



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hello there, my friend. How are you? I am so excited for you to listen to this podcast episode today. I cannot even stand myself. It's such a good one. I know it's long, but I really want to make sure that you listen all the way through. This is such good stuff and I would love for you to share it with anybody who you think could be helped by it.

I do just want to let you know that there is one little expletive in there, so if you have children around and you're concerned about that, then this will be one that you'll want to listen to with headphones. But otherwise, it's nothing crazy but just wanted to let you know, give you the heads up. I know sometimes some of you listen with kids in the car.

I want to introduce Megan Schenke. She is an amazing physician. She's going to tell you all about herself, but she is from Canada. She actually lives in the Yukon territory and she's like one of those old town country doctors except she's a total badass and does like medevac stuff too and all this crazy stuff that just makes me feel a little stressed out, just even thinking about to be honest. But she's amazing. We're so glad to have people like her in the world taking care of us, but she is somebody who reached out to me. She's has been a client now for almost a year and she reached out to offer coming onto the podcast to discuss the binge eating that she has been working on. This is something that I've addressed a little bit on the podcast. I address it more within my program and I've worked with many, many clients who have trouble with bingeing.

But this is the first time that we're really digging in on bingeing and she is just the perfect person to describe her whole process through just identifying what was going on for her and coming up with a solution and working through that. She's very upfront that it's not like she's completely solved this problem for herself, but she has made such incredible strides. It's really inspiring to listen to and I know that so many of you are going to get a lot out of it, even if bingeing isn't something that you struggle with at all. You're still going to get a ton, ton, ton out of it.

So be sure to listen to all of this. Now, if you are interested in learning more about working with me, if you struggle with bingeing or even if you don't, then I just want to encourage you to go to katrinaubellmd.com/info, I-N-F O and you'll get more information about what the program is all about that she talks about. So, I cannot wait for you to hear this interview with Megan. Please enjoy.

Hey, Megan. Thanks for coming on the broadcast.

Megan Schenke: Hi.

Katrina Ubell: I'm so excited to have you here. I really, really, really super appreciate you raising your hand to come on. Super great. All right. Okay, so let's start with you telling us just a little bit about yourself, just where you are where you live, that kind of thing.

Megan Schenke: Yeah, so I'm 34 I'm a rural family doc in Whitehorse Yukon, which most people have no idea where that is, but it's remote Northern Canada beside Alaska. I do everything. So we do private practice, emerge, medevac, addictions med hospitalist, which is great. I have a husband, Luke, and a three and a half year old daughter, Rhilyn, and a couple of dogs.

Katrina Ubell: Awesome. Super cool. Okay, so today we're going to be talking about binge eating and we're going to really just dig into the whole thing. I was saying to you before we hit record, like I'm so excited to just talk about all the things, but first we're going to start off with you telling us your story of just when this all began and kind of the whole progression up until just pretty recently.

Megan Schenke: Yeah. So I come from a naturally thin family. My sister, my parents are both very thin. My parents really prioritized healthy eating. We exercised as a family. I was always very active but ever since I was about in the first grade, I started to become overweight. I don't really remember how it started, but I have memories sort of as early as being eight or nine of just wanting more food all the time. I don't know. My family was big for frosted flakes for breakfast and we would have frosted flakes. My sister and dad would have a bowl and I would have four bowls and just feel like I couldn't fill myself up. I always wanted more. Those are sort of my earliest memories of feeling a little bit different than my family.

I was still very active and my parents were really good. They were never like, "No, don't eat that." But I know that I felt different and so that sort of continued on for most of my childhood. I think I was telling on this on a coaching call once, but I was maybe 10 and I remember at Halloween. I ate all the Halloween candy sitting in a closet by myself because my parents would hide it because otherwise I would eat it all. Then I ate it all and I was so embarrassed. Then I ran to the neighbors and threw out the wrappers so that nobody would know, which of course they still knew because there was no Halloween candy left.

Katrina Ubell: Right.

Megan Schenke: I just, from a young age, remember this insatiable appetite for sugar. I never ever over ate pasta or chips or things like that. It was always, always for the sugar. Then just in prep for this podcast, I was thinking back a little bit on how my parents sort of rewarded us. So I was always a child that very much needed a lot of external validation, has always been a people pleaser and we were rewarded with treats.

So if I did well in school, we got candy. If I got a first time in swimming, we would go get a rice crispy square. In my brain, it became sort of entrenched. Like you do a good job, you get sugar and you love sugar so you want to work harder to do a good job kind of thing.

It just became this thing kind of growing up. But I knew something was different because I always just wanted to eat more but I didn't really have much shame. There was this shame of being embarrassed that I let my parents down by eating all the candy. But at school and stuff, I was the bigger kid. I had a lot of friends. I still did like volleyball and all that stuff.

But it didn't seem to affect me too, too much. I was just overeating tons. We've talked in the past about the distinction with bingeing and I definitely even at that young age would eat so much to the point that I wanted to be sick. It was not just eating more because I wanted more. It was sort of this compulsive need to keep eating as fast as I could until I felt sick.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. So let's pause there just for a second to talk about that because that was definitely something that I wanted to address is kind of this difference between what is like actual bingeing and what is overeating and where that line is. In my mind, I think of it more as like a spectrum where bingeing is on the far end of the spectrum and where you draw the line, like if you look at DSM criteria and things like that, there is a line where somebody has sort of... not necessarily arbitrarily, but align has been drawn somewhere.

But in the common just vernacular of what we just talk about binge listening to a podcast, binge watching Netflix, and then we start talking about bingeing. I've had clients be like, "Oh, I'm bingeing. I was just bingeing so much." I'm like, "So what did you eat?" They're like, "Well, I had a handful of chocolate chips." I'm like, "Well, hold on a second. That is not actually bingeing. That's overeating or that's urge driven eating. I like to call it because you had an urge to eat it and that drove you to eat it even though maybe you were already full."

