



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hey there my friend. Welcome back to the podcast. If you're new here, I just want to give you a warm, warm welcome. I want to start off today with just a couple of brief notes.

I want to let you in just a little bit on the behind the scenes of how a podcast is produced. While there are some people who record their podcast and then immediately publish it, it's important to me that you have a proper and polished listening experience, so I've always used a podcast production team that does all their magic and makes this podcast sound about as professional a podcast can sound when you're not recording it in a sound booth. They do a great job, but they need some time to do their work, which means that I record each of these episodes at a minimum of 10 days before they go live and show up in your podcast app feed.

In addition, I want to point out that the day you listen to a podcast might be days or weeks after the podcast has been published, which means that it was recorded well before that, so why am I bringing this up? Normally this is not an issue at all and sometimes I've been able to get ahead on podcasts by even up to six weeks. But lately I've gotten a little bit of feedback from some listeners that what I said on some of my more recent episodes in regards to COVID and travel and things like that is not what's being recommended currently by the CDC and other experts.

I want to assure you that what I talk about was what was best practice at the time of the recording and let you know that there's no way to go back and update old episodes to make them consistent with what's being recommended at the current moment. So while I have plenty of non-physician listeners out there, you know who you are and I love you and thank you for being here. Ultimately this podcast is created for physicians and the physicians who listen to this podcast don't come here for medical advice or to find out how to best wash their hands or prevent transmission of COVID or things like that, and that is good because that is not what I'm an expert in.

What I am an expert in is helping you to learn how to manage your mind and manage your mouth. We focus on your mindset and how to stop overeating and overdrinking. And I'm confident that you as a physician know how to filter information through the lens of the current day circumstances and recommendations. So I would just encourage you to leave the parts that don't apply anymore if they're outdated and listen for what can help you today, what is applicable today. And I get it, lately, one day, seriously, it can feel like a week. And so something that was published relatively recently can already seem really out of date. So I just want to encourage you to not get hung up on things like that and instead focus on how what I teach on the episode applies to you and how it can help you.

And finally, I want to let you know that I've seen many physicians and other healthcare providers out there who really don't want to feel better right now. They are really very committed to their line of thinking. That creates a ton of fear, panic, stress and anxiety for them, and I understand that. I really do. I know you know what I'm talking about. We don't have to convince those people to think differently so that they can feel better, so that we can feel better, right? Which is why we want them to feel better in the first place. We really can just love them exactly as they are. Now, if this physician who's committed to this line of thinking is you, my suggestion is to work on developing enough self awareness to recognize that what you're doing is believing that your thoughts are the truth and that it's actually your thoughts that are creating your emotions, rather than telling someone who has a different way of thinking about this, that they're wrong or out of touch or don't understand what's really happening.

So focus on yourself and how you're always in control of your experience of this pandemic. And again, if you want to stay with that, committed to that line of thinking, you are more than welcome to do it. This podcast is for people who are ready to approach it in a different way.

Okay. Moving on. You don't have to look very far lately to see signs of gratitude for healthcare providers. Have you noticed this? There's so many different ways that people are offering their appreciation and thanks to everybody on the front lines. I've gone for some walks. I've seen chalk writing saying thank you. I've seen signs. I've seen it on social media. I've just seen so much of it and what a lot of people are calling the doctors and other healthcare workers who are taking care of COVID patients right now is healthcare heroes.

I've noticed though that some of my clients and other physicians are resisting this title of hero. They don't want to be called a hero if someone offers them thanks, it's like they deflate right in front of your eyes. It's like they recoil from the positivity. It's so interesting. I find this so interesting because in so many ways this pandemic is the chance for doctors to shine. Really, before the pandemic happened, so many physicians already felt underappreciated and believed that patients didn't respect them and that they were being treated badly. And now there's more love and respect and admiration for doctors than there's been for a really long time. And that's not landing that well for them either. So interesting.

So I want to talk today about not feeling very much like a hero and resisting the appreciation that comes along with it. I looked up the definition of a hero and according to Merriam Webster, a hero is one who shows great courage, love that, love those simple definitions. A hero is one who shows great courage. So I thought, well, okay, I believe I know what courage is, but what's the definition of courage? Definition of courage is the mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear or difficulty. It's the mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear or difficulty. And that sounds about right, yeah?

Every time you venture to the hospital, you are a hero. Every time you go there, even though you really don't want to, or you're afraid to, you're a hero. When you keep coming back to work day after day, shift after shift, even though there's inherent danger in what you're doing, you're a hero.

So let's talk about what a hero is not. A hero is not someone who has unflinching confidence in what they're doing, who never doubts themselves, okay? A hero is not someone who is never afraid and just charges forward like they haven't got a care in the world.

A hero is not someone who puts themselves recklessly and unnecessarily in harm's way. Being a hero also has nothing to do with ego or arrogance. This is very important, okay? Heroic activities are not done because of the credit the person will get afterward. That's why they're heroes. They have the mental and moral strength to move toward danger, fear, and difficulty over and over again. It's about doing what's right. It's not about the ticker tape parade that may come afterward.

