



# WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Hello, hello. Welcome back to the podcast, my friends. How are you doing? How is your February going? We're in the thick of it in winter. Hopefully, maybe if you live in the South you like having sweater weather. I know a lot of people are into that, and those of us up in the North when we get good snow, then we just have to get out there and enjoy it.

Today I actually took our dog, right after I dropped the kids off at school I brought our dog to the dog park and it's actually snowing right now and I just knew he would have the time of his life. And I also wanted to run him. We've decided to pull him from the doggy daycare that he was going to and so he normally would go today and I thought, you know what, this dog really needs to run. He needs to get some energy out. And so we walked around for 40 minutes. We actually have this really nice dog park. It's really pretty big and there's a whole woods area that's kind of cleared out and so you can walk through there with them. And he just had the time of his life. It never ceases to make me feel so joyful for his unbridled joy of running free off-leash, right? It's just the best, just seeing him so, so, so, so happy. But anyway, being out there in the snow, it's so beautiful and pretty and, you know, it makes it pass a little bit faster.

All right, so today I want to talk to you about the concept of admiration and admiration is something that, just even really in the last year, I've been studying more of and learning more about and applying it to my life in a totally different way. If you had asked me a couple of years ago who I admired, I think I would have a little bit of a hard time giving you examples outside of like Oprah Winfrey, Michelle Obama. But people that I know who I admire, people in my life who I admire, I don't think there would have been that many, really. And I think it's really interesting.

The more I've thought about this, the more I've been thinking about how we admire people when we're young. I know when I was younger, I admired musicians, actresses and actors. I admired the Olympians every time the Olympics came around. I was just in such awe of them. So much admiration for them. Just anybody who did something great in the world. We admired them so much. But then also there were, I mean, if we're being honest, the quote-unquote cool kids or maybe some kid who had a cool car or something. We admire them for that. And I think admiration is just a regular part of a child's life. They're looking ahead to what life might be like for them and they're using what they admire as kind of a gauge, like, "Hey, this is a thing that I think is pretty cool. How could I set forth in my life to be able to create that for me?"

Like for instance, say some kid in school on a 16th birthday got a really cool sports car. You might be thinking to yourself, "You know what, hey, someday I'm going to want a cool car like that, and so if I want that, I'm going to have to make more money than just minimum wage." Or something like that. And you might've been motivated anyway for other reasons, but it can give you kind of this little motivation, sort of like your bucket list. "Someday I'd like to have really fun convertible sports car," or something like that.

And so the admiration that we are taking part in when we're young is just kind of par for the course. I think we talk about it a lot with our peers. Even when we're going through our medical training, there are physicians attendings that we work with who we admire. There's, of course, ones that we don't, but the ones that we admire, we think, "Oh my gosh, he or she has really got it going on," or, "They seem to really have a good balance between their work life and their home life," or, "I really admire how that person treats their patients, how they develop rapport with them, how they explain what they're going to be doing before a procedure, how they deal with their post-op care, how they treat the people in their office, their office staff, how they run the actual business end of their practice."

There's so many things that we can admire in those people and what I think is really fascinating is that I think that around our mid-thirties or so, probably right around the time that we are transitioning from our training to our job as an attending physician, we kind of start to fizzle out on the admiration of others. Now, when you first got out and practice, you might have these people who are kind of like your mentors or people who are much more senior than you and you might admire things. Like I remember admiring like, "Oh my gosh, there's so many things that just seem so easy to them, like they don't have to think so hard about it like I do, and maybe someday I'll be able to do that." But it doesn't take long before you're settled in and you just realize that they're another human being just like you.

But that maybe that admiration kind of fades. And so I think what ends up happening once we settle into kind of our quote unquote grown-up life, because of course as physicians, we've been postponing that grown-up life for such a long time, we finally settle into it and we stop seeking out role models, for many of us. We stop looking ahead going, "So what else is it that I want to create?"

In fact, I used to always say this and I said it in a way like it was so great. I used to say all the career development that physicians have to do, we just do it all up-front so that then we get out and then we can just work our jobs and that's it. And comparing that to then businesses, people who are in business in corporate America, where they were working for the next promotion and always trying to achieve something new, at the time I felt so grateful that I didn't have to do that. I was kind of off the hook from that. Like that was just something from my past. We kind of compacted it and intensified it into our whole training period and then, okay, off we can go. Now we can just kind of coast.

