



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hey, there my friend. How is it going? Holy moly, these times we're living in right. I know it can be interesting to tune into a weight loss podcast when there's so much going on in the world. But I do want you to know why what I have to offer is so important for you today. And the way I always think about it is that however you cope with negative emotion or stress in your life or things not going the way you think they should in your regular in "life" meaning before a couple of weeks ago, it was only going to be amplified when we have a situation like what we have going on right now.

And so all the more important is it to focus on this kind of thing. Not because necessarily you need to be losing a ton of weight right now, but more so because what we don't want to end up with is you haven't gained an extra 20 pounds from going through this whole thing, because you ate your way through it and you drank a bunch of alcohol to be able to cope. My biggest concern and what I really want to help you to prevent is coming out on the other side of this pandemic absolutely burned out completely, just trashed in your brain, so worn out that all you want to do is just escape medicine and do something else.

I want to make sure that you are supported and cared for as best as possible and I want to make sure that I'm offering you as much help in mastering your mind and managing it and making sure that you are creating the experience that you want out of this situation rather than just letting it happen to you. What you're going to find is that the majority of the people around you are going to be thinking that their circumstances, the neutral facts around them are determining their experience.

But if you've listened to me at all for any length of time, you know that, that's not what creates your experience. What creates your experience is the way that you think, all the situations that you have going on, what kind of protective equipment you have, how many masks there are, how many cases have been confirmed in your area, how many doctors and nurses and other health carrier, ancillary staff are available to help. All of those things are neutral facts.

They're something that everybody can agree upon and then we have thoughts about whether that's good or bad, whether people are managing things well, whether they're not. We have a lot of thoughts and those thoughts are to be creating your feelings. Your feelings will create your experience of this whole situation. Now, that doesn't mean that if you think things aren't going as according to plan or as smoothly as they could that you just decide to not say anything and not care about it doesn't mean that at all.

But coming from a place of rage or anger or frustration doesn't tend to help people work together better. It doesn't tend to improve the workflow or the teams, how smoothly the team is working together. It is something that is only going to hold you back and it's also going to expend a lot of your energy. I've heard this so much from my clients that they're feeling so exhausted and so tired and so much of that exhaustion and fatigue comes because of the amount of emotional work they're doing, right?

There's the physical work. There's obviously the thinking work that you're doing, the cognitive work that you're doing and figuring out how to best treat your patients and keep your family afloat and all of those things. But then, there's this other level of energy expenditure that comes from you having negative emotions and then resisting them, right? Thinking, "It shouldn't be this way. I shouldn't be so frustrated. I shouldn't be so angry. People should be acting differently."

And all that resistance, all that does is it just zaps you, completely zaps you of all your energy. And when you're so depleted from an energy standpoint, then what happens is your compassion tank just runs drier and drier. It's really hard for you to have compassion for the person that you're taking care of and even to have compassion for the other people that you're working with. When you've been reminding so many of my clients is the vast majority of people, they don't have the thought model.

They don't know that their thoughts are creating their feelings. They really think that the circumstances around them, the people around them, the precedent, the CDC, the way people are handling all of it, that, that is the problem. But it's always your thought. When you know this and you're feeling these negative emotions, at least try to take ownership of the fact that it is your thought that's creating that emotion right now.

And you might really want to believe that thought and you really want to feel that way in the moment and that is fine. You are totally entitled to do that. But just recognize that is your way of thinking, that is creating that. Just work on owning it first before you try to change anything. Okay? This is super powerful stuff. What I want to delve into today on this podcast is feeling safe.

And I've been hearing from so many different people on Instagram also in my programs about feeling unsafe. Now, really quickly on Instagram, I have been on there creating a lot of Instagram stories and saving them to highlights bubbles, where people have been telling me what their concerns are or what they're struggling with and then, I've been coaching them through that.

If you're interested in seeing all of the previous coaching that I did and what I'm doing moving forward, which is pretty much the place that I can do the most up to the minute coaching and help based on what the current situation is, then you can find me over there at the handle on Instagram is coach Katrina Ubell MD, so coach Katrina Ubell MD is where you can find me there.