I remember actually somebody telling me a couple of years ago just describing how she had binged and she said how she ate so much food to the point where she felt so much pain in her stomach. Then in order to make that pain go away, she ate more food.

Megan Schenke: Yes.

Katrina Ubell: I remember thinking like, "Okay, that is different. That is not the same thing as I just ate a really big piece of cake." I want to make sure that we're talking about that the audience understands. We're talking about actual bingeing here and how that can be different. People use what they use, but it's important that we know what we're actually talking about here. You're not like, "Oh I just kind of eat a little too much sometimes." You're like really, really, really excessively full.

Megan Schenke: Totally. Actually what you just said was perfect because that's what I would do. I would feel so sick and want to die and then I would eat more because I thought it would make me feel better. It's the weirdest conversation to have in your brain. It started out gradual. I agree with the spectrum. I didn't start out eating until I wanted to be sick, but the more I started overeating, then the more it trended towards eating until I wanted to be sick. Then it was almost like I wasn't in control of my body. I felt like something was driving me to just eat and eat and eat. This is from a super young age that I would just feel this compulsion to do it.

It wasn't just for negative stuff. I know traditional therapies very much like, "You go to find what's wrong." But like I would binge if I did really well in school or if I was a competitive horseback rider. If we did super well in our competition, I would go home and just eat until I wanted to die.

Katrina Ubell: That's so interesting. So were you doing this in front of the family at this point or how was that all happening?

Megan Schenke: No. So I would hide and do it. At lunch at elementary school, we could cross the street and go to the grocery store and I would go and buy with my allowance, just tons and tons of food and then just sit in the bathroom and eat it. My parents... I'm sure they knew I would hide food, I would hoard it and then binge on it. I'm sure they knew. But I think they were just so scared to say anything to make me feel ashamed about my weight.

I even remember I was maybe 12 and we were at the doctor's and they weighed me and they were like, "Her weight's a problem." My mum was like, "It is not a problem. She's perfect as she is. We eat healthy." I think they're wonderful parents but very much like, "We eat healthy. There's no problem here kind of thing. We eat dinner together every night." I was sort of the good girl who did really well in school. Then I did all the things and like, "No, Megan doesn't have a problem." So, yeah. So that was sort of elementary school and in high school was the same. I didn't get into any purging at that time. It was more just the bingeing.

I remember my riding coach because she caught me with one, one day and I'd had like 14 of those sweet Nestle ice teas in a row. She saw all the cantons and all the rappers and was like, "Hey man, what's going on?"

Katrina Ubell: Hold on.

Megan Schenke: I was like, "No." I just totally made up something about how like, "Oh, it gives me energy to keep going." I could tell she was kind of like, "That's weird." The more people started to find out, the more I tried to hide it because I just felt so ashamed that I had this thing that I couldn't control within me, kind of just that would rear itself up in this. I was probably bingeing four five times a day, a week, throughout sort of elementary and high school and just like steadily gaining and gaining and gaining.

So when I started university, I'm five, four, I was 190 pounds and I was bingeing probably four nights a week. The irony here is, when I started university, my roommates were all cheerleaders for the Western Mustangs, which is a very, very sort of highly ranked cheer thing in Canada. All of a sudden, I was sort of... so when I was bingeing, I knew it was wrong, but I didn't have the shame associated with my weight. I was ashamed that I was bingeing but I wasn't sort of... I was kind of self conscious but I didn't... I was like, "I'm just the big girl, whatever."

But now all of a sudden, I was thrust into this world of calorie counting and fat counting and you exercise to burn off calories, not for fun. All of a sudden, my total mindset shifted. Then that's when sort of my real disorder of eating became an issue. I stopped exercising because I liked it. As a group, we would do like three hours at the gym and then I would restrict my food because they were restricting their food. That's what you did if you wanted to watch your weight. The more I restricted my food and sort of exercised as punishment, the more the urges to binge got worse. That's when I really found myself sort of trapped in this cycle of restriction, bingeing, exercising for five or six hours to work it off, bingeing more because I was so hungry from exercising, then fasting for a day or so to like get rid of the weight and it became just this all consuming thing.

It was interesting because my roommates also, I feel they probably had bulimia as well, but we all knew what the other ones were doing, but we never talked about it. It was still this very shameful thing and everyone was sort of competing to who could be skinnier, but nobody was sort of like, "Hey, does anyone else feel like this is a better problem?"

Katrina Ubell: Right, right, right.

Megan Schenke: Looking back or just a really interesting dynamic between all of us. That first year of university I dropped, I went from 190 to 140 in a year with just restriction, binging, and then exercising. There was one summer I just ate watermelon, like a quarter of a watermelon a day, for probably four months. I looked great and everybody was like, "You look amazing. What are you doing?"

I felt so good about myself because I was looking good. But meanwhile, I was still just like... I knew deep down that what I was doing was just so wrong. Then what really screwed with my brain is I started to gain weight. Even with the excessive purging and the excessive food restriction, I would just keep gaining and gaining and gaining. Then it would make me like exercise more. Then I started like abusing laxatives. I tried the self-induced vomiting. It wasn't really my jam. It was more for me like the excessive exercise and it was just a cycle, so all throughout undergrad. When I graduated undergrad, I was probably every other day exercising for five to six hours and I was

Katrina Ubell: On top of this, an excellent student, right?

Megan Schenke: Yeah.

Katrina Ubell: You were able to get into medical schools.

Megan Schenke: Exactly, right.

Katrina Ubell: How did you have time for that?

Megan Schenke: No. I would get up at 4:00 in the morning and then my roommates would go to bed and I would go... We lived sort of on a hill and I would just like walk like obsessively up and down this hill. It was crazy. When I was sort of prepping for this interview and I was looking back on that time, I actually have no idea how I... Now I think I have no time. It's like doing eight hours a day of school and like six hours a day of exercise.