So why doesn't the hero designation land for you? You clearly meet the definition of a hero, but you can't accept the appreciation. Whenever someone offers you a compliment or admiration and you don't accept it, it's because you disagree with them in actuality. They say, "Hey, thanks for being awesome and helping all of us. That's really heroic." But deep down for you, you're thinking, "Yeah, but you don't know what's really going through my mind while I'm at work. I'm the furthest thing from awesome. You don't know that deep down I'm scared to death and it takes everything in me not to sprint for the door and never look back. Half the time I barely feel like I know what I'm doing. That's anything but heroic."

So what you're doing when you're thinking that way is you're judging yourself negatively and then negating what you can be proud of. If being a hero means showing up with courage every day, then you are a hero. So let's put this all into the thought model. If you are new to my work and new to the podcast, then I do want you to go back and listen to the first couple episodes, first few episodes of this podcast. That's where I teach you all about the thought model in depth, and then you'll have much better sense of what I'm about to say.

When somebody says that you're a hero and thanks you for your contribution during this pandemic, then that goes on the action line of their model. Okay, so they have a model and what they're saying and doing goes on the action line. The work that you have done, right? Going to the hospital, taking care of patients. That is a neutral fact for them. So it goes on the circumstance line of the model. But there's two more lines in between circumstance and action, right? They then interpret your work and your actions with their thoughts, so their thoughts assign meaning to what you've done. It assigns meaning to what their circumstance is, which is your actions, the activities that you've been involved in, and so their thoughts might be something like, "I could never do that. I'm so glad we have people who are willing and able to do this work to help us in our time of need. I really admire the people who step up and do everything they can to save people's lives."

Whatever the thought it is, it creates a feeling for them. So let's say the feeling is appreciative and when they feel appreciative, they say words to you about how they appreciate and admire the work that you do and how you're a hero in this pandemic. And then the result for them saying this is that they get to feel great about sharing the gratitude and admiration that they're feeling. So that is their model.

Now follow me on this, okay? Stay with me. What that person says goes on your circumstance line. It's just words they've said to you until your brain assigns meaning to it with thoughts. So your circumstance line is the neutral facts. This person said these words. If the person said the same thing in a foreign language that you don't understand, your brain would assign a very different meaning to it. And that's how we know that it's not what they say that determines how you feel, it's how your brain interprets what they say. That interpretation is your thought about it.

When you compare the thoughts you usually think about yourself or your general self concept to the thoughts this person has about you, they don't line up. And the reason I know this is because only people who don't have a strong opinion of themselves and the value they bring as a human being on this earth would disagree with someone else's thoughts of gratitude and admiration. So this hero business is bringing out all of the perfectionism and all of the imposter syndrome thoughts in full force for so many of you. When you have perfectionist thoughts, you're believing that you can't be considered a hero unless you've done something even better and more remarkable than what you've already done. There's an unattainable ideal and you are definitely not measuring up to it, but you believe that other people are, which makes you feel even worse about yourself.

In imposter syndrome, you believe thoughts that tell you that you're actually not very good at what you do. You're not very helpful, and you're not contributing in a meaningful way. And if anybody were to find that out, then they know that you're actually a fraud and you're actually not very smart, and then they wouldn't believe that you're a hero after all. This is why being called hero doesn't land for you because you don't believe in your own worth enough to see what you contribute to society. So your brain will just make up more self-deprecating stories about how you're actually terrible and you'll cringe internally and you'll rebuff yourself outwardly and inwardly or both. So ultimately it might not matter at all if you think you're a hero or if others think you are, right, like who really cares? This is why you care. How you respond to the situation, gives you a little bit of insight into your own self worth and your opinion of yourself. It might be showing you where you have a bit more work to do.

So consider this. What if you could admire yourself for how courageous you're being every single day, whether you're working on the front lines or not? What if you could be grateful to yourself that you're going in and taking care of patients even though there's more of a threat to your health and wellbeing than normal? How might that improve your experience of going to work? It's not surprising that if you don't want to go to work, feel terribly sorry for yourself the whole time you're there and then don't appreciate yourself for going in there and doing your job, that you would be really miserable right now and unable or really unwilling to believe that you're a hero. So the next time someone calls you a hero or thanks you for doing your job or you see a sign of thanks, check in with yourself. What emotion are you feeling? If it's a negative emotion, you know that you have more work to do on your opinion of yourself.

And I've also heard that some physicians' family members or loved ones have tried to persuade them not to go into work, telling them that they don't have to be a hero. Like you don't have to be a hero and go in there. And these doctors then feel torn because their families are just scared for them and don't want them to get sick or hurt. Now it's important to understand that in this scenario, the term hero is being used in a way that implies a lack of concern for safety, or putting yourself at risk in a way that's particularly unwise, and as you now know, that's not what it means to be a hero at all.

When someone tells you that they don't want you to be a hero, they're confused. They think that in order for them to not feel afraid or concerned or unsettled, that you need to do something different, that you should not go into work. They're confused because they think that what you do or don't do determines their feelings, but what you do or don't do is their circumstance. It's a neutral fact for them.

Then they have a thought about it and it's their thought that creates their fear and concern. So many of us get this mixed up all the time. We try to control or persuade others to do what we want them to do so that we could feel better. But the way to feel better is to look at the thought that's creating the feeling that you don't want to feel. So all of this is just our human brains doing what human brains do, okay, so nobody's right or wrong here.

What I'm offering you is a way of thinking about what's happening that will give you more insight into why you do what you do and why others do what they do and what you can change and how you can change it, if you want to.

Do not forget you are doing a really good job. I love and appreciate you, and I will see next time. Take care.