



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, Hey there, my friend. Welcome to the podcast. How are you today? I'm so glad that you're here with me. I could not be better. So happy to be nice and warm in cozy in my house. It's cold here in Wisconsin in this time of year. And it's so nice when you have all the pleasures of warm clothes, and heat, and a roof over your head. It's so good to bring yourself back to those basics. One of my friends calls it a hedonic reset. We can get to that point where we're like, "The temperature just is one degree off from what I like." You can get a little entitled about it. And it's so good to just bring it back sometimes to like, "I am totally okay." Like, "I have so much amazingness in my life."

In fact, I was supposed to have a doctor's appointment today. Went there. They had a scheduling snafu. They're like, "Nope, we can't see you today." I was like, "Okay, cool. I'll go back home." And on my way back home there was a man crossing the street, and then he set himself up with his sign, and his American flag, and he was asking for money because he was homeless. And it's just always good to remember there are people who have nowhere to go and it's freezing cold outside. And we really have got a great life even with everything else that we have going on.

Now, not to say that whatever is bothering you isn't worth looking at. Sometimes we're like, "I shouldn't even be complaining about anything." No, of course, you can complain about things. But I think it's also good to just take a moment to bring yourself back to reality of the "first world problem issue." Everything is fine. We're doing great. If you have money and overeating is a problem for you, you are living a great life. That overall means that things are really, really good.

Okay. Today I want to talk to you about getting started losing weight. And if you're someone who's already been losing weight or you're like, "Oh no, no, no, I'm past that." I still want you to listen. Okay. Because there's for sure things in other areas of our lives that we want to do and we aren't getting started. So even though maybe getting started with your weight loss and your food issues is not what your current struggle is. I'm sure you're going to learn something that's going to help you in this podcast.

So what inspired me for this topic today is this journal that I have. I think many of you know that I'm writing a book right now. And that has been a really interesting self development journey in and of itself. But I feel like I'm settling into the grind of it, I guess I would say. I feel like I've figured out this is how the book's going to get written. And so what that means is I've been getting up at 4:30 every morning to write. As much as that sounds like the worst thing in the world, it actually is turning out to be something that is creating chapters in a book. So I'm going to continue doing it.

And a teeny bit of me today actually recognize that I think I might be falling in love with this idea of getting up early. And actually beginning getting a partner was never good. But once I'm up, being in the house with everybody's sleep at being completely quiet, and feeling rested is really amazing versus staying up way too late where I'm exhausted, and I really just need to go to sleep. Now, when I say feeling rested, that requires me to go to bed earlier than some of my children. But I am committed to writing this book for you guys. So there you go. I am making sure that I get enough sleep so that I can do it.

But anyway, my point is, that I have a special journal that I got when I got the idea that I wanted to write this book. And all of my notes for what I want to put into the book, I put into this one specific journal. And I just grabbed it. I think I liked the color of it or something. I don't even know that I really read what was on it, but the quote that's on it is actually something that is pretty poignant and one that I want to reflect on today in this podcast. And it's a quote by Mark Twain and the quote is, "The secret of getting ahead is getting started." And honestly, for writing a book that's so good because how are you going to get ahead with the book? How are you going to get that book written? You have to actually start. And it turns out sometimes getting started is the hardest part or one of the hardest parts.

And I know for a fact that getting started with losing weight is something that so many of my listeners and my clients are stuck with all the time. And getting started can look like lots of different things. So we are having trouble getting started. They can look like lots of different things. When you're getting started, you start. So you just decide today I'm going to do it and I'm going to start sorting it out. And the things that I haven't figured out yet, I'm going to start figuring them out. And as new obstacles come up and new challenges, I'm going to either deal with them in the moment. Or if it's not possible for me to do that in a moment, then I will kind of put them aside, and I will move ahead, and come up with what the solutions are. I'm going to figure that out. I'm going to make the best possible decisions I can in the moment and keep learning and growing and trying new things.

But what so many of us are doing instead is, we're getting ready to get started. So that can look like listening to a weight loss podcast and thinking, "Oh, that sounds so good." Or, "I should totally do that." Or, "That completely applies to me." Or, "Someday I'm going to take a moment. I'm going to do that work that she suggests." But not actually ever doing it. Okay? So sometimes it looks like that. It looks like we just aren't ready yet. We need to get ourselves prepared. There's more information that we need. We haven't decided on certain things that need to happen. We might be very confused about certain things. We think we need more information.