I want to talk more about safety and feeling unsafe, worrying about maybe your spouse who's maybe in health care or an elderly family member and worrying about people's safety and that feeling of being unsafe. And so I think that we think mostly about safety as something that is a fact. If you are in a certain circumstance, then you're safe and if you're not, you're not safe. Right? If your physician spouse stayed home and didn't go to work, they'd be safe and if they go to work, then they're not safe from getting COVID.

And I want to talk to you about safety as a feeling and then also our thoughts about safety. If for instance, I recently heard of a nurse practitioner in an ICU getting instruction via FaceTime on how to reuse all of her protective gear and ideally she would be replacing it. And she was feeling so unsafe and so afraid because she was thinking, "This gear isn't actually keeping me safe and I'm taking care of these infected patients."

And I want to offer to you that, that may feel really true. But I think there's definitely different ways that you can think about it that are going to serve you more. Here's how this works. When you have a thought that feels really true, but it creates a feeling that doesn't serve you in a result that doesn't serve you that doesn't mean that you have to continue thinking about it that way. I'm going to give you some examples here.

You are always able to decide to think about it in a different way that also is equally as true or could be equally as true but creates a different, more desirable feeling for you and a different, more desirable result for you. There's often so many different ways that we can think about things. Many of us are quite skilled at being devil's advocate or thinking about things from multiple sides and so we have the ability to look at it from all different angles and think about it in different ways.

But in a situation like this where our safety, which is such a core basic human need, when that feels threatened, we will just have our brains focus on we're unsafe. This isn't safe. I'm not safe and create safety. Go and create safety, this is very important. And so the brain is just doing what it's always programmed to do and how it's been for very long time since humans have been around and that's fine.

But I do want to let you know that when you are more aware of what your thoughts are that are creating that feeling of not being safe and feeling unsafe, then you can actually look at them and go, "Oh, okay. I'm believing this and that's making me feel unsafe." Like, "I'm believing that I'm not safe, because I am not able to change out my protective gear and equipment every day the way it might be recommended."

And so another way that might possibly be more useful or might serve you more is thinking about it as well, "I'm so grateful that I have the gear that I do have and it's a good thing that I'm a smart person who has a lot of ability to focus my attention on making sure that I take it off and put it back on properly to make sure that I don't contaminate myself or others. I'm going to be the expert in how to reuse my protective gear, since this is the situation at hand."

Because remember again, having to reuse your protective equipment is a neutral fact. We think that's not right. It shouldn't be that way. That's not the recommendations, all of those things. But all of that is still a thought. That doesn't mean that it's a fact. What's a fact is, "Here's your equipment and that's what you get to wear, that's all you have." There's a different way of thinking about it like, "I'm going to rock this out. I'm going to be the person who completely is safe, even though she's reusing all of her equipment."

I know so many people will think, "If I'm around all of these infected people, it's only a matter of time until I get it." And then, they feel unsafe. And I want to offer to you that that's a terrible way of thinking about it. Even if the odds show us that that's true.

Thinking about it that way, right? We know that our thoughts create a results, right? If your thought is, "By being around all these patients, I'm probably going to get this virus." Most likely you're going to create the result of getting the virus.

And the way you'll do that is when you already are resigned to the fact that you're getting it. The actions that you take that are driven from the feeling that's created from that thought, those actions are going to be you being less strict with yourself about all the safety precautions, right? You're just, you're already thinking it's going to happen, so you do things that make it more likely that it's going to happen.

This is why our brains are so powerful. You might be like, "Hey, I'm thinking." But seriously, this is everything. This will change your whole experience, not only just your mental experience, but even possibly your physical experience of all of this. I also think that when you are thinking in a way that is so depleting to your brain, like I was talking about earlier, that just depletes your whole body's ability to defend itself.

And I don't have data support what it does to your immune system, but I do know that when you are well rested and well cared for and you're managing your brain, your brain is very powerful in terms of how well you're able to resist disease and infection and things like that. You have to be managing your brain in order for you to give yourself the best chance possible of not getting this. Those are the thoughts that create the feelings of safety or not being safe, right?

