



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Hello there, my friend. Welcome back to the podcast. So happy to have you with me here today. I want to also welcome you, if you're new to the podcast, then this is going to be a good one. We're going to dive in. We're going to be talking about religion today. This is going to be applicable to anybody who has a belief system and also if your belief system includes you not believing that there is a higher power. This isn't just only if you have religion in your life is this going to be useful. We're going to be talking about how coaching and religion mesh together and also how some people who are not religious believe that coaching does have some religious undertones to it. Generally the people who are religious feel like coaching isn't religious enough and some people who are not religious feel like coaching is too religious. We're going to be talking about all of that.

This is a really exciting episode for me. I've been thinking about it for a long time actually, and just wanted to get more information from some of my clients or other people with different religious backgrounds and different belief systems before I dug in, because certainly the way that I believe is my own personal belief system. I kind of felt like it wasn't, on its own, really that relevant to you, my listener. It was kind of like, "Yeah, I can tell you what I believe, but how's that relevant to you?"

I also know that lots and lots of people don't believe the way I believe. I actually went to my clients and I asked those who had done a lot of work on figuring out how to align coaching with their religious beliefs and how they had done all that work, to share with me some of that work that they had done and how they'd put it all together for themselves.

Then I also collected some of the questions that my clients have been asking recently about religion and their religious nature, possibly how people see things, and the questions that they have. I want to address a lot of those today for you. It's going to be great.

Okay, the big question that I get is how you mash your religious beliefs with the coaching tools that I teach you here. It can seem like they're misaligned philosophically, it's just like you've got this one part of your life that's your religion and you've got this other part of your life that's coaching. How do you fit those together? Or do they even fit together? That's the question.

Here's the thing with religion, and we're not just going to be talking about a specific religion today. It turns out that most of the clients that I have who had been doing a lot of the work on this, happened to be Christians.

They were the ones who spoke up about it. I might discuss it in that framework a little bit more, but it certainly applies to everybody in all religions, no matter what you believe. The thing that you have to understand about religion is that religion is a set of beliefs. We know it's beliefs and it's not facts because that's what faith is. Faith is required in a religion. That means that you believe it without always having the full evidence in front of you.

It's a collection of beliefs that you have. What we know our beliefs are, are thoughts that we've thought so many times that we believe them. For many of us, if we grew up in a certain religion, we were taught these beliefs, we were told to believe them as a child and we've continued on believing them. That's not the case for everybody, some people find religion later in life or they convert to a different religion. Then they decide at that point to change their beliefs and their thoughts about it.

The way that I approach religion in terms of a coaching model is in a very simple way. I think what really gets in the way for a lot of people on this is they start making it very complicated in their brains and they start confusing themselves. It starts turning into kind of a big thing. I want to offer to you that it actually is super, super simple. That is by asking yourself, what is the result of me believing and thinking these thoughts? That is where the thought model comes in.

If you're brand new and you don't know what the thought model is, I teach it in depth in the first couple episodes of this podcast. You might want to just hit pause and go and listen to those so you know what I'm talking about. Just as a quick review, there's five components of the thought model. There's the circumstance that we start with, that is the neutral facts, what everybody agrees on. That goes on the C line there. Then we have thoughts, and our thoughts are about the circumstance. These are things that we create when two neurons in our brain put something together. They have an electrical connection and we have a thought. We have thoughts, our thoughts create our feelings, that's the third line. Our feelings drive our actions, what we do, what we don't do, how we act, how we react. Then our actions create our results. Our results are always proof or evidence of that original thought.

If you have a thought that's a religious thought, what is the result of you thinking that? Of you believing that? What that means is you take that thought that you have about religion. The circumstance can just be religion. I'm Lutheran and that is, I was raised in a Lutheran church or something. That's a neutral fact. You can have a thought like, "I believe blah, blah, blah." Then you ask yourself, "When I think the thought, 'I believe X, Y, Z,' how do I feel? What is the emotion that I experienced when I think that thought?" Then you ask yourself what you do when you are feeling that feeling. Then what is a result of doing those things.

It's really, really simple. The way I look at all of this is that you get to decide what you choose to believe. You get to look at it again and again, you don't have to continue to believe things that aren't serving you. In fact, there are certain beliefs that I had that were taught to me when I was growing up, and thought, "I should think these things. I should believe these things," but I just didn't. That conflict actually created a negative result for me, it made me want to distance myself from religion. When I really got to the place where I got very clear on what it is that I believe and I just don't even worry about changing that anymore because I chose those beliefs and I just know that I don't need any more than what I have.

That very, very small belief system, I always joke, I'm like, "I've got a kindergardener's level of religious belief." That's why I didn't really want to come here and talk about my belief. I know a lot of you would be like, "Listen girl." But it works for me.