I think the biggest thing from that time was I just felt so trapped. I felt like I couldn't control my bingeing and then if I didn't exercise then I would keep gaining even more weight than I was already gaining. I suddenly cared more about what I looked like than I ever had in my life. So it was just this horrible feeling of being stuck. I've also just been not good enough. My roommates... they didn't have to exercise for five or six hours and maybe they did. They could have equally been doing what I was doing, but in my mind, I was the one that had to like work out so hard and I still wasn't as skinny as them. Like, "What is wrong with me that I can't get a hold of this?"

I thought about was food all the time. When I was exercising, I would just think about like, "What can I binge on tomorrow?" I would drive out of the way to go pick up food from different places and the same patterns, like hiding the food, going out of my way to get it, eating till I wanted to throw up, and then eating more to make me feel better. Then the next day, exercising constantly in.

Katrina Ubell: Did you have any injuries or anything? I'm just wondering how your body could keep up with that.

Megan Schenke: No, actually. I think about that now because my body certainly couldn't handle that now, but I didn't. I was so strong. I remember I did a triathlon with my dad and he was like, "Oh my God, you're so fast and you're so strong." It was this weird... I was so ashamed of myself, but I was getting such positive validation from everyone around me that it was such a weird sort of bubble

Katrina Ubell: You feel even more stuck because you don't want to

Megan Schenke: Totally.

Katrina Ubell: ... break. Yeah, break the facade of what people think about you, especially when you're wanting so much external validation and you're wanting them to think positively about you. But then there's the shame of like, "But if they really knew what was going on,"

Megan Schenke: Totally. If they

Katrina Ubell: That they would think that way about me. Yeah.

Megan Schenke: It's funny because... I don't know. In university you kind of separate from your parents a bit and I've always been super close, particularly with my dad and we'd sort of drift. But then when I started getting even more fit, it sort of brought us closer again. It was this thing we would do together and I would be like, "Yeah, I'm biking 30 kilometers with my dad and I can keep up." Yeah, it just fed into that sort of external validation piece. But always, always. I was like, "Well, if anybody really knew the real Megan, nobody would want me."

Katrina Ubell: Did anybody really know what was going on at this point?

Megan Schenke: I don't think so, and I still to this day haven't actually talked about this with my parents. I think they must have had an idea on some level, but I never talked about this with anybody.

Katrina Ubell: No.

Megan Schenke: I just sort of shoved it down to the side. Yeah.

Katrina Ubell: Then you got into medical school and then you didn't have five to six hours.

Megan Schenke: No.

Katrina Ubell: And no exercise. So what happened?

Megan Schenke: That's when the weight gain really became an issue. I was still bingeing because then in medical school, all of a sudden I'm not the brightest person in the class and I'm not this standout person that I was all of my life previously. That was really difficult for me. So all of a sudden I'm just like one of many. It's a lot of shame based learning and you don't get much sleep and you just constantly feel stupid. I felt in med school and, and then that's when the bingeing really, I mean, kind of get worse in four nights a week. Yes it can.

I didn't have time. I just did not have time to do the exercise. I would periodically. If I had like an event or if we were going on a warm vacation, I would restrict my food and then I would do like two or three hours of exercise a day to get down. I was maybe like 170 in med school and I would get down to 150 for the thing. Then as soon as the thing was over, then I would just regain the same 20 pounds back and forth. But I was bingeing almost every night. I actually moved back in with my parents for med school because they lived around the corner from it.

I actually have no idea how they didn't pick up on it because it was constant. Every single night I would eat until I wanted to die. Then same thing, I'd pack up all the rappers and stuff, put them in a bag, bring them out to someone else's garbage. Then the weight, just sort of like piles and piles and piles. Yeah.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. So then with your residency as well, I mean, kind of the same thing, right? Just similar thing.

Megan Schenke: The one thing I will say, residency I was like, "Okay, if I take myself out of my normal environment, maybe this will be better." So I actually moved across the country, so I'm from Ontario originally. I moved to British Columbia where I knew nobody and I took up some weird... I took a whitewater kayaking which is kind of an extreme sport that I would never have thought of.

But I was like, "Okay, I'm going to just start exercising for fun again." I sort of did. It sort of got a little bit better in the first year of residency, just being totally removed from my normal environment. That's where I actually met my husband, who I didn't talk to about this with any of this at the time, but I was almost happy. I found a sport that I really liked again and I was like, "Oh, this person loves me," even though I was still like 170 pounds. I didn't really binge. I definitely overeat but I didn't binge.

But then, he was military so he got posted on the other side of the country for my last year of residency and then I started bingeing again. Then I stopped doing sort of the exercise for fun and I found myself sort of starting back into the sort of food restricting, then bingeing and then the exercise thing wasn't really a thing for me in residency because who has time for that?

Katrina Ubell: Right.

Megan Schenke: But then it started up again for sure. Not so much the purging piece, more just like the constant bingeing. Then after residency, I moved back to Ontario because that's where he was posted and it wasn't too, too bad to be honest. I would maybe binge once or twice a week. It wasn't because I was getting established and practice and I had control over my schedule. I feel like when I had more control in other areas, I didn't have the urge so much to do it.

My husband... he started to sort of notice and then he'd be like, "Hey, that's a lot of stuff you're eating." Are you sure you want to eat it?" One day I just came right out and I was like, "I have, believe me. Here you go, are you sure you still want to marry me?" kind of thing. He was sort of like, "Oh, okay whatever."

Katrina Ubell: Sort of a guy response. All right.

Megan Schenke: I was like, "I'm dropping this huge bomb on you." He's like, "I thought something was weird because you just eat a lot of food." Okay. So yeah. So it was sort of like status quo. I didn't get into the excessive purging, but I still binge and I still had a lot of that deep shame and sort of this. Honestly, I just thought that this was me. I didn't

Katrina Ubell: Did sharing that with him... did that give you any kind of relief or did you ever think like, "Maybe I should see a therapist or I kind of want to tell someone?" Or you just kind of kept hoping it would go away?

