



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hey there my friend. Welcome back to the podcast and if you are new here then welcome, welcome, welcome. I'm so happy to have you here. I know that there's going to be many of you who are just searching for a weight loss podcast to go along with your 2020 January weight loss goals and I'm so happy to have you here. The great news is that you have stumbled across the podcast that is going to actually help you to lose your weight and keep it off permanently and that is not hyperbole. Okay? That is not me just exaggerating or saying some unrealistic claims, but really what we do on this podcast is we talk about losing weight and we do it in a way that actually solves a problem for good, which is of course dialing in your food and changing some things there, but mostly working on your brain and why you overeat in the first place.

This is the part that the vast majority of weight loss programs and diets do not cover. They do not address why you keep eating more food than your body needs in the first place and it's not just because ice cream tastes good, okay? It's not because you like pizza. Okay? It is so much more than that. It's so much more about what's actually happening in your brain and that's what we really dig into. Once you can solve that problem, that's when you actually solve your weight problem for good. And so that's exactly what we're going to talk about today is how to lose the weight and keep it off long term so that you really are solving the problem for good.

So, let's start talking about what it takes to lose weight for the long term, right? To really lose it and keep it off permanently. I've been thinking a lot about my journey through weight loss and into maintenance as well as so many of my clients who are in the same position. And like many of you know, but if you don't know my story is that I struggled with my weight for decades and decades and I'm a lifetime Weight Watchers member and I just could not figure out how to keep the weight off. Like I could lose the weight pretty okay when I was very much like using willpower and white knuckling my way through eating those points, very much a perfectionistic way of looking at it, very all or nothing. I was either doing it 100% or I wasn't doing it at all and I just could not figure out a way to lose the weight in a way that was doable for me longterm and I couldn't figure out a way to keep it off. Like maintenance happened for like maybe 30 minutes. Like I just could not keep it off so I had to figure out how to solve this problem and I just was looking at my other clients who've had very similar experiences where they've struggled with their weight for so long and just could not figure it out until we worked together.

So what was the common theme amongst all of us? And what it is, is persistence. It's continuing on even when it gets hard, even when you don't want to do it anymore, even when it's the last thing you feel like doing, even when it's inconvenient, even when people are looking at you funny at times, like that's the level of persistence that's required. And what I find is that most people who are losing weight are not persistent, right? What do we do? We try things for a few days or a few weeks or maybe even a couple of months, but then we decide, well, I'm going on vacation, I'll just kind of loosen up the reins a little bit and then before we know what we're just right back eating everything that we always ate and gaining the weight right back again.

We know this is how most people address their weight issue because 99% or so of people who lose weight will have regained it within three years. We know that we are not solving the real problem of overweight and obesity when we focus on the food and we don't actually focus on our brains and becoming a different person, right? Weight loss is a personal growth opportunity. It requires personal development. When you don't do that development, when you don't grow as a human being throughout your weight loss process, you will not be a different person who doesn't overeat to deal with their life. You will be the same person in the smaller body and that old person is a person who overeats so you will just go back to overeating again and gaining that weight back again. So if you were thinking about times where you've lost weight in the past and then you've regained it again, that's probably what happened, right? You changed some things, you ate some different ways and sure your body changed, but it's not going to be longterm and meaningful if you are not doing it in a way that actually changes your brain.

So, when we think about persistence, that encompasses three different elements for me and what I think of is preparation, practice and patience. And it's just convenient that they all happen to have Ps as the starting letter. I didn't mean for it to be that way, but that is what happened. So, first let's talk about preparation. When you are starting to lose weight, it is ideal if you spend a moment or two or a couple of days or weeks maybe even preparing yourself for the process. Because what most of us do is we throw ourselves into the process, headlong. We are just going, you know, headfirst into the whole thing and we haven't really thought about it. What we're mostly focusing on is which groceries do we need to buy? How are we going to get the people around us to accommodate our eating needs? How are we going to make this work and make it so it's not totally horrible when we're at work and that's what we're focusing on.

That's all the wrong things to focus on. Of course you're going to want to think about those things in due time, but the things that are really going to make a difference for you in terms of your preparation are really looking at your desire, your level of desire to solve your weight problem. When I think about all of my clients and myself as well who have been able to lose our weight and keep it off, everybody had a very, very, very strong desire to solve their weight problem and their overeating problem. And what that desire generally comes from is getting to a point where you just can't tolerate the current situation any longer.

I know for myself, I had gone up and down with my weight so many times. I had really, really sworn to myself that I was not going to gain the weight back again after I lost it and then I totally did again and I just didn't know what to do. And I really found myself at this crossroads having to look at what I was going to do next because where I currently was, was no longer tolerable. I was not going to accept it in my life anymore.

I was no longer going to just sit on this merry go round spinning around and around and around with no escape route of losing weight and then gaining it again and beating myself up and being upset with myself and then losing it again. And you know, I was not going to have three different sizes of full wardrobes in my closet to accommodate all the sizes that I would go up as I was gaining and then going back down again. I was not going to do it anymore.