And I find this to be the case with so many of my physician clients, first of all, because we're data hounds. We love information, we love learning. And so what so many of us really thrive on is gathering information, researching things, and that just takes us down further and further through these long rabbit holes that don't actually move us forward. It just brings up more doubt for us in our mind. It makes us think there's more information that we still don't understand. And we just feel even more confused because now we figured out that there's within this one way of eating, there's actually 12 different subways of eating like subgroups. And how are we supposed to know which one we're supposed to do. And it's just all very confusing? It's going to require a lot of time and effort to figure it out. And so we just don't get started because we haven't put forth that amount of effort that we feel like is required.

We might also feel really, really overwhelmed at the whole prospect of it. We know it's something we want to do, but just getting going seems very hard. So this is another way it can look like, "I'm totally going to do it, but I just need to have a pocket or a window of time and space to open up for me." If I didn't have this full time job, if I didn't have all these kids or these other responsibilities, if I didn't have to be a caretaker to my parents on top of my job or on top of my responsibilities as a friend or a spouse or a parent, then I would have the time to focus on myself and actually get done what I want to get done. Get started on losing the weight.

So what that ends up being is just a constant deferral. We're just constantly deferring, deferring, deferring, thinking like, "Oh, I'm going to do it. I'm 100% going to do it. I just can't do it right now." And I do think, I was thinking about this today, I was thinking, are there times really when it makes sense not to start? And I think there are probably some times. Like if you're about to go travel to a foreign country for a week or two weeks, maybe on the plane over isn't the time to decide like, "Hey, I'm going to just totally change up all my eating, do something different." I think if you are about to start a week of being on service and when you're on service, you're working like 16 hour days or something, maybe that's not the best time to get started. So I do think there are times. Like maybe you're working a week of nights or something. Maybe that's not the best time to get started.

Now, that doesn't mean that the flip side of that is you're overeating and you're eating all of the things and just completely using food to neutralize all your feelings, but maybe the actual buckling down and making a plan and following it kind of thing, maybe that's not the best time. But those times in our lives are really, really few and far between. They're really pretty minimal when you look at everything as a whole. So it's just another excuse that ultimately makes us feel safe because if I'm going to do it but now's not the right time, then I can feel better about myself because I'm not saying I'm not going to do it, I'm just saying I'm going to do it, but when the time comes, when it's the right time, when I'm ready.

And what ends up happening though is the right time never comes. So what we're doing is, we're just thinking, "Well, I don't want to have to feel bad about myself by just admitting that I'm not going to do this work," because that's how we would choose to think, to feel about ourselves, which is also an option. Instead, I'm just going to keep deferring it and deferring it. Like I'm totally going to do it at some point so that we can feel better about ourselves. Although I feel like deep down we know when we're kind of, you ain't going to run chain. We're like, "Yeah, I don't really mean it." If I'm being totally honest, I don't mean it.

I see this also with clients who are saying like, "I'm just working on getting started. I have started a few times and I'm really trying. I'm spending a lot of time trying. I'm going to get some coaching on that and then I'm going to try." Trying comes in a lot for some people about how they're going to approach their weight loss journey or also just making changes. So let's say you have someone who comes home from work, they're overwhelmed with the kids, so the house may be being a disaster and feeling really hungry and then needing to make dinner. And it just all feels very overwhelming to them in that moment.

And so they're saying, "Well, I have a plan for what I'm going to eat, but when I get home it's just very hard for me. So I'm going to try to follow it. I'm going to try." But what's behind that is I'm going to try, but not really.

I'm really probably not going to do it. It's basically a quit before you even start, but it's just like wrapped up in a pretty bow. It's like I'm going to try to do that so that I maybe save a thing that I want to hear and maybe my coach wants to hear, but I'm really probably not going to do it. I'm probably just going to give myself an ability to get off the hook.

Now, here's what's interesting about this and where this often shows up for people. If you are somebody who basically believes that you can't lose weight, like you're just not able to be a thin person, maybe you feel like you have this belief that there's like obesity gene in your family or in you, or you just think like, "I'm just not sure. I don't know that I really believe that I can lose weight," often it will show up in this way where somebody will say, "Well, deep down they believe I don't really know that I can lose weight." Or, "I think that it's not possible for me."

So then they'll do all this work to try to lose weight. They won't be following their plan. So of course, they won't be losing weight, but then they'll say, "Well, okay, I'm going to try that thing." Or, "I'm going to try that other thing." And they may even think very superficially like, I really am going to try, I'm going to force some effort on that. But deep down they won't really do it. They'll believe like it won't really matter. It's not worth it because they don't believe that they can actually lose weight. So if they follow the plan and they lost weight, which usually they have some evidence that if they follow their plan, they do lose weight. So they know their plan works. It's not that the plan doesn't work, but then that would go against what their belief is. If your body starts losing weight, but you believe you can't lose weight, you will sabotage yourself in order to prove your belief true that you really can't lose weight.

