



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, Hello there, my friend. Welcome back to the podcast. And if you're new, welcome. I'm so glad that you're here. I am recording this one early in the morning again for you. As I've told you before on the podcast, I am getting up early most days to write the book that I'm writing and I actually got up early but I'm getting other work done today. I ended up having a pretty busy week and I really wanted to get this podcast episode recorded because we are leaving in a couple of days to go on our annual ski trip to Vail, Colorado.

And I often actually travel with my podcast mic. And when I feel motivated I just go ahead and record a podcast for you. As you know, I've told you that I've recorded this podcast in lots of different places and I kind of think I'm not going to do that this time. So I wanted to make sure that I got this recorded. I've had this idea, it's been cooking in my brain for a while and so it's kind of a no brainer to get it done. But at the same time I just had to pause and let my six year old daughter know, "Hey you got to be quiet," because she just woke up early and I think my husband's going to be getting up to work out here momentarily as well. So it's going to be an interesting one. This one.

All right, so today I want to talk to you about innovation and using innovation as a tool to create the lasting weight loss that you desire. Because most of us know we can lose weight, we can white knuckle it, we can count points, we can eat pre-made meals. There's things that we can do and weight will come off of our bodies, but I'm sure you've had this experience as have I so many different times that that's not really what we want.

We're like, "I want to get this weight off of me," but what we really want, we do want that, but what we really want is freedom around food. We want to have to not think about it anymore. We want to get to a place where we don't have to use some specific tool or points or things like that to be able to function in the world. I remember always saying, because I lost my weight with weight watchers so many times. I'm a lifetime member. Always the answer for me was go back to weight watchers and I would follow the points and track the points and do the whole thing and it worked. It always worked. But then I would get to my goal weight and I had zero interest in continuing to count those points. Like the idea of counting points for the rest of my life. I was just like, no, I'm not interested in doing that. That's not something that I can envision myself doing long term.

But what I, this is where I struggled, what I didn't do is I did not actually innovate an idea and a way for me to keep that weight off. I was just like, "Hmm, maybe I'll just stop doing that and hopefully the problem will be solved."

I didn't really think about like, okay, but that's unlikely because you have so much evidence that every time you stop counting the points, the weight gradually comes back on again. And for me honestly it usually was, there was some sort of travel involved. It was already kind of getting a little looser and like hmm, I wasn't as strict with myself.

And then we'd go on a trip and it was like game over and the weight was totally coming back on again. And so innovation is something that we value in so many different areas. I mean innovation is spoken about in the business setting all the time. Of course, in medicine we are always trying to innovate. Innovation is what creates something new. The definition of innovation is a new idea method or device. And so think about in medicine what we're always doing, we're always looking for a way to be able to help our patients in a better way. A new way of treating a disease, a new medication that's going to help maybe some way of reducing side effects of something, some new medical device that's going to completely revolutionize people's lives who struggled with a specific problem.

I mean this is something that's valued and we kind of take it for granted. It's like, of course there's always going to be new research coming out. There's of course always going to be new practice guidelines that we want to be following. There's always going to be some new thing that we're going to take part in. I remember in medical school them saying, "Well, what you learn here in these next four years, by the time you retire, about half of it will no longer even be relevant or how you practice medicine anymore." And I think that's so telling. There's so much innovation going on all the time and I believe that as the world's population continues to grow, the faster the innovation will go. There's just more people who are super intelligent. There's more human brains set to the task of solving the world's problems.

That is just going to be faster and faster and faster. Of course, that's why sub-specialties have become such a thing. There's just no way that a generalist can keep up with all the different innovation that's happening all of the time. But when it comes, our weight loss, what we often do is completely not innovate at all. I'm the prime example. I think the first time I went to weight watchers I was in medical school. Yeah. I think I was in medical school and I'm like, "Oh, this works." And then I continued to do the same thing on and off for the next, let me just think about do the math here about 15 years. And I had so much evidence that it wasn't really working, but I never put two and two together that, huh, maybe I need to change the way that I'm approaching it. Maybe I need to innovate.

So I looked up the definition of innovate and the definition is to make changes or do something in a new way. And that is from Merriam-Webster dictionary. So we need to be making changes and doing something in a new way in order to innovate and that is exactly what's required in order to lose weight permanently. So if you have tried things and it hasn't worked for you long term in the past, which if you still want to lose weight and still have weight to lose then yes you are in that place. And I would even argue if you are at maintenance right now, at your goal weight and figuring out how to maintain, you're for sure doing something in a new way, if maintenance has never been something you've really been very good at.

It's always interesting to me when people are like, "Great, I lost the weight, I'm done." I'm like, I would argue that you're just beginning because this is a whole new skill set that you have to develop. How to keep that weight off without all the dopamine hits, of seeing the scale drop and buying smaller clothes and people making comments and things like that. You just have to learn how to make it just your new normal even when you're not getting that external validation. So when it comes to innovating and your weight journey, you have to start thinking about what you've done in the past, which parts of it have worked and which have not worked, and then innovate to create a new way of doing the things that didn't work.