You can just decide like, "I'm safe, because I've got me. I've got the value that I can create in my brain. As long as I've got my brain, I am safe, because I can take care of myself. I can handle whatever it comes my way. I can handle it." You can create that feeling of safety for yourself. And then when you have the thought like, "It's not safe for me to have to reuse my productive equipment." That probably creates a feeling of anger or frustration.

A lot of people have talked about really intense emotions like rage and terror, fury, things like that. That thought is it not one that serves you, "I'm not safe if I have to reuse my equipment." How about, "I'm going to make sure that I'm safe no matter what equipment they give me, I'm going to get solutions focused." Let's talk about this a little bit, so when you think about just Africa for example, I've seen a number of documentaries and I've been to Africa myself as well, where the hospitals have very little in the way of equipment and supplies and the doctors there are literally amazing.

They take what they have and they perform miracles every day, because they have to get creative. They know what they could use ideally, and they don't have any of that stuff and they're not going to get it. They have to figure out the best way to take care of their patients and support them and care for them provided with what they have. And I think that they're so used to it there that they're like, "This is the deal. This is how it is."

Even though many of them have done their training and then in places where they had all the equipment they needed, they come back, they figure it out, and then this is just how they roll. We tend to be so spoiled in our first world hospitals that we are like, "What do you mean you don't have the equipment? I mean, I need this stuff. I can't do it any other way." And what I want to offer to you is that one of the most powerful things you can do is to question that.

What if you didn't have any of that stuff and you still could help people? Maybe you could come up with some new way that would be even better, because you'd be allowing your brain to innovate and come up with creative solutions. The only way that, that's going to be possible for you is if you can get yourself out of what's essentially a victim mentality of thinking that there's a villain out there and that villain could be any number of people and organizations and even the virus, right, that are creating a very disempowered place for you.

When you think that there are these villains out there, the people who aren't shipping the proper swabs or aren't getting you the equipment that you need or that you're totally overrun with patients who need care, being in that victim mentality does not allow you to perform as a physician as well as you would be able to if you had a different mindset. Right? When you get into solutions focus place, you just figure out what you can do rather than focusing on what you can't do. You focus on what you can do and you just go ahead and do that.

There was a time when I was in medical school, I was doing a rotation. I think it was my OB-GYN rotation and one of the residents that I was doing overnight call with. I think she and I were eating dinner and she was telling me about how a few years earlier during her residency, I think she was an intern, there had been a big explosion nearby the hospital at a big manufacturing plant. And so their hospital had been the closest hospital, so the emergency team all went out there and all the ambulances brought in these horribly burned people.

And here she was a new intern and she was describing to me how there was nobody to tell her what to do. She just went around to everybody she could and she was just pushing morphine, pushing Morphe and pushing morphine. And I remember thinking, "How did she know what to do? How did she know how much to give?" In my mind I was so early, I think this was my second rotation and all of third year, so I was like, "How would you even know what to do?" And she just got in there and she just did it, right.

And this is a really similar situation where you get in there and you figure out, what do I have? What's the most pressing need and how can I help people with what I have? That's the way that you approach something like this versus sitting around complaining and wishing you had other equipment or even thinking about if you had the other equipment, how things might be different and how you might be able to help somebody more, that does not serve you or them at all.

Sitting around thinking about what you don't have is just an absolute waste of your energy, your thought, your creative ability, your intelligence. Take your very intelligent brain and focus it on figuring out how to do the very best that you can with what you have and just knowing that everybody else who's complaining around you, none of that even matters. You're there for the patients and you're there to help in any way that you possibly can. This is really important.

I do also want to touch a little bit more on taking care of yourself, because of course, taking your care of yourself, a huge part of that is managing your brain. I mean, it's arguably one of the best probably after sleeping, but I really want to encourage you to make sure that you are doing what you can do to take good care of yourself when you're not working. This may mean that you're not able to do school with your kids in the way that you think you should be able to or maybe even in the way that the school is asking you to.

And I really want to talk you through the concept of being okay with that. I've heard so many parents who are thinking, "Okay. Well, I'm already working 13 plus hour days and I'm supposed to be doing school with the kids. How am I supposed to do all this stuff?" And what I want to tell you is you don't have to do any of that stuff, because here's the thing with kids, number one, they're resilient. Number two, being educated consistently is not a basic human right.