So sometimes that constant like, "Well, I'm trying. Well, I'm doing my best," but you're not really. And you know you're not really. And it usually comes down to that belief that it's really not possible for you. And so the thing about it it's like, let's just think about Yoda. I've got a little bit of Star Wars on the mind. All three of my kids, even my six year old daughter, she's been really into Star Wars lately. Over the holiday break, they were watching a bunch of it. And then this was actually, it's just a little aside. My oldest son kept commenting on how some kids at Disney Plus and how The Mandalorian was a show Star Wars show on there and kept mentioning it. Now, Disney Plus not expensive. Of course, we can afford it. But I was like, "Really? Do they need something else?" And then what I did was, I decided to turn it into a teaching opportunity for them.

So I coached my oldest son who's 14 in negotiating with his two younger siblings who are six and eight about how they could all share the cost of Disney Plus so that they'd each be paying like two bucks a month for it basically. And they all paid in advance for the whole year. But it was really fun helping him to figure out how to sell them on his idea, and negotiate things, and troubleshoot where there might be some issues and stuff. But the bottom line is, we now have the Disney Plus channel. We've got all the Star Wars shows, we've got the movies, this Mandalorian show.

Anyway, so back to Yoda. Okay. So what is Yoda famous for saying, "Do or do not, there is no try." So think about that in terms of getting started losing weight, or really getting going, getting some momentum going with your weight loss. This trying business. No, you're not going to try. You're either going to do it or you're not going to do it.

And I think where the people who get stuck in try mode or thinking that they're trying, where they get stuck is in thinking, "Well, that's actually going to motivate me to do it. When I'm trying, I will do it." But it's not the case. It literally takes no effort to not put food in your mouth. It takes way more effort to put food in your mouth than it does to not put food in your mouth, chew it up and swallow it.

So you don't have to like try very hard to not exert that effort. But when you're not eating the food, you have to be willing to feel the emotions that you feel and not use food to make yourself feel better. And that's the part that you're not willing to do. Okay? That's what's so clear. It has nothing to do with what food is on your plan, or what you feel like eating that day, or you're needing variety, or all the things that people are focused on that are just complete nonsense and a distraction from the real problem when it comes to overweight and over eating, it really comes down to, are you willing to do what you said you're going to do and then deal with what comes up for you when you do it.

And that's usually where people get stuck. They're like, I really don't want to deal with it because they feel like somehow it's going to overwhelm them. It's going to overtake them. There'll be overcome by it. They will maybe act in a way that they don't want to act. Maybe they'll scream and yell at everybody. They'll act completely out of character for themselves. Sometimes I feel like, for some people it can feel almost like this identity shift. They don't know how to identify with themselves as someone who actually is feeling emotions and has to process them, or in some cases reacts to them. They might really take pride in being somebody who doesn't yell, doesn't get upset, keeps everything in check is very neutral and even keel emotionally.

Well, if food is what's allowing them to be that way. They're going to be very reluctant to give that up. So this is where we have to dig deep and go, "Okay, can I be willing to be with myself and actually see what I'm like, who am I when I don't have food as a way to soothe myself, as a way to comfort myself?" Can I just be with myself in my true, authentic emotional state and find out what that is? When you're "trying," you're not even aware of what is actually going on for you. So you don't know how to fix it. So I hear that a lot with my clients. "Well, I don't even know how to solve this problem. I don't know. I just keep spinning and doing the same thing." And it all comes back to being willing to find out.

When we're like, "I don't even know how to stop." Well, you have to be willing to be aware enough of yourself and to have enough self awareness and self regard to go, "You know what? I do want to figure this out." That's where you have to have that commitment to getting started and doing it and continue to fail forward, to mess up, and have all kinds of issues with what you're doing, and have it not work out perfectly, not just the first time, but maybe the first 10, 20, 50, 100, 150 or more times. Being willing to pick yourself up, dust your knees off, and actually look at that and go, "Okay, what was that?" And not go, "okay. Well, now I'm just going to try again for that same thing."

Instead of going, "So what happened for me that I wasn't willing to do what I said I was going to do?" What's going on behind that? And not just allowing your brain to go, "I don't know. I can't figure it out." If you did know what is it, what might it be? Let's just brainstorm options. Maybe through the brainstorm you'll be able to tap into what that is and where the problem is.

