



# WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Oh, hey there, my friend. Welcome back to the podcast. How are you doing? How are things? Wow. A lot has happened in our world. I am recording this from a hotel room in Dallas, Texas. I had come down here for a workshop that we thought was going to happen, and then everything started shutting down. And literally, as my Lyft ride was pulling up to the hotel, I found out that the event was canceled. So I decided to stay for a number of reasons, and part of those reasons is to get some work done. I could not be more excited to be bringing you some help in the midst of what's going on for us in the world, really, with the whole COVID-19 situation.

Now, I do want to just tell you that if you're new and you're finding this, it could just be that ... I mean, even though this podcast is for physicians, I have so many people who listen to this podcast who are not physicians. I think so many people will be finding this podcast because they will be quarantining themselves at home, they're distancing themselves socially, and they're kind of like, "Well, what else can I do? Maybe I'll find a new weight loss podcast."

So if you're new here for whatever reason, if you're a physician or not a physician, I do want to let you know that I have a lot of free resources on my website. There's tons there. So just go to my website, [katrinaubellmd.com](http://katrinaubellmd.com), and click on the free resources link and you'll be able to pick and choose from all the things that I have for you there. It's all for free, and it will help you to figure out how to not eat your way through a pandemic, which is what we're going to be talking about today.

Now, I do have to say that as I'm just kind of seeing what other people are thinking and saying and what people are struggling with, I do think that as physicians we are actually doing super well with this. So I do just want to give you a pat on the back. I think we're doing a really good job as we do in crisis situations with keeping our heads on straight. You guys have heard me talk about this before, and you've probably read the book *House of God*. If you haven't, you really should. It's kind of required reading if you're in medicine. But, in there they say, "What's the first rule in a code situation?" It's to check your own pulse. This is just a very similar situation where you're looking at a lot of chaos, a lot of unmanaged minds, a lot of fear, and so the first thing you want to do is not hop on board with their train of thought. You want to check in with yourself first and go, "Well, hold on a second. What's actually happening here?"

Of course, as physicians, we're also trained to be able to look at evidence, and research, and data, and interpret it way better than the vast majority of the population as well. In fact, I don't generally watch a lot of news really at all because I don't find that it usually serves me very well.

But what I've been finding in terms of keeping myself updated with what's going on is that since I don't work for an institution anymore that would be giving me the latest information on what's specifically happening in my institution, which I know a lot of you have, I've just been going to the CDC website and listening to their media update every day. I figure all the media is all getting the information from the CDC anyway, so I might as well just get it straight from the horse's mouth, right? Just get that information. And of course, as a physician, I'm able to interpret what they say and look at it from a rational perspective and decide what to do based on that.

But, there's some other things that are happening that are outside of our control that we still have thoughts about that are probably not about the patients that we're seeing or our actual work as physicians. You may have children home now from school. You may have children who are not able to attend any kind of childcare. They are home all the time because all the events, and activities, and sports, and things have all been canceled. You might have parents or other family members ill. You might have ...

What I'm hearing a lot of is that a lot of people's parents or family members are in full-blown panic mode, like conspiracy theory, it's the end of the world. And they're just feeling like they're spending so much time trying to talk people down or even then questioning their own more rational way of thinking about it or their thoughts that are not creating fear or worry for them. They're starting to go, "Well, maybe. Am I just the one who's clueless? Maybe they're right." When you're exposed to so many people who are so worried all the time, it is very easy then to start going, "Well, if I'm the odd man out and thinking about it in this way, maybe I'm the one who actually has it wrong." So I want to dress all of that, but all within the framework of not eating in order to deal with all of this, not using food to handle the stress that you're experiencing because it is just a very, very unusual time that none of us have ever experienced before.