I like the results that I get from it. I feel very peaceful, very content. It feels very, very good for me and I don't have a lot of conflict internally, I create what I want in my life because of it. The results that I get out of it are very positive, so I know that works for me. But if you have a belief, you put on that thought line, "I believe X, Y, Z, something" and the feeling that you have in regards to that is anxiety, feeling unsettled, feeling uneasy, feeling like you're wrong. There's something wrong with you, if you feel damaged, something like that, your actions are generally not going to be something that is going to serve you and then the result, of course, will be something negative for you.

You can decide that you think that belief is true, but what purpose does it serve? I think the purpose of religion in our lives is to enhance our lives. The reason we have religion is not to make ourselves feel bad or to beat ourselves up for our whole lives. That somehow we are going to be paid off in the future positively when we're dead, or whatever happens if there's an afterlife or something like that because of how negative we felt throughout our lives. I just don't think that it works that way.

But I also agree that I could be completely wrong about all of it. There are other people in other religions who are going to be like, "You're totally wrong, that's not true at all. This is the actual truth." Maybe I am wrong, but I do know that while I'm alive, and I'm here, and it's not possible for me to know whether I'm right or wrong, I can believe whatever I want to believe. I want to choose to believe things that produce a positive result for me in my life, that helped me to be the best version of a human being that I can possibly be. That feels very right to me and I'm pretty sure that if there is a higher power, whatever it is, whatever name you want to give to it, I don't think that that would be a bad thing. I think it all comes together as a positive way of approaching your life.

This is really the question, what do you believe and what are the results of those beliefs? Once you know what the results are, do you want to choose to continue to believe them? I personally believe that whatever you call any higher power that you might believe in, we'll just say God just because easy to say, I believe that God believes that all of us are whole, and perfect, and worthy exactly as we are. Warts and all, with all of our sins, and all of that. That's that unconditional love that is offered by God.

We do not approach ourselves from that place. We don't agree with him so often, we think that there's something wrong with us. We think that we're not worthy, we think that our imperfections are intolerable. What I think coaching can help you to do is to see what God sees in you. Basically, get your thoughts to a place where you agree with what God believes in you.

I think that if you believe in a religious framework of some sort, all you're doing when you're working on your thinking is working on agreeing with what that higher power thinks about you. I have clients then who offered that they used to have a lot of thoughts about themselves within their religion that they would really struggle with feeling like a fraud.

Particularly, there's somebody who converted to Judaism and she felt like she was a fraud. Then she kept trying to prove that she was Jewish, and then do things to try to prove that, then would feel super anxious when she was trying to do those things. By changing her thinking, she has changed her identity. She now feels 100% Jewish all of the time. She doesn't feel like she has something to prove. She is 100% worthy, and there, and whole completely.

Another client was sharing that she used to feel very judged by the members of her congregation, so she really struggled within that. A lot of us struggle to because we have a whole bunch of humans, all together, and then that's just always a recipe for drama.

What I think you can definitely do is you can explore your faith more openly when you are able to choose your beliefs because they serve you. You feel judged by members of your congregation for who you are, you get to decide how you want to think about that, how you want to think about yourself, how you want to think about them, and how you want to think about what the church is teaching. You get to decide that this is what's true because the result of believing that is what serves you, and not because you're supposed to or you were told to believe or think a certain way.

I do want to share this one Bible verse that one of my clients had said that really helped her as she was figuring out some of this work and figuring out how to mesh everything together. It's from Romans 2:12 and it says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will." She just said that this helped her so much because she really was transforming her mind by choosing her thoughts and that this helps so much. Other clients as well talked about how they felt such a transformation. There's even Bible passages, if you look, that support doing this work.

Along the same lines of believing that it's worthwhile to think about yourself in the way that God thinks about you, Christians believe that God gives mercy, and forgiveness, and grace even when you do the wrong thing. Which of course you're going to do all the time because you're human. I think a really interesting way to think about that is if God can offer me that grace, and mercy, and forgiveness, who am I to not offer it to myself? To not offer love to myself, to not forgive myself when I make mistakes, to not offer myself grace? That is exactly what I see in my clients and of course it was in me as well. Being so hard on myself, beating myself up so much, being so angry with myself for just chewing up some food and swallowing it. Who cares? Being so angry at myself that my body was a certain size or my clothes were too tight. None of that even matters.

My clients know this because I tell them all the time, when you can offer yourself love, and forgiveness, and mercy, and grace, then you can start offering it to others as well. That just completely changes your whole entire life for the better. What I think is helpful is if you have a religious framework in your life, maybe you're like, "I don't even know what it's like to be unconditionally loved by someone. Like how would I do that for myself?" If you believe in a God that loves you unconditionally, then you can look to your religious beliefs as an example of how you can start offering that to yourself offering yourself that kind of godly love.