And of course there are people who, especially maybe in academia, who are wanting different promotions, wanting different leadership roles or things like that. Maybe you're wanting some leadership roles within your organization in some way. But for me, I was in a private practice with one location and there really wasn't room for any kind of promotion or movement up.

All the physicians were doing the same job and that was pretty much it. Any other work that might be out there or something else for me to think about, typically it was related to helping to run a hospital committee or something that was really quite different, really, when you think about it and for me just wasn't something I was interested in. I think it's great when people do that, but it just wasn't something that I wanted to leave my children at home to go do.

So what ends up happening for a lot of us is we feel that stagnation that often comes from not having any role models, not having any further goals, not even looking ahead to maybe somebody who is a parent who is further along than us, who's a good role model for us, or maybe somebody even 20 years older than us or more, maybe a neighbor or family friend or somebody who really just has a lot of wisdom or is just someone pleasant to be around. Someone that you could aspire to be like or to take parts of their personality or the way they approach their life and have that be something that you want to work on for yourself.

And I think another part of this is that as we get older, oftentimes by the time we are settled into our attending life, we also stop dreaming. We aren't sitting there thinking and dreaming about our magical job as a doctor that we're going to have. We're like, "I have it." And if anything, you're probably thinking, "Well, these things about it kind of suck." But I think that's par for the course. I don't know that it could be that much better. And even for people who get into their first job or two and realize, "Whoa, this is not the environment at all that I want to be in," even when you switch jobs or move cross-country or something like that, there's still going to be the ups and downs. There's never going to be that job that's just like, "Oh my gosh, I hit the jackpot. It's amazing every single day, all the time." There's always something.

So we stop dreaming. We stop really thinking forward into the future. We kind of take it like we're hitting our stride and I think to a certain extent, that thought can feel good, but I think over the course of time it results in us stopping dreaming, no longer seeking role models, just basically kind of doing the same thing, different day and all the things that ensue from there.

Here's what ensues. When you don't have other people that you admire, where you are intentionally admiring them, what ends up happening is your brain sees some other people who have things that you don't have. Now, maybe those are tangible physical things, or maybe those are just accolades. Maybe that's a reputation. Maybe that is a leadership position or something like that. And honestly, you know what? It also can be the way someone's body looks, as well.

So we end up looking at what they have, what they've created in their life, and instead of admiring them for what they've created, we end up comparing ourselves to them. And when we compare ourselves to them, we create that compare and despair. We feel envy or we feel jealousy. And what we make it mean, that somebody else has these things or has accomplished these desirable results, is we make it mean that something is wrong with us. So we turn it on to ourselves. Rather than admiring someone that they have done something so great and that we're happy for them, we instead make it mean something negative about us. That we're lacking something, that we're never going to be good enough, something's wrong with us, something like that.

And then what also often happens, especially amongst women, is that it turns into this competitive kind of environment. And that competition can look a lot like a lot of judgment on that person, a lot of gossip, a lot of just mean thinking, mean talk, really just trying to vilify that other person in order to make ourselves feel better.

So this is someone who has something that we think is good, but left unchecked, our brains will compare ourselves to them and then make that mean something negative about us. Then because we feel so negative about that, we want to turn around and decide to believe something negative about that person. So fascinating, what our brains do.

This is just status quo. I mean, if you've ever worked in a medical office where there's a number of middle-aged women, holy moly, right? There's a lot of gossiping. I mean, unless you are really, really good at managing your team. A lot of gossiping, a lot of talking behind people's backs, just not being nice, right? This is just what ends up kind of happening for us because we aren't intentional about what's happening.

So I think that a lot of this comes from us just overall feeling, I always say that we're developmentally delayed, but feeling we're a little behind the eight ball or maybe a lot behind the eight ball because our friends who have different jobs are maybe also working a lot and maybe also have some educational debt, but probably don't have quite as much as we have and are maybe even making more. And meanwhile they've been doing this for a while, so they've been traveling, they've been doing all these other things that are really fun and feel very adult.

And here we come out of our training, jump right into our attending life. We've got massive amounts of debt, most of us, and sure, we're making some money, but I always found it somewhat fascinating. It's not like you get your full salary the day you start your job and you usually have moving expenses and of course, you want to maybe upgrade where you live and maybe you need a car that's finally reliable and there's a lot of expenses when you're first starting out and it doesn't feel like you have that much money. And then your contemporaries might have other possessions or they might have a family already and you feel behind the eight ball because of that. It's basically overall a belief that you're not where you think you should be. That somehow, something in your life isn't okay. Maybe even the fact that you still struggle with your weight. That is not where you should be.