Now, with that said, there's lots, still lots of ways of looking at this. Last week, I was talking about how the unknown doesn't have to be scary, and I still stand by that. At this point, if you're okay, and everything is okay, and you have some basic needs, things are okay. Everybody's freaking out about toilet paper. I'm telling you, this is enough reason for me to actually buckle down, get an electrician in my house so that I can get one of those bidet seats. Because I've actually secretly been wanting one for a really long time, but I'm like, "That's ridiculous." Now I'm like, "Listen, then all you need is a towel to pat yourself dry and we are doing great," right? But everyone's so what are we going to do if we don't have toilet paper? I'm like, "There's lots of options." I in fact still have a couple of those squeeze bottles that they gave me after I delivered my babies. I'm like, "Oh, listen. You can just use that as like a makeshift bidet." We are totally going to be fine, right?

So I do want to spend a moment just wanting to empower you, really, in the fact that this is a situation that is really an extraordinary opportunity for us as physicians to lead the world really at large. People are looking to us to determine what they should think and feel. In fact, I've had many, many conversations with people over the last week who are laypeople, they're not in medicine at all, and they're so worried. Then when I share with them the way that I'm thinking about it, they're like, "Oh, well, that's reassuring." Nobody around them is talking about it in any kind of way that isn't steeped in panic, and fear, and concern, and anxiety.

So this is an opportunity to lead us physicians to show everyone around us there are options as to how we approach this. You do not have to be freaking out. In fact, of course worry does not result in anything positive. It's one of our indulgent emotions. So even though it may feel like, well, I should be worried cause everyone else is, it's not creating anything useful for you.

Now, what I think though is that most of you, as my listeners, are actually not that worried. It's just all the worried people around you. And then what that means is that your clinic is packed. You have so many patients to see. You have so many phone calls, so many people that you're talking off the ledge. You're just constantly managing people's emotional states by helping them to figure out what's going on for them. So what that means is typically working longer hours, having a higher caseload, more patients to see, more phone calls, to get through, more charting to do, just more of everything.

Now, if you're already in a situation where your work environment isn't really to your satisfaction or you haven't done a lot of the thought work that's required to make it so that you can actually enjoy yourself there, something like this is only going to amplify your experience of that. It's only going to make it that much worse. It's only going to make you be like, "Now, why am I still in medicine? Why have I not left yet?" And that's when I want to make sure that you're not getting into.

So if you are feeling extra stressed from working a lot and just all the demands of what's coming right now, then it can be really easy to turn to food and alcohol as well to just take the edge off. I mean, you guys know I've told this story so many times how ... Of course it was not in a pandemic situation, but I would feel so exhausted by the end of the day when I got home I just couldn't even eat anything healthy. I would just sit down with a big bowl of popcorn and drink some Prosecco and zone out in front of the TV. I just wanted to check out of the world basically.

So I do want to offer to you that food and alcohol is ... It's one option, but it's not one that's really going to serve you ultimately in the long run. And I do want to address later in the podcast some other opportunities of ways for you to take good care of yourself and actually support yourself, since it seems like this is a situation of unknown duration. We don't know how long this is going to be something that we're going to be dealing with.

I do want to let you know that no matter what the unique circumstances are that you have going on right now, I just want to give you the ... offer you the thought of the great Marie Forleo that everything is figureoutable. This really truly is one of the best thoughts that you can ever take on. It really, truly is something that gets you out of the fear, the panic, the worry, the concern, the frustration. A lot of people are feeling like, "Now my kids are out of school for an indefinite amount of time. What am I going to do with them? I have to go to work." Maybe you're a single parent or your spouse has to work too.

It's not so simple for physicians to work from home or work remotely. I mean, it's possible in some ways, but in a lot of ways it really isn't. So we have to start getting creative, right? Now, you can get creative and figure it out and have a terrible experience of having done that or you can really use this as an opportunity to use your brain in a creative way and come up with a solution that's going to work, really tapping into your network and figuring out a way to make it work so that what needs to be done needs to be done.

Now, I do also want to mention that if you need some help, this is the time to ask for it. If you need to change around your shifts or your hours that you're working or you need to start working opposite hours as your spouse to make sure that the kids are covered, everything is figureoutable. 100% there's a solution. You just have to keep looking for it. So I want to encourage you to just keep that everything-is-figureoutable mindset going for you.

If you don't know Marie Forleo, she actually teaches business and she's great, so she's probably not is somebody who's going to be super relevant to you, but she does have a book that came out relatively recently titled Everything is Figureoutable. So if you're interested, you can have a look at that. I kind of feel like everybody's going to be doing a lot of reading, and Netflix watching, and listening to podcasts, and all the things we can kind of do on our own away from groups of people.