Megan Schenke: Not even go away. I honestly just thought that that's what I did. That was just who I am.

Katrina Ubell: Not something to be solved.

Megan Schenke: Yeah. I kept thinking there was something wrong with me, but I didn't think of it in terms of maybe someone can help me with it. I was just sort of like, "This is my shame and my cross to bear," kind of thing.

Katrina Ubell: Got it. Okay.

Megan Schenke: So I just sort of carried on. Then I got pregnant and I had terrible hyperemesis, which the irony is not lost on me for literally not being able to control throwing up, but it was super weird because I would have like two hours in a day where I could eat without throwing up and I would eat and eat again until I was sick. Then I would spend the rest of the day throwing up. I lost some weight and then I gained some weight and all this stuff. I remember being like, "Okay, this is good. I'm not going to gain so much weight in pregnancy because I'm throwing..." just this totally disordered thinking about it.

Then after I had my daughter, that's when stuff really sort of started to get downhill for me. She was super colicky so I struggled a lot and I was alone a lot because my husband was gone and we didn't have much family support. Then he left the military and we decided then to move across the country to Whitehorse where we moved in with my sister, but he was still gone.

He was gone about three weeks a month for work. I was building a house, solo parenting, my one year old and getting established in a new medical community. I just totally lost myself. I couldn't function, I was miserable and I was yelling all the time. I think I didn't know who I was anymore. I felt like that person of the past who did all these really cool things was just totally gone.

I remember one morning, I think it was like January, 2018 and I was trying to get my kid out of her crib and I couldn't even like lift her. I was so weak just from deconditioning and being so overweight. I was like, "This is not cool." I joined this online fitness challenge and it was four 30 minute workouts a week. But I finally started to connect back to that person who used to just exercise for fun and to feel strong. I was like, "Okay, I can do this." Then my sister was great. I think she's always known I've had a problem with overeating as well, but so she would sort of... We were living together and I would be bingeing and she'd be sort of sitting there being like, "Hey

Katrina Ubell: So, now you're doing it in front of her, so you weren't even trying to hide it. Yeah.

Megan Schenke: Then she sort of started overeating to keep me company almost. I think I felt bad that I was doing it. So then she would overeat and then I would feel so guilty so then I would eat more. I was like, "This really weird dynamic going." But so then we started running together and so we put my daughter in bed and we would just like run laps around, she lives on a farm and it sort of brought me back that joy of exercise again and connecting with people and not just being like Megan, the mom and Megan the doctor and Megan the wife and that was really great.

I mean I only lost about 10 pounds because I was still bingeing nightly. But I started to realize that I could feel better and that makes sense. I started to just be like, "Oh, maybe I don't have to live my life like I'm treading water with my head barely above like something here." Then I injured my foot, so I was running maybe about 40 kilometers a week and I got terrible plantar fasciitis that now two years later is still a problem, but I couldn't run anymore.

Then that really sort of triggered me into getting really deeply depressed, I think. Then the bingeing got much worse and then we actually moved into our house so I didn't have my sister and my husband was still gone and I was alone at night and that just led to these huge, huge amounts of bingeing. Then it was October of 2018 that I found your podcast and I don't even know how it was. I think it was like a Facebook ad or something. It was a super random thing and it just popped up and I was like, "Okay, I'm a busy physician, we'll see what this lady has to say."

I listened to the first one driving my daughter to daycare and I started crying cause I was like, "Wow, you just pulled all the things out of my head. This is crazy." She was like, "Why is this lady making you cry mommy?" I had to pull over and I was like, "Just give me a minute." I think I just listened to like the first 10 episodes in a week. I hate using the word binge listens because it just brings up some things that I quickly let them to the mall and I was like, "Okay." I didn't do any of the things though. I was just consuming the information and I was like, "One day when my house is done and I'm working less and my husband's home and I have more time, I'll do all of these things."

I was listening and I finally felt like, "Hey, maybe there is something that I could work on to make myself not do this." I was sort of the first time that I actually started to think I don't have to live my life maybe like this but just planted the seed. Then I remember I reached out to Cathy in November or something and I was like, "How much does this cost?" Then in Canadian dollars it's a whole lot more. I was like, "Oh hell no. No way I can ever spend as much money on myself. I'm not doing it."

Then just things got worse. I was miserable at work. I was miserable as a mom. I was miserable as a wife. I honestly just felt hopeless and trapped in my life. Then I just was on a night shift and I signed up for the January, 2019 group. As soon as I signed up, wanted to go and vomit. I was so nervous. Same thing as sort of friend that you had on the podcast, I was like, "Maybe I can get my money back. Maybe I should have done this." I would just totally panic. Then I went home and I just ate. And I ate and ate and ate. I think I signed up early December and the program started at the end of January and I kid you not, I gained 15 pounds before it started because I was like, "This is it. I'm not going to binge anymore. We're all in." I just ate all the things all the time, but it was okay because I knew once the program I would be all in and I would fix myself kind of thing. So, yeah. So then that brought me to January of 2019, last year.

Katrina Ubell: Before we get into that, what was your kind of... Were you thinking like, "I'm just going to lose some weight." Or were you thinking like, "Maybe she could help me stop bingeing." Or what was your thought about the bingeing going into that?

Megan Schenke: No. I didn't think you could help me stop bingeing. I thought that you could help me lose some weight and I thought it would be like all I've tried all the diets. I thought it would be like all of the other things where I did it for six months, I lost some weight and then I probably would gain it back. At this point I was just sort of like, "Well, I can't keep gaining so I might as well try it." But no, I did not. Still, my bingeing to me was unfixable problem. Yeah.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. So you came into the program and you started following it.

Megan Schenke: Yeah, and I did

Katrina Ubell: Then what happened?