And I think as we proceed in midlife and if you're going to have any children, you finish having your family, you start to really face the reality of what your life looks like and particularly what your body looks like. If you've had a number of children, if you've had multiples, probably, especially if you carried them anywhere close to term, the chances of your belly skin completely sucking back into a nice tight belly? I hate to break it to you. Really probably not going to happen. Now, of course there's things that can be done. You can get surgeries and procedures and things like that to handle that, but I think there's this kind of dissatisfaction with, I always kind of thought, "Someday I'll just really hit the gym hard and I'll eat right and then I'll really be able to have that beach body, bikini body, you know, ready body, and then I'll finally like my body. Then I'll finally like myself."

And the kind of same thing with the rest of the way that our life looks, where like, "Then I'm going to finally get this attending job. Then it's going to be so great and I'll finally like myself. My life will be great." And then we're like, "Oh, well, now I just have bigger bills. And sure, it's nice and there's a lot of great things about living here, but there's some trade-offs too, like there's a lot more upkeep and maintenance for this home. The taxes are a lot higher." There are so many other things that can be going on.

So I think that in that midlife period, so let's just say maybe 35 to 50, 55-ish or so, we are facing that reality of what's going on in our lives. Now, some of us feel this dissatisfaction. I mean, this is when people talk about a midlife crisis, right? Just kind of reevaluating everything and going like, "Wait a minute. What's happening here? Is this really what I want? Is this really what I've created in my life?" Some of us go, "You know what, I need to sort myself out and I'm going to get some help." And that's where coaching can be such an amazing tool and I help my clients with this all the time. But some people, a lot of people, in fact, most people are going to just think that their life is just a fact and they're just going to complain a lot and live a life feeling like they just are not, that life maybe dealt them a bad hand. Maybe things didn't work out for them the way they should. Maybe their relationships aren't the way they always thought they should be or things like that.

And then what I find is that for a lot of people, certainly not everyone, but for a lot of people, once they may be hit 55 or getting closer to 60 or maybe even a little older, there is a level of wisdom that comes. They're kind of coming out on the other side of this and in doing so, they often are making peace with those things that they thought were really not right or not good about their lives or their bodies or things like that. There's a lot of acceptance and then they can move ahead. Now again, not everybody. There are plenty of women who go to their deathbed wishing they could just lose 10 pounds. They just never give up on it at all. But for a lot of people, that is the case.

So the whole purpose of discussing this whole issue is, what if we could just skip that whole part of the 20 plus years or so where we are in the state of just not being happy, ultimately, deep down with what's going on in our lives, but also with ourselves? Maybe we're rocking it in so many areas of our lives, but when it comes to ourselves and our body and how we're treating ourselves, that's not good. Or we're everything to everybody else, but overall, we're pretty burned out and really not caring for ourselves in the way that we should.

So I was thinking about admiration in the whole framework of all of this, and I think it's so important to find people that you admire. Now, here's what's really important. Just because you admire someone doesn't mean that you want what they have. So let's just use me as an example. You can admire what I've done, but that doesn't mean that you have to quit your job as a pediatrician, become a coach and start a business. You can admire what I've done and use that as a stepping off point for yourself to figure out what else might you want to do in your life.

Maybe something's possible for you that you never even could dream of, that you never even knew was even available to you because you just never went there, you never even allowed yourself to dream anymore. You didn't spend any time there being curious and trying to find out what it is that you really want in your life besides what you currently have right now.

Now, here's the thing. You don't necessarily have to achieve or create anything else. In fact, it's wonderful if you're loving your life and you think everything's amazing. That's awesome, but make sure that you are there with yourself, you're not comparing and despairing with other people. When you're finding feelings that are based in envy or jealousy or you're finding yourself gossiping or judging other people, getting really curious as to what that's about.

But I also want to talk about admiring yourself because this is something that I definitely see with my physician clients so often, that this concept of admiring yourself seems like it's conceited or that you're going to be really full of yourself or that people will reject you if you admire yourself, especially if you admire yourself out loud and in public. And so I actually looked up what the definition is of admiration - I was just curious - and it's respect and warm approval. And I was thinking to myself, isn't it so funny how we make outward admiration of ourselves seem like such a ridiculous thing? That we're totally full of ourselves or that it's just somehow egotistical. But how is it bad to respect yourself and approve yourself warmly? There's really no downside to that, because we're often seeking other people's approval so much. We're people-pleasing. We're doing all of these things to try to get their approval so we can feel good about ourselves. And by admiring ourselves, we're offering ourselves our own warm approval. We're respecting ourselves as human beings, as people who are worthy and deserving of all of the things. A mind that's managed. No more nonsense and drama around food. So many things that we deserve, when we respect ourselves, we decide that that's something that is not just an indulgence or something that would be ridiculous for us to want for ourselves.