Now, if you have ill family members, whether they actually have COVID-19 or they have something else, again, these are unique circumstances in terms of you being able to support them, figuring out what are the best ways for you to help them and still stay healthy yourself and deal with whatever may come up. So just remember that everything is figureoutable. I do want to also remind you that everything that's happened ... Literally, nothing has really changed in your world in the sense that everything around you that's happening is still a circumstance and your brain is still assigning meaning to it with the way that it's thinking. So if you generally find that you have an easy time of thinking thoughts that make you feel pretty positively about your life and now you're finding that that's harder, it's only because your brain wants to interpret what's happening in a more negative way. There really are a lot of fats, and those are neutral in terms of closures of things, travel bans, or just the recommendation of social distancing and things like that. All of that is just the way it is.

In fact, my assistant, Kathy, she's been looking forward to seeing Hamilton on Broadway for such a long time and she has tickets for next week. She found out Broadway shut down. She was like, "No!" There's a lot of disappointment, and I think it's okay to let yourself be disappointed. There are a lot of things coming up that I've been looking forward to that are being canceled, and it's going to be okay. It's really not a problem unless we decide that it is.

So let's talk a little bit about best practices for basic self care. Because when you're taking care of yourself, you're going to be less likely to be asking for food or alcohol to make you feel better. What I found is that one of the quickest ways to get back into that old overeating and overdrinking habit is to just let all the things that support me otherwise go to the wayside. So let's just touch on those. It's like we all know them, but, again, it's so good to just have the reminder and think actively about how to apply this to your life.

When it comes to eating, one of the first things that is going to be so important for you is to make sure that you are eating meals. I remember back in my residency days when we would have to take you to call and work over the holidays, how the cafeteria would be closed. I would think I'd be able to figure something out. Back in those days, we didn't have DoorDash and stuff like that. So I just figured I'd find something, nurses station, whatever, and all there was was complete junk and candy, which at first seems fun and then just feels terrible in your stomach. You do not feel good.

So if you're relying on just snacking and grabbing a little bits of this and that and not actually taking time to eat a quality meal, it's going to be a lot harder for you to manage your mind. Your hunger is going to be all out of whack. You're going to be extra hungry. You're not going to be fueling your body with foods that actually nourish it so that you can think clearly and function at your highest level. So these meals do not need to be fancy, but they are totally possible, right? It's totally possible for you to pack a meal, something very, very simple, and bring it with you, something that you can eat in between patients or while you're charting really quick or things like that, okay? So make sure you're eating meals and that you're not just mostly grazing, or snacking, or falling into that kind of old way of eating where you're having a little of this and a little of that, couple of handfuls in between patients.

Around this time, when things like this are happening and all of your usual routines are thrown off, it's easy to just throw the baby out with the bath water and think, "Well, I'm just not going to plan my meals. I'm not going to make sure that we have the food that we need in the house. I'm not going to do all those things because we're just in survival mode," or something like that. You got to really question the way that you're thinking about that and what result it's creating for you because it's driving you to not take the actions that you know support you.

So in terms of all the things that are typically supporting you, it's business as usual, right? If anything, we want to double down on those things and make sure that we're really supporting ourselves. So really making sure that you've got your food under control and keep it very, very simple. A lot of people are stocking up on foods. Make sure if you're doing that that you're stocking up on things that actually support you. You don't need to be stocking up on Doritos. That's not the only thing that can help you through this pandemic, okay?

The next thing is sleep. Now, when you are working a lot, of course you're more mentally exhausted, you're probably more physically exhausted, and you are going to need to give your brain a chance to recover. Now, what we find happens often, of course, is if we're not managing our mind and we felt like work was really stressful or the kids have been home all day and driving you crazy and you're feeling like you just need a break, instead of going and taking the rest that you need, it's really easy to get sucked into the latest Netflix show. There's one on HBO right now that I'm totally hooked on, and I have to seriously manage it because ... My brain's just like, "Listen, how about you just sleep four hours and we watched six episodes in a row right now?" I have to be really onto myself.