And for me the two options were to either just accept the fact that most people gain weight and continued gaining weight as they get older and maybe that just was going to be my life and maybe I could just work to accept that or I was going to have to do something totally different than what I had done before and that's where I found life coaching in terms of how it can help you to lose weight because it's not just about the food, right? You wouldn't need a life coach if it was just about the food. If it was just about food, you could work with a dietician, lose the weight, and keep it off forever and never have a weight problem again. Except that is not how it works, right? So many people work with a dietician or online nutritionist or somebody like that, and sure, you might lose some weight, but it doesn't last because it does not address the brain component. Okay?

So, you have to get very, very clear on why you want to solve the problem. When you get to a point where who you currently are in terms of weight and how you use food and the whole struggle is no longer acceptable to you, then that propels you forward. Right? That drives that persistence that's required to continue working on losing the weight, picking yourself up after you stumble and fall again and again and again to just keep going no matter what. Like failure is not an option. This is no longer acceptable to go back to the way things were, things have to change and I'm going to figure it out.

You have to know why you want to lose this. If you're thinking you just want to lose this weight because you should or because your doctor said you should or because as a doctor you know that it would be healthier for you or you know that you're setting yourself up for some increased risk of diseases that are worse with overweight, like things like that generally are not that compelling for people. I find myself, I'm not sitting here going everyday like I'm just so glad that I am putting myself in a position where I'm at a lower risk for obesity related diseases. Like that's just not very compelling even though of course I'm happy about it. It's not something that's very compelling for me moving forward. You know, thinking like, I'm so glad I'm doing this because I know I should, it's just not very compelling. But what is compelling for me is the desire to never go back to the old nonsense. Like there's no possible way that I will ever allow that to happen. That's how I know I will maintain this weight forever. No matter what happens, I know I will persist even if I gain weight, even if things get difficult for a long time, I will continue to persist because I refuse to go back to the way things were. Right? That's very compelling to me as I continue to maintain, right?

We think that we need to persist just in the beginning or all the way through goal but once you get to goal, you don't get plastered with gold stars. It's not like all of a sudden the approval of the universe descends down upon you and your life is amazing forevermore. You know what's so interesting is in the beginning you're losing weight and people notice and your clothes are fitting better and you're feeling better and you're seeing the results on the scale.

It's all very motivating, but I tell you what, when you're maintaining, no one's coming up to you and is just going like, "Hey, good job. I noticed you look exactly the same as you did six months ago. That's awesome. Good for you." Right? No one says that. No one is just like, "I just haven't seen you in a year and you look exactly the same. Good job." Right?

You're not getting that external validation that you would be getting when you're losing weight, which is one reason why maintenance is so hard for so many people because it's an internal process that you have to do yourself. It's work that you have to do without the external approval of others. Yes, every time you put your clothes on, they fit. Is it great? Of course it's great, but it's still not the same as getting lots of attention and noticing those visible changes so you have to get yourself to that place where your persistence is driven by this very strong desire to never go back to where you are right now. So, if you spend some time determining why you don't want to go back, right, you understanding the pain, emotional and physical that this is creating for you in your life, that can be very, very motivating for you as you move forward and continue to persist in the weight loss process.

Now let's talk about practicing. This is something that I noticed so many of my clients are very reluctant to do. We think that we should just know everything immediately and never have a problem. I think this is made worse by being a physician, by kind of having this idea that while I'm already a doctor and I should know this stuff and I understand the science and there's really no reason why I shouldn't be doing this. So the minute you don't do it, you think that something's fundamentally wrong with you and you're definitely not good enough. And so just screw all of it, hide in shame, complain, beat yourself up, tons of self-loathing, all of that. And you know, that is a big reason why so many physicians will lose some weight and then gain it back or not be able to stick with something because of this idea that you should be perfect at it immediately. And when you think about it, it literally makes no sense. Like why would you think that that would be the case when it's something that you have not learned yet? It is a skill that you have not developed yet.

My kids right now are, all three of them are practicing because in a couple months they're going to be going to a piano competition and so they have to learn two pieces of music by heart and play them for some judges. And my 14 year old son was practicing the other day and I was sitting in the room as he was doing it and he would mess this up or have trouble here and I gave him all these different suggestions, like try slowing it down, try playing it with a metronome, try just the right hand only, then try just the left hand only then bring them together. Like he's still even learning how to practice, right? That alone is a skill that we have to develop.

How do you actually get better at something? How can you practice in a way that's very effective? Well, one of the best ways to practice is to make a lot of mistakes. If you can get a lot of your mistakes made early on, then you already are so much further down the path than the person who is afraid to make any mistakes and that's what I find so many of you are finding yourselves doing, is you aren't willing to make mistakes. You aren't willing to experiment and figure out what really works for you because here's the disappointing truth, nobody out there has the solution to your weight loss, but you do. What you need is a guide who can help you to sort that out into actually tap into that inner wisdom that you have to figure out what's going to work for you. So, whenever you're signing up for someone's program where they hand you a grocery list and a meal plan, it's not going to work. It's not going to work long term.