Okay. Now let's start talking a little bit more about the struggles that I hear people talking about. This comes down to what some of my clients have struggled with and I've startled with some of this as well, so I'll have some thoughts even personally as well. A lot of people believe that the main core beliefs or tenants of their religion are facts. Then they don't know where to put those in the model because not everyone agrees with that.

We would say you could put a fact on the circumstance line, but it's only a circumstance if everybody would agree. For instance, in Christianity, a belief could be that Jesus Christ is the son of God. Not everybody believes that, in fact, tons of people don't. So then we can't put that in the circumstance line. But people who have been raised with that belief are like, "Yeah, but that doesn't seem right to put that on the thought line because it's true." Some people call that an absolute truth and believe that the model doesn't allow for that. Because they believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, it just is the truth.

But here's what I think is so interesting is even that, "I believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God" is something to put in the model as a thought to see what the result is. Maybe the result of that is amazing and you just feel so connected and then your actions are a Bible study, and taking you can out of the Bible, and helping you to live a better life, and that result's amazing for you. Great, that is fabulous.

But what I usually find is that people who are really struggling with the Truth with a capital T truth, like, "This is the truth. I know what's right and other people don't agree with me. Sorry, but you're wrong." They end up ultimately using this in a way to be negative toward themselves. Often they end up with a result that doesn't actually serve them. That may or may not be the case for you, but I really want to encourage you to explore it and to figure out what the result is. Because whatever your thought is, it's always going to end up in that result line for yourself. It's just a question of is it a positive result for you or is it a result that maybe isn't quite as good as you thought it would be?

I don't know what the answer is to that, but I think that one of the best things about being an adult, and being a person with a brain who has free will, that a lot of people believe is God-given, but regardless whether you do or you don't, you can take the time that's required to look through what it is that you're thinking and believing and re-decide whether it's something that serves you and moves you forward. I just think that when religion is supporting you in a very positive way, then what you're getting out of that is so many amazing effects. You're taking actions that are potentially making a big difference in other people's lives. You're serving others. Some of my clients talked about how they really believe that the work that they do as a physician is religious space, they feel very, very connected.

Here's the thing, if you hate your job right now, that wouldn't be very godly. A great way to serve people and come from a religious place is to actually love your job, love your patients, and do an amazing level of quality of care for them. I just think that being willing to readdress all of it is very good. Now, if you're coming from maybe a more conservative background where they say that anybody who even suggests that you rethink anything, that's the words from the Devil, that's the enemy, things like that. You can decide if you want to agree with that or not.

I think that it's so, oh gosh, it's so amazing when you think like, "Do I still believe that?" And you go, "Yes, I do. And I love believing it because of all these amazing results that I get in my life." How much more connected to your religion can you feel than that? But when you won't even let yourself go to that place, you're just keeping yourself stuck. What has happened is other people have offered you their thoughts and told you that it's true, and then you've agreed with them. But it's also good for you to just rethink it yourself and decide, "Is this also what I want to continue to believe in?"

Some people struggle with believing that coaching is too self-focused. That you're focusing on yourself too much and you shouldn't be focusing on yourself too much. One of my clients was sharing about how she's worked through that and she was basically saying that the way she worked through it is by realizing that God made her exactly as she is and God made her brain as well. Therefore, she can trust that her brain has the answer she seeks because God made her brain. If God is guiding her thoughts, then she can trust in her thoughts and doing the thought work, and that she's going to get the answers that she wants or she's going to be guided in a positive way.

Spending time thinking about yourself doesn't have to mean at all that you are being selfish or anything like that. In fact, I've done a podcast on this before about how actually working on yourself is the least selfish thing that you can possibly do. In fact, you are able to serve others so much better when you take the time to get yourself straightened out first.

Okay. Let's now talk about whether coaching is religious. This is the flip side of that. I've had clients say, and honestly I kind of struggled with this a little bit too, "Do we have to believe in predetermination or God having a plan?" Where this often comes up is when we use the Byron Katie phrase, "Well, that was always going to happen. How do we know that? Because it did happen." I believe that I talked about this on a prior podcast a long time ago when I talked about when my daughter died, I really struggled with this a lot as well. Many people offer to us that it was God's plan that she would die. I just personally don't agree with that. I just personally don't think that God's plan is for babies to be killed. I just don't believe that, it just doesn't work for me. The reason I know it doesn't work for me is because the results that I get when I think that is not a positive one for me. So I decided to let that one go.