So just be really careful in making sure that you are carving out that time, getting the sleep that you need. Sorry, that just startled me. The heater is so loud. So that you get the sleep that you need and that you really are focusing on helping yourself to stay healthy and feeling good. It's one thing to do things to try to keep yourself healthy so that you don't contract the virus, but it's another to just do the things that support you so that you actually are feeling good in your body and feeling like you're functioning at 100% brain capacity and able to be as efficient and productive as you possibly can be. And patient, right? I think that's the biggest thing that people are finding is that they're thinking like, "Okay, my compassion tank is starting to dwindle a little." And we can talk about that in a moment as well.

Another thing in terms of self-care best practices. Be very careful about reading and listening to the news updates, especially if you tend toward anxiety or have a bit of like that kind of worry bone in you. Decide how you're going to find out the information that you need to be able to protect yourself and your family and take good care of your patients, and then that's it. There's no more. There's no like getting on social media and reading what everyone is retweeting a hundred gazillion times. Twitter is not a news source, okay? This is not how you want to be finding these things out.

What I always think is, you know what? If something really big changes, I'm going to find out. It's not like I'm going to be oblivious for days on end. The information is going to make its way to me. Most other people are doing all the over-consuming of news for me and they will make sure that I know if that's needed. So just be really mindful and careful about that information that you're taking in.

Next thing is actively de-stressing and managing your mind. So let's talk about that briefly. Active de-stressing does not look like eating or drinking alcohol. It does not look like zoning out in front of your phone on social media or watching a bunch of shows. It does not mean sitting around complaining about things, okay? What active de stressing looks like is doing things that actually reduce the stress in your life.

Now, for some people that can be a loving form of exercise, something that they actually like to do. If you're feeling particularly depleted, it's very easy for you to convince yourself that you don't need to do the exercise, or you're too tired, or you don't want to do it. I really want to discourage you if this is a regular part of your life and your habits from getting into that habit of not doing those things, even if it means going outside for a walk. I mean, no one's going to be out there probably, right? So you can get out there and get that fresh air. If you have a Peloton ... I know so many physicians love their Pelotons.

You don't have to be killing yourself, dripping in sweat, but just do something to move your body, whatever it is you like to do. It could even just be stretching. I find sometimes I just take 5, 10 minutes, sit on the floor, and do some stretches and I already feel so much better in my body. I feel like so much of that stress intention is already released just by stretching my muscles out.

Other ways to actively de-stress include doing some meditation. This can also look like tapping if you're into tapping at all, if you look to prayer as a way to feel connected with yourself and with a higher power, if that's something that you're connected with. These are all things that are good practices to continue doing to help remind you everything is okay right now.

I love looking outside. So here in Dallas, the trees are already starting to bloom. I just love how nature just continues no matter what is happening. You just look outside, it's like the sun keeps rising. The sun keeps setting. Right now it's raining here. The rain clouds come. The birds fly around. It's kind of there's this whole universe out there that is just trucking along regardless of what's going on for us. I actually find that to be very reassuring. It's always available to me to reconnect to, to get out in it. There's this whole movement of doing forest bathing, I think they call it. I think that term came from Japan. Just getting out in nature, reconnecting with what we know to be true and good, and it's very grounding for us. It really, really helps us with stress.

The next part of that then is managing your mind. What I mean by that is recognizing that not everything that comes into your head is a fact or something to be believed. Again, like I said, pretty much everything that's happening around you is a circumstance. That means it's a neutral fact and you get to decide what you want to think about it, what meaning you want to assign to it. Your brain will probably offer you all kinds of crazy things from time to time. And if you're managing your mind, you look at all of those thoughts and you evaluate them with curiosity. You go, "Hmm. I want to question this one. Is this one really useful? Is this one really going to help me create what I want?" Even if it feels true, if it doesn't give you a result you want, it makes you feel negatively in some way, it creates an action that you don't want or just some sort of result that you're not into, that's not a good thought. That's not a good one to keep thinking.