This is what I'm finding super interesting because the people who are really the ones who continue on and are willing to just tough it out through this part of the process tend to have a reason for losing weight that is very, very strong for them.

People call it your why. They are very, very committed to losing this weight. And oftentimes, I find that yeah, they want to lose the weight and they want their clothes to fit a certain way, but usually they are just committed to improving their emotional state. They are committed to sorting themselves out mentally and emotionally, and would like to have some weight loss as a part of that. And that's great as well. And their commitment to themselves is recognizing that there's a lot going on in their minds and in their bodies in terms of emotions that they need to sort through. They need to figure that out, so that they really can make the changes that they need to make moving forward.

I just have been thinking more about that commitment and the why, the reason why you're doing things. Recently for myself, I'm going through a situation right now where I'm working with an integrative medicine specialist on a couple of different things that are going on for me. But in particular, I have been on a proton pump inhibitor for literally 20 years. I had a chronic cough in medical school, and we tried all these different things. Nothing worked. The last thing we tried, even though I'd never had heartburn a day in my life was a PPI. I got put on it, it worked. My cough went away. And at that time everyone just thought like, "Okay, then just keep taking it."

And what was so interesting was, I had never had heartburn a day in my life until I was on that medicine for a while and forgot to take it. And I was like, "Oh, this is what heartburn feels like." Well, long story short, I've actually tried to get off of it through working with a regular GI specialist. And it was eight weeks of absolute torture, no improvement whatsoever. My voice was impacted negatively, which is not good when you're doing a podcast. I had terrible sore throat, sour brash. It was not getting better and I just had to go back on it.

Well, now there's some other longer term issues, some bigger issues happening in my body because I've been on this medication for so long. And I just knew that I needed somebody who had a better understanding of all the supplements and all the different things that you can take in order to get this settled. And who also has knowledge of different dietary things that you can do to help. So this doctor is very confident he can get me off this medication, but we have to do a lot of things in order to get my gut health optimal before we start weaning me off the medication.

And so it's been an interesting process. It's actually not that different how I'm eating now than I was before, except that I can't have dairy anymore, which is actually fine because I didn't eat dairy for five years when I was vegan, so I know I can do it. It's not like I can't survive. But not being able to have that has changed some things. And I might have to go on and even more elimination diet that they call an autoimmune protocol. And so I've been researching that and thinking about all that stuff.

But I was thinking, you know what? I'm 100% willing to do this for as long as it takes. Even though I've got some travel plans for later this year, that will make it definitely a challenge. I am so committed because there's a chance that this medication might be increasing my risk of dementia.

That is a hard why. I do not want to expose myself to that. Now, I'm at a point where basically I'm not able to keep my ferritin levels up, even when I'm taking a whole bunch of iron supplements. My stomach cannot even absorb it. My body's not absorbing iron now at this point.

There's some longer term issues that are happening because of this medication. And so my why is so strong. The possibility of me quitting on this, I'm not going to quit. I'm going to keep going, even when it's super hard, even when I'm traveling, even when I have to be "that person at a restaurant asking for completely separate made meal that's going to work with all my dietary restrictions". I'm going to do that because of what I have writing on the line. I need to get off this medication. And I really do believe that this doctor can help me. And so I'm going to do what he says and I'm going to do it. I'm not going to complain. I'm not going to sit there and say like, "Well, I'm just going to cheat sometimes cause I'm only harming myself if I do that."

So if you can get to a place where you have that strong of a why, of why you need to lose weight, maybe you just want some freedom from the decades of mental chatter you've had around food and overeating and feeling bad about yourself and body image issues. Maybe you are at a place where you're like, "Yeah, I can see how my food is helping me to deal with these other issues that are a major problem for me in my life. I really hate my job. I believe I'm in the wrong marriage. I'm really struggling with my kids, my aging parents," whatever it may be like. Those are all the reasons why you keep sticking with this work even when it's hard, even when you're failing and failing and failing again.

But that's why we talk about with failing forward. You can fail and then go back to the beginning or just quit. Or you can fail, pick yourself up, dust yourself off and take the next steps forward. And then you fail again, you pick yourself up, and you learn from that, and what are you going to do next? What are you going to do moving forward to improve things? That's what you want to be doing. So when you're getting started, this is what you need to be approaching. You need to be thinking about yourself as committed to continuing on. There is no trying. You are going to do this. You're just going to do it. And you're going to keep going, you're going to keep going and you're going to keep going.

Have a wonderful, wonderful week and I'll talk to you next time. All right, take care. Bye bye.