Megan Schenke: I did the no flour, no sugar for six weeks. Actually, my urges to binge completely disappeared for those six weeks. I was doing the thought work. I know a lot of people are sort of like, "Yeah, I left it to the side." But actually I started with just five minutes a day, but it was all very superficial. Or I would focus on my work or my husband or my parenting. I did not in Waldo at all. I did not focus at all on the bingeing because in my mind that's the core of me is this person. Therefore, that's not fixable. So I'll fix all these other things.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, yeah which is also good. Good time spend, right?

Megan Schenke: Yeah. So, it was great. I lost 30 pounds in Waldo. I completely changed the way that I think about my life. I think you've talked about this before on podcasts, but what I got out of Waldo, there was weight loss, but there was also the way that I view things and for the first time was not in this, things are happening to me, victim mentality. I realized that I was creating everything that I was feeling with how I was thinking.

Before I signed up for Waldo, stuff with my husband was rough. We were not partners at all. We were arguing constantly and I was so angry. The first thing I did was the relationship module on him. I just realized like, "Oh, I don't have to think this way. It's not him. He's not the problem. The problem is my thoughts." Then same thing with work. I was turning very victimy everything was just, "If only all these other people would change and my job would be easier," kind of thing. That's where I focused a lot of my work and my life got infinitely better.

Katrina Ubell: I bet. Yeah.

Megan Schenke: It was amazing. It's actually funny because I think it was even February, my dad came up to visit and he was like, "What are you doing? You look so much happier." This was like a month into the program. He was like, "I don't understand this." I was like, "Well, I have a life coach." My dad was like, "I don't understand what that is." I leave it to him. It was funny because he and my sister kind of clash and that's another issue. I'm generally the mediator between them and they had just had this huge thing and I was like, "Well, what if you thought about it this way?" He was sort of like, "Did your life coach tell you that?" And I was like, "Yeah." He was like, "Well, this could actually work." That's really nothing. I just remember being like, "It is like Holy Molly."

Katrina Ubell: That's awesome.

Megan Schenke: Yeah. So I was losing weight and it was good. I was really working on the other areas of my life that I previously felt like I was very stuck in and my husband too was joking because he was like, "We need to buy this Katrina lady a gift because..." Holy moly, you're so nice. I was better as a parent. I was so yelly before and I would yell and then I would feel guilty and I was like, "I'm clearly destroying my daughter. I shouldn't have been a mother," all of this stuff. Everything got better from that perspective. But then I started adding in joy eats, and I only did sugary joy eats because that's what a joy to me is sugar. Then the urges to binge started creeping back in.

So it was sort of probably the end of March that I started bingeing again and it would be maybe once a week and I would binge and then I would have this thoughts of, "Maybe if you just fast a little bit longer tomorrow, it kind of makes up for it." I would be like, "Oh, maybe I could fit in a couple extra hours of bike riding to sort of work that off." The difference now that was that I noticed that I was having, whereas before I just did.

Katrina Ubell: It was just whatever your brains offered you, now you have that awareness of like, "That's so interesting that that's what my brain's telling me."

Megan Schenke: Totally. I was like, "Okay." I would binge and again, this is like eating so fast, all of the food till I want to die. I noticed too when I first started the program, I stopped driving to this one particular store that had these chocolate covered things that were my favorite.

Then I noticed that one day I'd had a really crappy emerge shift and I drove and got these like chocolate covered jujubes and I was like, "Megan, oh dear," that kind of thing.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Have you thought at this point like, "Oh, maybe I'm cured." Were you like pretty disappointed or how did you respond to that?

Megan Schenke: Yeah, I sort of did think I was cured. I was like, "Oh, I just don't eat sugar and I don't binge. This is good."

Katrina Ubell: Problem solved. Yeah.

Megan Schenke: Then, yeah. Then as soon as I started creeping in, I went immediately to... Well, this just proves that this is me and there's something wrong with me, so if I can get my shit together and eat properly for the rest of the week and I binge once a week, okay. I was still losing weight despite that. I didn't let myself excessively fast or excessively exercise because I knew that that was one thing I didn't want to go back to. I was like, "Okay, if I manage this the rest of the time I can still lose weight." But yeah, that's just the deep core of you is this rotten person who just binges and that's fine.

Katrina Ubell: Right. I can think better thoughts about that. Terrible sort of terms.

Megan Schenke: It's so funny because I never even thought to look at that as a circumstance in Waldo. I honestly wonder if it was maybe just avoidance. I didn't want to do that

Katrina Ubell: A little bit of denial. It's not even like a thing that's... it's off limits for what we're doing.

Megan Schenke: Yeah. Yeah. Then you finished Waldo and I was down 30 pounds and then my weight loss sort of stalled and I went right into masters. I remember the same thing. I was like, "I don't think I can spend this much money on myself." My husband was like, "Please just do it. Just sign up. Just please for the love of God." So perfect. Then I asked for coaching. My weight loss stalled big time, which then sort of all of those old feelings started coming back.

So then I started being like, "Well that's it. There's six months. I lost the weight now." I said, "Now I'm going to gain it back. I might as well just given." Then the bingeing sort of started to increase and it was sort of like two days a week. Then it was actually my husband the one day because I was bingeing in front of him and he was like, "I thought we didn't like do this anymore. Well, ask Katrina about it." I was like, "No, Katrina can't help me with this. This is like the core of me that's wrong."

Katrina Ubell: Right.

Megan Schenke: He was sort of like, "I don't know, maybe you should try." No. It was just, I was so convinced that this is not something that's fixable, but also in masters to me, of course I'm the only one with this problem, right? Nobody else could still be doing this work and bingeing and I'm the special snowflake. I'm the only one that's got this problem. I was like, "Oh, it's not going to be helpful for anyone else. I shouldn't waste time with this. This is stupid. Plus it's not fixable."

Anyway, I had this story, it was very believable at the time, but I was like, "Okay, I was all in for everything else. Let's just try it." Then I asked for a quote call help on that call. I felt sick when I signed up. I was literally even right leading up to it. I was like, "I'm not going to do this. I'll just say I had to go on a medivac or something." Then

Katrina Ubell: That's a hard thing when you're a doctor. You always have that out.