Going back to everything is figureoutable, that's why that's such a great thought. It's such a quick, easy one. You can always remember it. So as soon as your brain starts worrying and panicking and you're not going to be able to figure it out, well, everything's figureoutable. Okay, well, if everything's figureoutable, then I'm going to set my brain to work on figuring this out instead of spending my brain energy thinking about how it's not possible to find a solution when a solution exists.

So it's really, really important that you're spending some time with yourself, emptying out the contents of your brain onto paper in the form of a thought download so you can see what's actually happening, so you can actually see what's going on in there and you can decide how do I consciously want to think about this. If your kids are home for weeks, how do you want to think about that? Your brain left unattended is not going to probably choose very good thoughts about that. This is going to be a really miserable experience of it. Or you can really decide to think something different.

I know I'm going to figure this out. My kids are actually still in school as of this recording, but I'm pretty sure it's going to be coming. The school's notified us how they're already working on remote learning plans. Luckily, I'm in a position where my kids are all at an age where they overall can pretty much manage themselves to a certain extent for the most part, and so it's not as big of a deal. But of course I have concerns about them being home, not able to go do anything else, and missing out of school and all that. But here's the thing. I know it's all figureoutable. We're going to figure out a way to make it work. There's totally things that they can do. It doesn't mean that it's just like a complete Spirit watch Fest.

Oh my gosh. Do any of your kids watch Spirit? My daughter has just completely become obsessed with this to the point where I actually came home like in the evening after she was already in bed one night, and I thought, "Oh, I'm going to just go in there really quick and see if she's still awake." I walked halfway through the room before she even recognized, like she even noticed that I was there. She had totally snuck an iPad into her room and was watching Spirit. I was just like, "Oh my goodness. Guess there's worse things she could be doing, but also it's way past bedtime and this is not okay."

So if you come from that place of I'm going to figure it out, this also helps to reduce your urges for a solution in the form of food and alcohol. You're not going to be eating your way through all of it because you're like, "Oh my God. I can't even believe I have to deal with this horror. It's so awful, and all the chaos. People are so annoying. I have no compassion left for anybody anymore.

The only way that I can escape that is with food and maybe drinking some wine." There's so many other options for ways for you to make yourself just feel more settled and content in this world right now. Because it's feeling so unsettled that is what really ultimately feels so uncomfortable. There's so many unknowns. We are such creatures of habit. We just love having that consistency and the predictability and we've ... Many of us lost that, right?

I want to touch quickly on the stock market. As I'm recording this, there's of course a lot of volatility and things are dropping a lot. I just want to offer to you a thought that I've always thought in terms of medicine that I think we're actually uniquely privileged in this way. I think just in general, not every field of medicine, but most fields of medicine are uniquely insulated from recessions and economic downturns and things like that, or at least somewhat protected. Sometimes it's mitigated a little bit. It's just not quite as intense for us as for others.

But, here's what I always told myself when I was in practice. I would always say, "you know what? What I know for sure, especially when people can't go anywhere, what are they going to do? They're going to have sex. And when people have sex, they make babies, and those babies are going to have to be born, and someone's going to have to take care of those babies. Those babies are going to need checkups. Those babies are going to get sick, and they're going to need people to take care of them. Those kids are going to grow up. They're going to need vaccines. They're going to have problems. They're going to need physicians to take care of them," and this goes ... That's obviously for pediatrics, but the same goes for pretty much most other forms of medicine.

So if you start really worrying about what it means with money and all of these things, I love the thought I always know that I can make money. Maybe, overall, potentially it means that you can't retire when you wanted to. Okay, that's fine. That's something we can work on. You can change your thinking about that and work on acceptance instead of resistance for that, especially depending on where you are in the stage of your life. But what I know is that the value that physicians bring is unique and it's always needed. So if you need to make money, you will be able to make money. You're not going to have to go work as a barista at Starbucks. Which, by the way, all the baristas, we love them. It's amazing. I actually think it's probably a pretty great job. But you don't have to go do that. You'll be able to work as a physician and you're going to be able to provide tremendous value and be compensated adequately financially for that.