But where many clients will get stuck is there'll be resisting something that happened in the past and then the coaching will be, "Well, it was always going to happen that way and we know that nothing went wrong because it happened that way." People who aren't religious will really struggle with this. They'll say, "Well, I don't believe that everything happens for a reason." Here's the thing, I actually agree with you personally. Now a lot of people do, many, many people believe that everything is part of God's plan, that everything is predetermined and it's all happening for a reason. I personally don't, but I really find so much peace when I recognize that however something happened was how it was supposed to happen.

For me, there's no religion involved in that at all. If are not a religious person, if you don't have religious beliefs or it's not a part of your life, that you can just drop all of that, that whole part of it, it's not that at all. Some people have even said, "Well, why does something that's happened have to be good or bad? How about it just is?" I 100% agree.

Byron Katie wrote the book, *Loving What Is*, and that's where this phrase comes from. She doesn't do anything that's religious at all, so it's not religious based at all.

When I first was offered that my daughter was always going to die and how do we know that? Because she did. I had a lot of resistance to that. I completely understand it when people struggle with this. I was just like, "Mm, no." It didn't land. But over the course of time, what I realized is that I was really resisting that she had died. I was thinking that it shouldn't have happened. That's not really up to us to decide whether something should or shouldn't happen because things just happen and then we get to decide what we want to think about it. We can decide that it shouldn't have happened, but all that creates for us is resistance and a lot of negative pushback, a lot of negative emotions, because we're resisting what happened instead of dropping all of that and moving forward.

In a religious kind of situation, often people will be able to drop that resistance by saying, "Well, it must have been part of God's plan. I don't have to understand it, God knows, God has it all figured out for me. I don't have to worry about it." In that framework, that can bring a lot of peace to people who have religious beliefs. But for people who don't have a lot of religious beliefs or any religious beliefs, they're just like, "Wait, hold on a second."

Really what it all boils down to is dropping the resistance and thinking that things should be different than they are. Life is happening and when we think that we have a lot of control over it, and then things happen in the way that they do and we realize we don't have control, that can make us feel very, very uneasy and very uncomfortable. That's where people who are religious will offer that the control lies in God's hands. We think we have the control or we like to believe that we have the control.

If we don't have the control, then God has a control. If you don't believe in God, you don't believe in that kind of a religious influence, then what do you believe? You just have to go to, "I live in a world that's outside of my control. Most things, the vast majority of things in my life and things that happen to me, are outside of my control." Then the work is becoming content and peaceful in that lack of control. There's no God, or religion, or anything that has to factor into that at all.

You can believe that everything happens for a reason and if the result of that belief is really positive for you, then awesome. Often, after my daughter died and people offered me that, I kind of was a little jealous of them. "Gosh, I wish that I could believe that. I wish that true to me," because it felt like it would just bring some peace automatically. But it didn't feel right to me. In essence, I was exchanging their offer to feel better for more discomfort and pain because it didn't create a result that felt good to me. I had to get to a different place with it.

For instance, just using the example of my daughter passing away, now I can believe, we're close to 10 years out now since that happened, which is crazy to think about. But I can think, "Okay, well she was always going to die because she did." It was always going to happen that way, I just didn't know. That whole time I believed that she was going to make it, she was going to be fine, she was going to live, everything was going to be okay. I was just wrong, I just didn't know. I felt like just because I believed it that it would be true. But as we know, gosh, we could give a million examples of how that's really not the case. We don't have that control that we have.

Often when we are feeling like coaching has that religious undertone, it's just because some people will take religious beliefs and use those as a way to explain something. But that's not required at all. In my mind, coaching is completely secular and you can enmesh it with religion if that's something that serves you positively. If it's just not something that you want involved in your life at all or it doesn't work for you, then you can completely keep it separate as well.

I hope that that's been helpful for you. I think that this is something that a lot of people struggle with. A lot of them really feel uncomfortable asking. It feels sort of like, "Should I even say anything?" I think it's such a great thing to look at because I think that again, we think that way more of what we are believing, what we think are, as facts. We think that so many of the things that we think are true are facts, but really what's true is that most of it, are thoughts. They're beliefs and beliefs are thoughts, they just are.

Gosh, I could talk about this forever. I will close it up here because we're well past time here. I just think that it's something to open your mind to and it's always a good idea to re-examine what you're believing, and whether it's serving you, and whether it's something you want to continue believing.

Like I said, this is something that I work with my clients on all the time. If this is something that you've also struggled with or you've been thinking, "I don't know if coaching is for me because I'm just not sure about this whole religion aspect to it," then I hope that this has helped you for sure. Whether you're religious or not, coaching can be helpful. It's really up to you whether it's something that you want to include or not.

All right, have a wonderful, wonderful rest of your week and those it next time. Take care, bye bye.