Megan Schenke: It was an excuse. Then I was like, "No, Megan, you trusted Katrina before and this stuff worked. Just do it and see what and if everybody else thinks it's stupid, that's great, but you don't know anybody else. So okay." I talked myself up and we did it. I felt this like huge weight lift. I suddenly was like, "Okay, I can talk about this." You were so kind to me on the phone and I was like, "Okay. Maybe this is something that is fixable."

On that call we'd sort of talked about... Just like the times when I tend to binge more and we talked about creating like an urge protocol of what to do if I felt because I knew when I was going to binge because the thoughts would start very early in the day and we kind of came up with all that and I hung up and I was like, "Great, I talked about it, I made my binge protocol, I'm fixed, this is it." I redid all my goals and I was like, "I'm not going to binge anymore and blah, blah, blah." I focused, I was like, "Okay, today went well. I didn't binge." Then I just binged like there was no tomorrow for months. It was multiple times a day craziness because I don't even really know.

It was this thought of like, "I'm not going to binge anymore," combined with, "Well I talked about it and asked for help, therefore it should be fixed. So why isn't this getting fixed?" It sort of turned into like a bit of a disaster actually. I started to panic and I couldn't even step on the scale. At the end of our original weight loss for doctors only, the scale to me, I was like, "Okay, this is a data point." Then it became just this thing in the morning that was looming and I was so scared to get on the scale. But then I asked for help again. I didn't sort of run away. I was like, "Okay, this is what's happening." Again, you were great.

Katrina Ubell: That's why I say it would have been so easy to just run away and basically ghost me and just not hear from you ever again. Completely. I just wanted to point that out, right? The fact that you're like still here and still asking for help, right? It really says a lot. Okay, continue.

Megan Schenke: Yeah. Then from there we sort of worked on what if you plan your binges into your eating plan? Because what I was doing was I was just putting the food that I thought that I should eat to lose weight and then I would eat off plan and then just prove to myself that I couldn't stick to my plan. I started planning in like the ass grabs and the binges and it sounds crazy. But it actually did help to take some of the stress off a little bit. Then I started to sort of prove to myself, "Okay, I can follow my plan."

Katrina Ubell: Yeah.

Megan Schenke: I gained back 15 pounds. And

Katrina Ubell: We talked about that. This whole process, it cannot occur while you're also losing weight.

Megan Schenke: Exactly.

Katrina Ubell: You're halfway willing to gain some weight throughout this process to end up losing all the weight. Because like you were saying, you end up hitting this point where if you're going to keep itching, like you just cannot continue to lose weight anymore. It's just not possible. Then you try doing more extreme things, more diet mentality, things of trying to do excessive fasting and I've seen that in different Facebook groups and stuff too, where it's like these long, long fasts all throughout the week, all based on willpower, right? Then on the weekend like, "Oh my gosh, you guys, I just ate so much food and it doesn't work."

So I feel like that can be a... especially in a weight loss group, it can be a hard ass. Even from your perspective, like buying in, I'm like, "Wait, now I got to gain weight on this thing." But it's like if you really want some freedom from what is happening, I mean, decades long situation that you've been in, it's like this part has to be solved before we can move on to anything else. The point of planning it out is that you're taking away the resistance, right? Because you're like, "I'm probably going to binge today. I don't want to binge. I shouldn't binge bingeing is wrong, but I do want to binge." Just all that whole nonsense around there. It's just like, "Tonight if I want to binge, I'm going to binge." Totally different experience.

Megan Schenke: Yeah, totally. I think to one site I'd asked for help. I suddenly knew that I could be helped and so I wanted to buy in to do the things that would help me. I have a daughter and the last thing that I want is to model for her the behaviors that I'm doing with food. I was like, "Okay, I asked for help, she has these suggestions, I'm just going to do it." I did freak out when I started gaining weight. I was like, "Oh no, we're not doing this." But I was like, "Nope. I'm going to try it. Everything else has worked." It did get easier. I found I was bingeing a lot less and I mean by a lot less, I was still bingeing probably four nights a week, but it was less than when I initially had asked for help. It took away the self like loading piece of it. But the next thing that came out of that though was this sort of feeling like deep down there was something wrong with me and that's why I binge. That's sort of what came out of the work I did sort of a lot of thought downloads on like, "Why do I keep doing this even though I know that I don't want to." It just sort of came down to... I felt like I was broken. There's sort of something wrong with me that maybe should be fixed but couldn't for a long time and now I'm asking for help.

Then it was sort of that and also like, "Well, maybe I don't deserve to be fixed kind of thing." I remembered on the first call we did at the very end I'd said, "I just don't feel like I deserve the life that I've had." It was right before we'd hung up and I listened to it again and I was like, "Well, that's a weird comment," because I never thought I had like a self worst problem. I was not hungry. Then I was like, "Well, that was weird to kind of come out." I sort of looked into it and I was like, "Wow, no, this is actually that I feel deep down that something is broken inside of me and that's why I binge. So it's not in my control. It's because I'm broken. It just needs to be sort of fixed."

Katrina Ubell: By continue to binge, it just further supports your belief, right? You believe that something's wrong with you, right? That you're like unfixable. Then if you stopped bingeing, then what? Then that's not who you are, like your whole life, right? There's this thing that's wrong with you that you do. That's wrong. So if you follow that model through, it's like that belief will create, more bingeing, the action of bingeing. I think once you've had that kind of realization, it's like, "Oh my gosh. It doesn't necessarily make stopping bingeing easier, but it at least just changes your whole mental construct, what it is and why it's happening."

Megan Schenke: That's what kind of came up. So right after I'd emailed Kathy about doing this podcast with you, I texted Brenda, who's become a good friend of mine from masters and I was like, "I can't believe I did this. I'm an impostor because I'm not fixed yet." Those were my exact words. She wrote back, "The fact that you think you need to be fixed is the problem." I was like, "No." But it suddenly kind of clicked. Then I had a call with Lynn shortly after.