So however you were trying to approach something and then you were doing it in a certain way, it wasn't working. You have to innovate a new approach to those issues in those areas of focus. So when you think about the things that worked, I often find that people will just tell me like, "Well, just nothing works. I can't keep any weight off." Like it's a very helpless and hopeless, very sad story usually about like, then I did this and then it didn't work and then I couldn't keep it up and whatever. But here's the thing, people would tell me all the time, "Oh, I did the whole 30 but then I just went back to my old way of eating." "Well, how did you feel when you're doing the whole 30?" "Oh, I felt Amazing. Are you kidding? I felt so good." Okay, well that's good information. It turns out when you eat that way, huh, my body responds really well.

And I'm not saying that that's the solution, like doing a whole 30 instead of doing it whole 365 over the rest of your life. I'm not saying that's necessarily what you decided to do, but it is really interesting like what's different between whole 30 and how you eat currently. Maybe you're eating way more fruits and vegetables when you're doing whole 30 and that's what is contributing to you feeling so much better. A lot less meat and whatever else that you're normally eating. A lot less junk food. Maybe you notice that you cut the flour and sugar out and you're like, "This, my body is so happy with you right now. My body is just functioning in the best way possible." So many women struggle with digestive issues and constipation chronically and things like that. Maybe you notice, wow, my gut health and my ability to digest is so much better when I'm not eating sugar and flour or something like that. That is actually really good information.

So you've looked at what has worked for you in the past, you know your body likes that and then you start looking at, okay well what were the things that were a challenge about this? Maybe it was that you looked at it like it was just a temporary kind of a thing. You weren't looking at it like, hey, how can I make this be a long lasting habit of mine? Like with the whole 30 you are thinking like I'm just going to do this for 30 days and then I'm going to ease myself back out of it again. But maybe thinking about easing yourself back out of it is the problem.

I know for myself it's the same thing with weight watchers. I'm going to get to goal and then I'm going to ease myself out of this points counting business except how I approached easing myself out did not work. Like what I didn't learn, well, there are lots of things I didn't learn while I was there, but what I really didn't learn was how to determine myself when appropriate amount of food is for my body, like how to listen to my body's signals that have always been there. When you have points or some sort of measurement or something like that, you are basically saying, "Hey, my body doesn't know how much food is the right amount of food for me."

Now, with that said on occasion, I actually think it can be helpful to measure your food, to give you some semblance of what a normal amount of food is for people. I will have clients do that on occasion for a short period of time just to give them some of that just frame of reference or sometimes just to get a little bit more precise with their eating. But in terms of a longterm solution, I mean I think if you want to weigh and measure food for the rest of your life or count points the rest of your life, great. I mean if that works for you, awesome, do it. It's just that most of us don't want to, we're not willing to do that. So we need to innovate and come up with a new way. Doing something in a new way. How do we maintain our weight without having to measure and weigh our food, without having to count points, without having to have meals already pre made and showing up.

I know for myself the points' thing was great as long as I was home, as long as I was 100% in control of the food that I was eating and preparing. But if I went out to a restaurant, it was so challenging and I was all up in my head about, I don't really know and, and I don't know how much this is. And they would say, "Oh, just make your best guess." Well, I was all in my head about, I don't know what I should, is this the right thing? And then of course I had so much trauma in my head then I would just over eat and try to convince myself that that was going to be okay. And of course it wasn't.

So then I tried to just control my environment. Well, I just don't really want to go out to eat because I'm not getting the results I want when I go out to eat. Rather than going, "Hey, I need to figure out how to be able to go out to eat or go to a party and have this not be a big deal," and that wasn't available to me as help, but I also wasn't taking ownership of the need that I had to innovate. I was kind of like, "Oh, that doesn't seem to be really a part of the program." So I want you to think about the changes that you need to make in order to create innovation and create a new way of losing weight and keeping it off permanently.

This really is not as complicated as it may sound. It's really just looking at, like I said, what works for you, and then doing that and then looking at what hasn't worked for you and creating something new to try in the meantime. Now what most of us as these highly intelligent physicians want to do is we want to come up with a new way and then we want it to work immediately and we want it to not be hard and we want to never fail or have any struggle with it. And we want to just have the first idea work immediately.

And listen, I am on board with you. If that were the case, then we could construct a way for that to be your path in life. Like I am all about it. Let's do it 100% except that I have coached hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of women physicians through weight loss and it's just not how it goes for really pretty much anybody. And so you have to be willing to continue to innovate, to come up with new iterations. It's not like Apple was like, "Hey, let's make an iPhone." And like the first thing that they came up with is what we have in our hands. This is such an accepted process in so many parts of the world, so many different areas of the world that you need to work on something you need to try new things.