They don't know better than you how to live your life and how to feed your body, okay? The way that you figure that out is by practicing, by experimenting, and then being willing to fail. Okay? The big F word. Now, what many of you do though is when you make a mistake, when you screw something up, you make it mean that you are a failure. Like that's who you are as a human being when of course, it's not that at all. You are of course always 100% valuable, lovable, worthy and good enough no matter what you do, even if you decide to never lose any weight, even if you decide to eat all the food, even if you decide you don't care and you'll just take diabetes, it's fine.

That is who you are at your core. Okay? So you are not a failure. You just make mistakes, which some people use the word fail to describe those. I personally don't use that word very often. I don't find it to be particularly useful for me in my life. I make tons of mistakes though. I definitely screw things up all the time. Like that's the way that I like to think about it. So I screw things up but then you have to be willing to learn, right? To spend a moment figuring it out. What is it that I could have learned from this? What could I have tried differently and how can I put myself into a position so I can try again soon?

I see this often. Maybe one of my clients will host a party at her house and it doesn't go well for her in terms of her eating and she doesn't follow her plan so then she thinks, "Well, I don't know. I'm just not ready to host a party. I shouldn't do that again for awhile." And I think, "No, you need to have friends over next weekend. Are you kidding me? No. We need to learn from this. You need to invite people over every weekend until this is just not even an issue anymore, you have it completely solved." You have to be willing to practice, put yourself in those positions. You can't just say like, "Well, we have to go on vacation. We can only stay at an Airbnb because I have to have a kitchen so that I can have this perfect food and have everything laid out." It's just perfectionist thinking that's only going to set you up for disaster, right? For not being able to continue this. You have to be able to figure out how to eat in a way that serves you no matter where you are, no matter what your circumstances are.

So, you have to be willing to practice. And that willingness to practice is how you persist, right? You keep trying, you keep practicing. You get better and better and better and better. And that is persistence. That is what keeps you along the path to maintenance and beyond.

And then the third part is patience. And I find that this is something that we have a deficiency of as well, most of us, and it's that we want to have it all figured out and not just figured out immediately, we want it figured out yesterday. We don't want to have to struggle. We want it to just come easy for us. We don't want to have to let it take as long as it takes. And again, if this is a personal growth experience, which weight loss is, permanent weight loss 100% is, then what we have to do is be in a position where we're willing to let it take as long as it needs to take. We need to be willing to continue on and keep trying and keep practicing and staying patient with ourselves. Not judging ourselves negatively, not beating ourselves up, not looking at it like something's terribly wrong with us if we're six months or a year in and we're still struggling with certain things. You have to be willing to let it take as long as it takes, as long as you are continuing to practice. Right? You were still persisting.

One way you could look at it, and I think this is how most people look at it, is, well, if I'm patient, then why would I ever change? I need to have the drive of disgust for myself and totally judging myself super negatively in order for me to propel myself forward and actually do something different, but that's not at all how this works.

When you are really judgmental of yourself and mean to yourself, which is really what it is, that doesn't propel you forward, right? Why would you want to persist at being mean to yourself? Like when you think about yourself 10 years from now, are you so excited to be super mean yourself and judge yourself harshly? Of course not, right? When you develop the skill of being patient with yourself, you open up the space and the room for yourself to develop in the way that you need to develop, right? If you just looked at it like you have to do it perfectly and we have to do it as quickly as possible, you're not willing to practice, right? You're like, "I can't do it right the first time, then screw all of it. I'm not going to be able to do it." And then you just give up and quit, which is the ultimate failure, right? Just actually not doing any of it.

So, cultivating that patience for yourself is very, very important and what contributes to patience is a willingness to love yourself, to not judge yourself, but instead to be very compassionate with yourself and very curious. That curiosity, that just open-hearted, open-minded curiosity is how you start to figure out solutions for yourself. When you're judging yourself so harshly, your brain just shuts down. All it does is show you how you can't do it and how it's not going to work for you this time. How this isn't meant for you and how your body won't cooperate and something's really wrong with you, and you're really the special person that could prove that weight loss is impossible for your body. And that's not the case at all.

So, when you're willing to be there with yourself for as long as it takes, it actually goes faster. Okay? I promise you. And then once you're in maintenance, you still have to be patient with yourself because there's still times you find yourself doing something and you're like, that's weird, but when you're willing to be curious and open and investigate it in an open hearted way, you're able to see what's going on for yourself, make adjustments and get yourself continuing on that path, persisting on that path of maintenance instead of going, "Hey, I knew you weren't going to be able to do it. I knew this was impossible. Here it is the beginning of the end, the weight is just going to come on like I knew it would." Right? That kind of thinking is never ever going to create what you want. You have to be really, really aware of that which is why working on your brain, working on your thinking and your emotions is absolutely critical in terms of permanent weight loss.

And with that, I just want to thank you for your attention and thank you for being here with me today. Have a wonderful week.

I love you so much and I'll talk to you next time. Take care. Bye-bye.