Katrina Ubell: So Lynn is one of the other coaches in the program who does one-on-one calls with the masters. Yeah.

Megan Schenke: I came to the thought that, "What if I just started bingeing to cope with emotions and it became a habit and it's not that there's anything wrong with me that needs fixing?" She was like, "Yeah, that could be it." But what's the underlying belief that you had before that we came to was that I am broken, therefore I binge. Then she said, well, what if your thought was maybe I'm not broken. What is the thought? What is the feeling that that leads to.

To be honest, the first thing they'd come up was fear, like panic attack, like heart racing, palm sweaty fear. She was sort of like, "Well, why do you think that is?" I was like, "Because I literally do not know who I am without bingeing. I have no memories where I haven't binged. I don't know what it would be like to not think about food all day long or how to work off my excess food or how would I even cope with good positive emotions or negative emotions." It sort of opened this whole like, "I don't know who I am thing," This was just two weeks ago. So this just goes to show like these onion layers.

Katrina Ubell: Or layers, right?

Megan Schenke: Yeah. And you've talked about this before, but it didn't really click in my head until Brenda sent that text back and I was like, "Maybe I'm not broken." But I wanted to still feel broken because that feels safe to me because I know who I am."

Katrina Ubell: It's so familiar.

Megan Schenke: Yeah, yeah.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, yeah, exactly. Yeah. So it's like you have to now get to know that version of you, that future self. Like who is a woman who doesn't binge? Getting to know her. This is like a foreign exchange student? Right? You had someone who moved in and you're like, "What is she doing? She's doing a lot of food until she feels sick." That's interesting.

Megan Schenke: Yeah, and that's where a lot of my work has been in the last two weeks is just sort of been like, "Well, okay, I'm feeling like happiness and I want to eat a cupcake, but like what would somebody who doesn't need to eat to celebrate want to do in this situation." It's not perfect. I haven't been bingeing but I still will overeat and actually that's something I should say since it's been about two months now since I've actually binged, since I started actually forgiving myself almost and sort of being like, okay, like planning it in and sort of making it okay.

I definitely cut down on the urges and then the less that I binge, then the less strong that the urges get. Do I think that I like that I'm never going to binge again? I don't know. I might my binge again, but at least now I know it's not because there's something wrong with me. It's because this is like a deeply ingrained habit.

Katrina Ubell: Correct. I think kind of having this idea of will you never binge again? Will you never, whatever. Who cares? All you need to know is right now, do you want to binge? It's like, "Not today. I don't think I'm going to today, but maybe someday I will, but today probably not." That takes away that pressure of like, "Oh my gosh, forever for the rest of my life. Never." It adds so much more mental drama to it versus like, "All I need to worry about is what I'm going to do today."

Megan Schenke: Yeah.

Katrina Ubell: I'm just thinking I don't need to do that.

Megan Schenke: Yeah. I'm even sort of like, "Okay, I could binge today if I want, but I don't really want to because I don't really want to feel so full." I'm actually to the place where you can be like, "I don't really feel like feeling that way. So I'm going to pass on that. But thanks brain." Then the other thing too I wanted to bring up too was I had this moment with my daughter, so she's three and she just had a massive dinner and I was cutting up her apple for the next day and she was like, "I want the apple." And I was like, "No, you're just going to take a bite and lick it and waste it. You can have it tomorrow."

She had the full blown like, "I want the apple." Kicking and screaming on the floor. I just sort of sat beside her and I was like, "I know you want the apple, we can have it tomorrow." I had this sort of out of body experience where I was like, "That's my primitive brain and I can show up and hold space for myself when I'm having a tantrum about wanting to binge." I don't have to be like, "No, Megan, stop it. You don't need what's wrong with you. You're so stupid." I could just sit there and be like, "Yeah, you want it."

Katrina Ubell: I get it, girl. I understand sometimes you really want it. It's just not good. It's not what you need.

Megan Schenke: Yeah. Again, it's all stuff you've talked about, but I didn't get it until I had these sort of little light bulb moments and I was open to having the light bulb moments.

Katrina Ubell: Right, right, right, right. It's like what Oprah says about luck. It's like preparation meeting opportunity. It's like certain to a certain extent, similar thing, right? Your brain is preparing, preparing, preparing. Then there's an opportunity to look at something in a different way or observe something in a new way and you're like, "Yes, I'm ready." Yeah. Because you're just totally in a different place. Yeah. So I mean it sounds like you're really just making massive progress here all because of being open to the idea that this could be something that is optional really, right?

I don't even want to say solvable because even looking at it maybe it's not a problem. Maybe sometimes people binge, right? You could just decide like some people decide to binge, some people don't. I think I'd like to be a person who doesn't versus turning it into this terrible thing about you or this medically diagnosable issue or whatever. Then on this person who does all this stuff, like "What if all of it's just thoughts and your brain just doing what it was conditioned to do and it can also be deconditioned to not do that so much anymore?"

I think what would be interesting to see over the course of time is if there is a particularly stressful time in life or different things are coming up, does that urge come up again? Because of the work that you're doing and have done, there'll be so much more awareness around it. Like, "Oh, that's so interesting. I'm having that urge." Even if you did binge, you would be like, "Oh okay that happened. I know how to handle this moving forward versus see, I knew there was like that black rotten core thing again to me."

Megan Schenke: Yeah. It takes away the fear too. I think before, I was so scared to fix it because then if I've binged again, it would mean that I failed. It's sort of like failing ahead of time with weight loss. But now that I know that ultimately it's me that chooses to binge or not binge. It's not something that happens to me. It's not out of my control. It's me physically putting this food in my mouth. Now that I sort of know that and accept, and I don't make it mean that I'm a bad person because I chose to binge for so long, but I know that I can choose not to in the future and I know that if I do choose to binge, then the next day I can get up and choose not to. It's this really sort of liberated place where I just don't have that fear of failure anymore because I know that I'm choosing to do it so I can just choose not to.