And that is something that so many children over the course of time and all over the world who had to deal with where for whatever reason they haven't been able to be educated in the way that they typically would. And if that involves tutors later on to get them up to speed or it involves repeating a grade, there are literally so many worse things that could happen. I want to make sure that you are not trying to focus on school with the kids at your own personal expense.

If you're on the front lines and you're expected to go in and help with this, we might be at this for a number of weeks or months even. It might even be longer. Honestly, if it's longer, that's probably good, because that means that we've contained it enough that we're able to slow down the spread. And so if that's the case and kids are not doing all the schoolwork the way that they might be ideal for you in your mind, I want to remind you that literally nothing is going wrong.

You have got to be making sure that you're taking care of yourself, so let's just review what those things are, how to take good care of yourself. You sleep, you make sure you sleep okay, do not be all up on Netflix all hours of the night. Don't get sucked into a show. You have to make sure that you sleep. I've been telling everybody about this app that I love that I think really helps the quality of your sleep, especially if you aren't getting that much. It's called brain.fm kind of think of like an FM radio station, brain.fm.

I get no kickback for this. I'm just a fan. They don't know who I am. They don't know exist, but I think it's really good. Even if you're coming home and finding or having a hard time winding down, they have a number of different tracks in there that are for de-stressing, unwinding, relaxing, some things that you might find that you really struggle with. Definitely check that out that it's basically it's the sounds that help to influence the way your brain functions.

And then on top of it, they put all kinds of different nature sounds and you can pick, I always do rain, because that's my favorite, but you can pick whatever you want. I even listened to the unwind one if I'm wanting to take a nap or something like that, it just gets your brain into that state of being able to sleep, so you get as much good sleep as you possibly can, very important. Second, you have got to be filling your body with good food.

Now, depending on the situation, you know what's available is available, but at the same time, if you can pack some decent food and quality food and bring it in with you to the hospital, I strongly encourage you to do that. Because you need to know that you've got your own back, right? You're going to support yourself and really care for yourself in a really solid way whenever you have the time to eat. Okay. And even if that's at the end of your shift, you're leaving, then at least there's good food for you that's already prepared and you know it's going to serve your body, very important.

We all think like, "Oh, whatever. I'll just eat whatever." But I'm telling you over eating a whole bunch of junk right now will make you feel worse. And I'm talking about the weight gain that comes with it. I'm just talking about how it actually feels in your body, right? So we're trying to make this experience, it's already challenging, more positive for you, then we want to make sure that you're feeling your body properly, that you're getting the sleep that you need.

And then, I also want to talk to you about actively de-stressing. This is very important. You do not just go in plop down in front of the TV as a glass of wine and watch the latest show. Although listen, it's totally okay to do that from time to time. Okay. I don't want to say that there's anything wrong with watching a show, but you do that after you've actively de stressed.

What that might look like is that might look like some exercise. Actually might look like, you know, burning off some of the stress and moving your body stretching out. It might look like doing some meditation or doing some prayer. I think a great way to actively do stress is to do a thought download and actually look at what your thoughts are. Empty out your brain so you don't have everything kicking around up in there.

You get it out and you could just clear. Even if you do, all you can do is just dump it out. At least you've offloaded all of that and you can now just chill out and relax. What we're looking to do is to increase your parasympathetic input. We need to chill you out after you're coming back. Okay. Especially with everything else that's going on, you need to know how you can take care of yourself in that way.

And then of course connection, right? And depending on your situation, you might be like, "I really wish I could go have some alone time. And depending on your situation, you might be like, "I really wish I could be around some people right now." I just want to offer to you that there's so many different ways to be connected and that the feeling of connection comes from the way that you're thinking.

If you're feeling disconnected, that's not because of the circumstance of who is around you physically, it is from what you're thinking about the people that you are in contact with or the people that you know. Just be really clear on that as well.

With that, I just to wish you the best possible week that you possibly can. Just know we're all in this together. All that's happening is we're experiencing normal human emotions and even though they're uncomfortable and we don't like them, that's really what's happening and we can get through this, especially if you stay with me here and I will help you with your thinking on it.

All right, I will talk to you next time. Take care. Bye bye.