So if you bring yourself back to, well, it's okay if I lose money because I can always just make more ... And especially when your mind is managed you can make even so much more, right? Then you don't have to spend so much time in fear and anxiety over what's happening with all of it. It's going to settle itself out. I always think as long as humans want things, and Americans sure want things, then there's an economy. Here's what I was actually just telling my mom. Actually, as I'm recording this, it's my mom's birthday today. I had a nice conversation with her. I was telling her maybe some businesses will go out of business, some big names that have been around a long time. But what I do know is that humans are innovative and creative. And where there are holes or gaps in the market, humans are going to figure out a way to fill it.

I was thinking about all the restaurants. If people don't want to go out to eat, well, thank goodness there's Uber Eats and DoorDash and things like that, right? All the restaurants that didn't get on board with that, they're probably going to be feeling it a lot harder.



I was thinking even about churches. If there's some churches that don't accept any donations online and they just ask for all the donations to come through the offering basket, they're going to be hurting. It's going to be a lot different than if you already had a system set up. And where there are no systems set up, human beings are going to figure it out. It's either going to be the big corporations that figure it out for themselves or it's going to be someone else who comes in is like, "I've got this. I see a problem, and I have a solution, and I'm going to bring it."

I love believing in the resilience of the human race, and I just feel it in my bones. I know it. We're going to get through this. We are all going to be okay. It's all something we're going to figure out, and it's going to be an amazing story some day, and we're going to do it. And really, the eating part is totally the optional part. I will tell you that when I think thoughts about how great the human race is and how we're going to figure this out, it does not create emotions that are so uncomfortable that I feel like I want to eat to make them go away. And that's the difference, right?

When you're managing your mind, you're not resisting the food. You're not going, "Well, I guess I just have to feel extra crappy all day long because I can't use food and alcohol to make myself feel better." You're going, "No, actually, I'm the one who's making me feel crappy. It has nothing to do with the rest of the world or what's going on around me. I've been responsible for it the whole time so I can change that any time I want to. And when I change it, I can create a better experience without asking for food or alcohol to need to assist me."

I'm telling you what, there's just the lightning strike. This is an interesting, interesting place to be recording. So with that, I will sign off from this episode. I do want to let you know, though, that I've been thinking a lot about my program that I'm offering and how I help women physicians in clinical practice lose weight. My next opening or my next group will be starting in May, and was really thinking about all the travel plans that are canceled. In fact, we've had a lot of travel that we are now rethinking and deciding what to do with. And I do want to just offer you this thought.

At this point, you are probably not going to be taking the vacations that you had been planning on taking in the coming months, right? There's just so much uncertainty. We don't know when we're going to be able to travel again, when it's going to be safe, and things like that. For sure you were going to be spending probably a pretty decent amount of money this year on some travel, some vacations, doing some nice things, and you're not going to be able to do that. I wanted to offer to you the idea that when you are in a self-quarantine situation where you're trying to distance yourself from other people and you're not going to be able to be as connected to your ways of enjoying life as you typically are, there literally could not be a better opportunity for you to take that money and invest it into improving your experience of your life and solving your overeating problem for good.

My program is online. It's totally something that you could do from the safety of your own home. There's no contagion risk or anything like that. And I'm really not saying this from a selling point. I literally cannot think of anything better you could do with your time. I could see you investing into this and in six months after that, by the end of the year going, "You know what?" I mean, I just see the aftermath of that whole experience for most people. And if anything, I'm coming out of it so much stronger in such a better place. You've been coached. Your whole experience of all of the chaos around you has been completely different. You've gotten all this personalized help. I just can't think of really any better way to use that money.

So when sometimes people say, "Well, I didn't really have the money right now," or, "We have all these other things planned," or, "We have all these other things that we're going to be allocating our money toward," this is such a good opportunity to reallocate that and focus on something that is going to absolutely transform your life for the better so that when this is all over you're coming out of it so much stronger and in so much of a better place.

All right, my friends. Listen, we have got this. It really is going to be okay. I cannot tell you enough how confident I am in that. We are going to be okay. I promise. So please have a wonderful week. Because guess what? You're the one who's in charge of whether you have a wonderful week or not. And I will talk to you next time.

All right, take care. Bye-bye.