Katrina Ubell: Right. You're just thinking like failure is just a mental construct like anything else. So you could define it as failure. You could define it as success. Like, "Here's another time where I binged and then I learned from it. Maybe that's part of this journey that I have to be on." I mean that might work for somebody and it might not work for somebody else. But being open, I mean, you could just tell the way that you talk about yourself and this whole experience now, how much more you love and respect yourself and like all the parts of you, right? Not the parts that you deem good and acceptable and the positive parts of you, which are when you were kind of earlier saying like, you kind of thought like, "I'm pretty awesome." In those ways, right?

Yeah, let's not talk about the other ways that I totally suck and unbroken permanently. Instead, you're looking at it like, "I love all of me, including the parts that are painful, that are the parts where I suffer, that are the parts that I would love to change." All of that, that love and support is what actually then creates the change.

I hope that people listening can see that even just in the way that you're describing it of once you've had that shift of maybe there isn't anything to fix, right? Thanks Brenda. It's like, "Oh my gosh." The whole world opened up for you. I also love that I don't get any sense from you that you're in a rush. You're not like, "I need to get this sorted out because I've got this weight to lose or I need this to stop because I need to get away from it," or something like that. It's just like it's going to take however long it takes. That patience with yourself is something that is what's going to actually help you create that result when you're on the timeline, when you're pushing yourself, when you're in a hurry. It's again resisting what's happening right now, which doesn't help you solve the problem.

Megan Schenke: Yeah. I was at first. October, I'm going to weigh this much because we're going to try for our second baby. I was like, "Nope, to be pregnant I have to be at my goal weight." It was this whole thing and then it got sort of totally thrown off by planting in the binges and stuff. Now I'm actually pregnant so I

Katrina Ubell: Congratulations.

Megan Schenke: My weight is going... it is going up and I have hyperemesis again. So I'm losing a lot of my nutrients and my weight still goes up. That's sort of the new thing of sort of managing my... It's not about the weight anymore for me, it's about the behavior piece. Would I love to get to my goal weight? Yes. Do I think that I will? I think so. It might be two or three years from now and that's fine, but for me if I can continue to sort of show up for myself the way that I am right now, that's all I want.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. I mean, because this is the true peace and the true freedom that you really want, right? It's like how we think we're going to feel when we lose the weight, right? But if you don't handle the bingeing, you won't, you'll be hanging on by the skin of your teeth because you're just like one binge away from gaining three to five pounds and your pants aren't fitting anymore, kind of thing.

Megan Schenke: The biggest thing when you're somebody who binges is that so much of your time is taken up by thinking about food and eating food and working off the food. For me, that's the biggest freedom as well is that I... Don't get me wrong. I still think about food a lot and it's stuff that I'm working on but I'm not spending hours and hours a day thinking about food, planning my food, eating food, thinking about having to work off the food. I have so much more time in my day to do other things and enjoy other things that I didn't realize was so nice. This has been my entire life. I didn't realize what it would be like to have sort of a "normal day" where you don't spend hours obsessing about food. That's been a really nice piece of this too.

That's why I think I am in less of a rush. I still have 35 pounds to go until I met my goal weight and that's going to go up more now that I'm pregnant and gaining weight despite puking every day. I know that it doesn't matter what happens because I don't think about food all the time anymore. That kind of makes sense. That has meant more to me than the numbers on the scale.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. That's so great. Okay, final question. I can just imagine that there is a female physician out there who's listening to this whole thing and she's totally struggled with bingeing and she is listening to you and going like, "She's so brave like how she showed up for herself." I just don't know that I could tell anybody there's been so much secrecy around it, so much isolation, so much shame, so much hiding. I just don't know that I could really put myself out there in that way to get help. So what would you say to somebody?

Megan Schenke: You are still lovable whether you do this or not and you just have to take the leap and ask for help. I would also say, deep down there's nothing wrong with you. Okay? I think most of us who have had this think that there's something so deeply wrong with us and there's not. I think it just comes down to that. There is nothing wrong with you. This is not something that you have to live with for the rest of your life. It's something that you are actually in complete control of.

So contrary to how I used to think that it was always something out of my control and happening to me, it's not, which is not a reason to beat yourself up about, it's a reason to realize that you actually can change this if you want to. If you don't want to, that's fine too. But if it bothers you and causes you shame, it is totally something that's changeable by doing this work and by trusting yourself and by asking people for help. I can tell you, I was so scared to ask for help and I got so much positive feedback from a lot of the other masters ladies that I suddenly realized you're not the only one that does this. There are so many people that do this as a way to cope. Asking for help, it gives you the tools that you need to then move forward and sort of create how you want to live your life.

Katrina Ubell: I was just going to say, after I coached you for the first time about this, so many other people reached out and were so grateful. Not just even in support of you, but just like that helped me so much and so thankful to you for being the one to step up and ask for help.

Megan Schenke: That's what I would say to people who are listening is that even though you might think that you're the only one that does this, you're not. Because you're not the only one that does it, there are people that can help you with it and particularly this work, because it doesn't delve into sort of, I don't know, the deep dark secrets of your past, that's why you binge now. It's not that at all. It's literally just you created a neuro pathway to cope with emotions and that's why you binge.

Therefore, you can create a new neural pathway to help you cope with emotions that you have to do this. But you just have to recognize that first before you can move on. There's nothing wrong with you. There's no deep dark core view. You're not a special broken snowflake. It literally is as simple as that. It just takes a long time to get there.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Yeah. Well, thank you so much, Megan. This has been a long one, but I think it's so, so, so good. I really, really, really appreciate you. Again, because I didn't reach out to you to ask you to come on, you raised your hand and said, "I would like to share this." I think it's so much more powerful when it comes from that angle. I think this is going to help so many people. So I just really appreciate you coming on.

Megan Schenke: No, thank you for having me. I hope that it does.