale is just a reflection of what's happening in your brain. When you really recognize that, it's like you don't even need to worry about losing those couple of pounds, because they will go away once you're managing your brain again.

Brenda Burns: Absolutely. And I totally did not believe you when you said that. I was like, "I don't think so, Katrina. It's because I had too much salt yesterday and my period's coming. But okay, you can believe that." But now, I'm like, "No, it's definitely that." I think of the scale as the gas gauge on my car. When I reach 130, I'm at a quarter tank, and when it's 131, that little blinker on my dash is going off like, "Get gas." To me, it's like something is going on, and I don't... Sometimes it takes four or five days to figure it out, and then I'm like, "Oh, aha. It was because of that. It's not like I stood down and magic happens. It's like, "Okay, just try to be more aware."

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Another thing that I thought would be nice for you to talk about is the friendships that you've created while you're within the masters program, because we do meet in person. I know you have a story of reaching out to somebody and creating a relationship with someone. So if you'd be willing to share, I would love for you to share that, because I think it really makes a big difference. Like a lot of physicians really feel very socially awkward or feel like they just don't really know how to put themselves out there, do they really want that connection or not? So I thought that it would be nice for you to talk about that a little bit if you could.

Brenda Burns: That sounds great. Hi to my new friend, Megan, by the way. My lowest strength is WOO, which for those of you who don't know, means I don't like to socialize and put myself out there. But I'm all in and I do whatever the program entails, so I came to masters live and I thought, "I'll just sit in the back. This is fine. I'll just observe what's going on. And I'll call my kids at lunch, and everything's fine." Then the seats were predetermined, and I was like, "Oh boy, this is great." I met a few people and talked, and that was good, and I thought, "These are great people to talk to, but I'm not super connecting with any of them."

Then one of my fellow masters posted on ask Katrina, ask for coaching, about something that made her feel very vulnerable about posting about... and I honestly could've written the post

myself. So instant connection. I'm getting goosebumps right now for that instant connection. And I thought, "Now how did she get in my brain?" Because I don't have room for all these people

Katrina Ubell: What's going on right now, right?

Brenda Burns: I already got Katrina, now I got Megan up here. I didn't have a way to contact her, so I posted back on your coaching site, saying, "I 100% hear you, sister," sent my details, and we were able to connect through the masters group, because that's part of the masters program, is being able to contact each other. And since then, I don't know, we're like sisters separated at birth. I was just texting her before this recording and I was like, "What have I done?" She's super supportive. But we've found a way... We live four timezones apart from each other. We send messages for each other sometimes, and we also reach out for life support if we're having a bad moment.

That's been a new facet for me. Probably only over the last three or four weeks has that happened since masters live. I'm just on this rollercoaster now, right? It's up and down and sideways and back around, and this is one of the high points, that Megan was brought into my life, and I'm truly thankful to have another person to help grow my journey and challenge me on more levels, because I just feel like it's all...

It sounds overwhelming to someone new who might be just starting a weight loss journey, but you have to remember as I peel the onions off one, I'm putting onions onto another ball or whatever I'm starting, because I started with Crossfit and bootcamp, and then I added eating a certain way and then I added your podcast and then I added WLDO and then I added masters, and then I added Lyn and then Sarah, who are two other coaches who help with masters, and then now I'm adding Megan. I feel like although this onion over here is the, quote, bad pile I'm peeling away, this onion over here is the good pile and it's getting bigger. I just look at this as part of my team. For anyone who's done WLDO, you should immediately sign up for masters, because I'd love to meet you. I will be the person in the back not talking, but come on over and talk to me.

Katrina Ubell: If it makes you feel better, WOO is my lowest too.

Brenda Burns: I know it is.

Katrina Ubell: I'm the exact same person as you.

Brenda Burns: We're so good together. We were so bad, but no, immediately, even if you've done WLDO five years ago or last week, you should immediately sign up for masters, because you're not done. You're not done. And even if you have more weight to lose, that's not the point. It's the thoughts that lead to the weight. And FYI, I've already signed up for the next masters.

Katrina Ubell: And I did not ask you to say that.

Brenda Burns: I actually sought you out to sign up for the next masters.

Katrina Ubell: I want to tell you this. But what I love about you reaching out to Megan is that that puts you out of your comfort zone big time.

Brenda Burns: 100%.

Katrina Ubell: But it's really, really important to me that in my program, if I'm going to facilitate some sort of communication amongst the members, that it's a true, meaningful relationship. Not just this thing on Facebook, where it's kind of like, "We're encouraging each other, but I couldn't really call you if I was really struggling," because you can feel like there's a lot of people around you, but still feel very isolated and lonely. It's very easy for you to just kind of hide in the background.

I think you can still do that within the masters program if you want to, but I think that the opportunity to really create a meaningful relationship even if it's with one person, I think is really, really great, especially when you have women physicians, who have very busy lives. And like you were saying, a lot of people don't understand what our lives are like, or a lot of people get all weird and feel intimidated. I was always so confused about that. I'm like, "I don't get that at all, but okay." I'm just like any other mom.

Brenda Burns: Me too.

Katrina Ubell: Just all these other elements that play into it, to be able to bring together women who have so much in common, not even just like the career stuff but the things that they work on that they're struggling with. All these women are working on their overeating issue too, and the food and all of that. That is really, really priceless. Like you said, like four timezones away, how would you have developed this otherwise? That's the point.

Brenda Burns: Exactly.

Katrina Ubell: I just think of it as it's available to those who are interested in having it, and I'm so glad that you went out on a limb and did that. That's so great.

Brenda Burns: Absolutely. I think of masters as... we're like a heard of zebras who are running, because we're all special flowers, like our own little zebra, but Megan's the zebra I would call if I fell. If I tripped, I'd be like, "Hey Megan," and she'd be the one to stop and come back and be like, "Okay, let's get up, let's keep going."

Katrina Ubell: Let's do it.

Brenda Burns: This is the direction we're heading in. Hopefully I provide the same for her. But it's truly amazing, and we find friends in the most random spots. And I've never met my friend Megan, but I will soon.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, yay. Super fun, super fun. As we're tying this all up, thank you so much for sharing your whole story. It's going to help so many people. I just really appreciate that. If you had

parting words, you have somebody who's a physician who's struggling with her weight, who is maybe just coming across this podcast, maybe hasn't... You had already been on the journey of losing weight, but maybe she's just kind of like, "I don't know. I don't even know if I'm at that point where I completely have had it yet, but I'm trying to sort it all out." Do you have a piece of advice for her, or a certain thought or something that you would want to impart?

Brenda Burns: Yeah. I think the biggest thing I've done to myself is commit to myself. I made the commitment that I was doing this, and I had no idea the path that it was going to take, and I still don't have any idea where I'm going in the future. But I have faith that I can figure it out, and that things will come by that I need when I need them. So I think if you're listening to this podcast, you know you want to commit to yourself but something's holding you back, and I think you should just do it. Just honestly figure it out, do it, make the time work, make the finances work.

Don't ask for permission from people to do it. Sign up like you're the boss of your life, and do it, and make that your priority. It doesn't matter if you have toddlers or a boss who won't listen, or you can't take your... You have to eat out for lunch. None of that matters. What matters is making your life better and saying, "I'm doing this for me, because I love me."

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Such great words. Thank you, Brenda. Oh my gosh, thank you so much. I really appreciate you.

Brenda Burns: Thank you for everything you do, Katrina. You're changing lives.