So many people talk about innovation in terms of relationships. Like if you're in a longterm committed relationship, do you need to be continuing to innovate to keep the relationship fresh, to come up with new ways to connect because you as a person are changing and your partner's changing as well.

Here's the same thing with weight loss. Like your body is changing, the way my body responded to weight watchers when I was 23 or however old I was when I first went, it was very different than it did when I was 39 the last time that I went. I mean I used to be able to lose three pounds in a week, like no problem.

And then as I got older, of course weight loss was not that quick. And then I would make that to mean something very disappointing. I'd be like, what? Only about a pound and a half down? What? And that's I think why I would just bang it out so much when I was breastfeeding because then it went faster. It was always about this diet mentality, which is of course never what creates longterm lasting permanent weight loss for us. I think that a huge innovation that I made for myself in terms of longterm weight loss was losing all the weight and maintaining and then spending a lot of time really working on basically what people call intuitive eating, but I think the way that I approach it is a little bit different. I should probably do a podcast on that as well, but really learning to tune in to what my body is telling me is an inappropriate thing to do.

And now that I'm aware of that, it's so obvious. It's like it's been there the whole time but you just didn't know. And then once you know, it's always there, always there to guide you and that's that ultimate freedom from food that we're talking about where your body always has the answer for you for what is the next best step, what you should eat or if you should even eat at all. And when you take all the drama out of it and you know how to manage your mind, it's just a completely different experience. So going out to eat is the same as going to a party is the same as eating at home. There is the difference.

I had to innovate something new so that it wasn't the situation where it was like, well, when I'm here, then I can eat this way and when I'm here I can eat this way. But God forbid I go to work and I haven't measured out all my food to know how many points it is, then I'm screwed and I'm just going to eat all the things. That's what I want to make sure we're not doing. Now, I think that with innovation it's a process. Like I was saying, there's different iterations. You start with one thing that's working. Then again, you figure out, okay, what do I like? What's working, what's not working? Now I'm going to innovate in the part that's not working. And then you try something new and then you reassess what works with that, what didn't work, what do I want to change and do different?

So this is the part where you have to be willing to let it be a journey, to let it be a process. Like it's not going to be something that you just figure out the first time. You have to be willing to be open to all the possibilities, to being creative, to being focused on something new that maybe you've never even heard of, maybe that no one has ever told you before. It's going to be this new thing that works for you. Maybe it's a new way of thinking about certain foods that when you think about it that way it serves you so much. I'm not going to be able to tell you that. I can give you suggestions, I can help you get there, I can be your guide, but you have to be willing to do that work to figure that out for yourself.

And so I'm telling you is an amazing tool, and it is so... I think it's just such a great way of thinking about the process like, well, I'm just innovating right now. Not like, I'm just jacking this up all the time and failing right and left and I suck at this, which is how most people will want to look at it instead looking at it like, okay, this is part of the process. I'm always going to be innovating. I think about that for myself.

I'm going to be turning 44 here pretty soon. I'm thinking, the next five to 10 years there's going to be some serious innovation required. I am quite sure just as my body goes through changes and to keep myself at a good weight for myself, I'm going to have to figure out new ways. Things that are working right now will probably not be working then, but when you're willing to innovate, who cares?

I'm going to figure it out. I'm not worried at all about that. I'm not worried like, "Hey, I think I'm going to lose the 15 pounds that most women gain when they go through menopause." I'm like, "No, I'm going to figure out a way to go through menopause and not gain that weight," 100% I'm going to do that. I know that for a fact because I can believe it, number one, but number two, I have all this evidence of I figured it out before or my body's changed before. Different things have come up before and I figured it out and I know I'll figure it out this time too.

So I want you to think about how innovation can come into your weight loss journey. How can you use this as a tool to keep yourself focused on creating the change that needs to happen so that you get the results that you want in your life because I'm telling you this is the best work. And once you figure this out, like say, you just apply this to your weight loss, then you know how to approach anything. Making changes maybe to the way you manage your practice or manage the people that you work with. Maybe it's your relationships like I was talking about. Maybe it's some problem that you see in your community and you innovate a new idea of how that problem can be solved.

Like your brain just starts operating in this way and it stops making a big dramatic story about how awful it is that you can't figure out how to stop putting food in your mouth. I literally just had somebody to tell me, "I think the only solution is to have someone sitting next to me preventing me from putting the food in my mouth," and I was thought to myself that way of thinking about it, which is optional, okay? That way of thinking about it is the most disempowering thing that I have heard. It's a complete victim mentality of the food being the villain and you being the victim, not having any control over what you do. And the only way for you to be able to not eat that food is for something outside of yourself to take the villain away, take the food away, somebody else.

I mean these are grown adults saying this. This is a terrible way of thinking about it, you have to be able to recognize that and then innovate. Like I cannot continue to think about this way because it creates the result of me having a lot of pain and agony emotionally and physically around my overweight issue and my weight loss struggle.

All right. Have a wonderful week and I will talk to you next time. Take care. Have a great one. Bye. Bye.