Also, when you admire yourself, this doesn't mean that you're always taking all the credit for what you have or what you've created. I think that's where people really get stuck with this, like if you're admiring yourself, then you're somehow taking credit. Now, I think it's also actually amazing to take credit for the things that you've done. I think that it is something that is important for us to practice. I see this all the time with physicians. They're like, "Yeah, whatever. I'm a doctor. Who cares?" But that's a really big accomplishment. You should admire yourself for getting through that. That doesn't mean that you're walking around like this entitled jackass. You can be a normal down to earth person, but still be like, "You know what? I got it going on, though, because look what I've created. Look what I do for a living. This is so amazing."

Now, if you have any kind of religious beliefs or any kind of connection to the universe or something larger than yourself in some sort of way, oftentimes people like to give credit to a higher power, another being, the universe, something like that when they're admiring themselves. They're not taking credit for it, they're going like, "No, this is God-given," or, "This is given from some other energy source out there and I'm just the conduit for it." But you can still admire yourself for being the conduit. There are so many people who aren't tapped into that, who aren't connected to that, aren't willing to take the suggestions and actually do something with them.

I actually heard Eckhart Tolle talking to Oprah in an interview and he was talking about how all the books that he's written, they're not his books. When people say, "Oh, you've changed my life. Your books have changed my life," He's like, "Well, no, that came from the universe. That came from this greater energy that just flowed through me onto the paper." And I think that's such an interesting way to think about it. He really is the conduit because he was open and he was also willing to sit down and write the book.

Some people are like, "Some day, I'll write a book. I should really do that." But most people won't because they're not willing to be that conduit. So you can admire yourself for being that conduit, for being willing to go through the whole process of even becoming a physician. Most people will just quit. It's way too hard. And you stuck it out. You can respect yourself and give yourself some approval for that, for sure.

I find this so often. It's so hard for my clients to allow themselves to be happy for their accomplishments. Something good happens and they immediately downplay it, but they're the biggest cheerleader for other people in their life. And it's again, because they don't admire themselves. They don't think they're deserving of that respect and that internal personal approval. And I want to make it clear again, this is not about bragging. This is not about being boastful. Although, I mean, some people might even interpret it in that way and that's, of course, their thoughts. But it's not like I'm asking you to do those things. Bragging and being boastful is like, "I'm amazing and I'm better than you." Admiring yourself is saying, "I'm awesome in these ways and I think you're awesome in these ways, too. I admire myself. I admire you. I think everything you're doing is amazing. Maybe I want to model some of the things in my life after what you're doing in your life. Maybe I want to create some of the results that you have. Maybe I don't, but I can still be your biggest champion. I can totally respect you and give you warm approval for that."

So this is really something that I think that is more acceptable and tangible for a lot of people as they're working toward developing self-worth, developing a relationship with themselves where they actually believe that they're a valuable human being who is just as worthy of being on this earth and taking up air and space as anybody else. And I just want you to think about, who do you admire? Who do you admire outside of yourself and your life? And if there really is nobody in your life that you know, that you admire, that's okay. It's completely fine. Maybe you just have to think about it some more, or maybe you just instead will do better by thinking about people outside of yourself that you don't know, or outside of your community that you don't know in person, but you can still admire them. They can be an amazing role model for you regardless.

And then think about in what ways you can be admiring yourself, how you can allow yourself to offer yourself the gift of your own admiration, and what that can create for you moving forward. Imagine that you're admiring yourself for sticking with a diet plan, trying to lose weight even when it's super hard. Even when you're disappointed in how you showed up in certain things, you can still respect yourself for coming back and trying again. You can really admire yourself for getting back up again and continuing forth on the process. You don't have to beat yourself up. You don't have to make it mean something's wrong with you. Other people have it all figured out. Everyone else is getting all the results and I'm not. I see that all the time.

So contemplate some admiration this week. I admire you because you know what? You are listening to a podcast on how to improve yourself. And most people don't do that, so you already are ahead of the game because you were even open to these ideas. Even if you listen to what I said and you're like, "I don't know about any of that," you're at least here and you're still listening. And for that, I admire you so much.

Have a wonderful, wonderful rest of your week and I'll talk to you very soon. Take care. Bye bye.