



# WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hey there, my friend. Welcome back to the podcast. So glad to have you here.

Okay. So today I want to talk to you about common goal weight misconceptions. Goal weight is such a tricky and emotionally charged and intense conversation for a lot of people. I think that it is along the same lines as weighing yourself. Like people get really, really emotional about goal weight and what should be your goal weight and what an ideal weight is for your body. And they get really worked up over it. And then think that very thoughts that are making them worked up is just the facts. And so I want to address some of those concerns and misconceptions today.

In fact, I have four of them that I'm going to be addressing on this podcast and I think it's going to really help you because goal weight is just an area that we create a lot of drama about in our brains. Because if you ask me, I think the reason why is because if we have a lot of drama about what our goal is, then that's a good reason to not get started or to kind of dink around because we don't really know where we're going and we're scared to go where we're going and we don't really know what we should be doing. And so we get worked up about it and that basically means that we just don't do anything or we do little. We give ourselves permission to slow our roll and not really do what we need to be doing and just stay in confusion and indecision and those are indulgent emotions. They do not create anything that you want in your life and they certainly don't solve your weight problem for good, which is what we're looking to do.

So the first thing that I want to talk about is, the first common misconception is that your goal weight is something that you can't adjust or change along the way. So you may have heard me talk about this on the podcast before, maybe not, but when my clients ask me, "Hey, what do you think a good goal weight is for me?" What I generally ask them to do is to look at a BMI chart, body mass index chart, and look at their height and look to see what would be a weight that would put them in the mid range of the BMI range. And here's what's really interesting about this. Some people get so offended by this. Some people get really upset. Some people are like, "But I don't want to do that." And some people are just like, "That's not possible for me and I haven't weighed that little since I was a child." And all kinds of different things come up for them.

So let me just dive into this a little bit deeper here and tell you why I offer that. First of all, that is not the proper weight for everybody by any stretch. But when you're looking to give a general guideline for somebody, it's a good place to start. If you look at that weight, whatever that weight is for you and your brain goes bananas. I have a lot of food analogies today.

Maybe your brain goes nuts. Oh God, that's food too. Okay. Your brain goes crazy, oh my gosh, then that's something to look at, okay? What I find is that people will start to blame me or get mad at me. They're like, "But I can't do that. How could you possibly expect me to be doing that?" And I find that so fascinating that that's what their brain does. Their brain is just taking something that's just an idea. It's just a conceptual idea, a thought and they're making it into something that is almost like offensive to them.

So let's just talk about why I suggest that and how that also may not be the right thing for you. And it's completely fine if you want to do it differently. So when I'm looking at the average person, most people, if they stop eating for emotional reasons and drinking alcohol for emotional reasons will be able to settle their bodies out at around a mid-range BMI place. Now here's where it gets tricky because people will say to me, "But I literally haven't weighed that since like eighth grade or something. I'm big boned. I have a large skeletal structure. I am just a large person. It's not possible for me to weigh that." And to that, I say, "I thought the same thing about myself and I was totally wrong and the only way that I could even believe that I was wrong was by just trying to create that mid range BMI and to see what happens, to see if it was possible."

In some ways I think I kind of wanted to prove that it wasn't possible and then dammit it was possible. I had thoughts that I would never wear anything smaller than a large as a top. And I would never wear anything that was in the single digits for pants ever. I just didn't think it was possible. I legit was just like, "No, I have these broad shoulders and I've got hips that are meant to birth children and I am of German descent." And I often have these thoughts like if I were living in Germany 100, 200, 300 years ago, I would be the total like Frau on the farm, like this large, very stout and sturdy woman. Like that's just who I am. I believed it was in my DNA. It's just in my genetics. This is just who I am and I was completely wrong.

So when you're believing that it's not possible for you to lose more weight, that may not be true. It also may, but probably for you, it's not true. So let me give you some of the exceptions. If you are somebody who is very, very, very hardcore with putting muscle on. So say you're a power lifter, say you do a large amount of strength training. Then I agree that a mid-range BMI is probably not going to be the right number for you because you have so much extra muscle on your body that weighs something, right? So what I would say for the small percentage of people who might be listening, who are fit into this category, that maybe what you should do is look at whatever that weight is, that's the mid-range BMI for you and maybe add 10 pounds or 15 pounds to it, okay? Just do that and know like you're making up or if you're really, really built, then maybe 20 pounds extra of muscle and you put that on and then you make that your goal, okay?

But the other exception is the opposite direction. If you know that you're someone who's very, very tiny, not just in stature and height, but also in your build. Like you're very, very little, then you're probably going to want to go lower than the mid-range BMI. Now, many of my clients, I wouldn't venture to say most of them already have an idea of what a good goal weight is for themselves. Like, they'll say, "There was that time where I lost weight and I weighed this much and I felt amazing. Like I want to get back to that weight or this was the number that I weighed when I got married and I felt amazing on that day and I want to weigh that again." But some of them as just a little caveat will say, I want to weigh that again, but I don't want to have to do what I did to be able to weigh that because they did all this diet mentality stuff that didn't serve them and was miserable for them and not something that they want to continue at all.

But sometimes not. Sometimes they're like, "I just want to be that fit and trim version of myself that I was when I was in my twenties." Now, again, it doesn't mean that you're not going to have like any wrinkles or any cellulite or any stretchy skin, if you've birthed any children or things like that. But you may know, you know what, that's a good weight for me. But then there's definitely people, especially people who've been overweight since they were young, who are like, "I really honestly don't know what a good weight is for me." So if that's the case, what I suggest is that you just pick some smaller goals for yourself rather than focusing so much on the mid-range BMI and whether it's possible or not and letting that slow you down, just go ahead and plan to lose 20 pounds. Like let's just lose 20 pounds and then we'll reassess when we're there.

What I find is that so many of my clients will say, "Listen, I just want to get into the normal BMI range, forget mid range. I just want to get into normal BMI range." And they think that's all that's possible for them. But once they get to that place, they realize, you know what, no, I still have another 10, 15 pounds I could lose. Maybe a little less or a little more, just depends. They realize, you know what? I can actually lose some more. I never thought that was possible but now that I am here and I see what my body is looking like and what is happening. Yeah. I definitely can do that. The other thing to think about with approaching mid-range BMI is that if you have not been very physically active for a while, then you probably don't have as much muscle mass on you.

And so if you are thinking, well, I can only get into just shy or just below the normal BMI range. Then you're thinking, okay, that's all that's possible for me. You actually have a considerable amount, more body fat on your body than you really need, because you don't have that much muscle mass. So what I suggest you do is get to mid range BMI, and then you can add some more muscle on, right? You can do, what's required to get yourself stronger and that kind of thing. I think that something that is a really powerful reason to lose weight is because you want to for you not so that you can look like that caricature of acceptability. Whatever your brain has fixated on, probably from when you were young of, you have to be thin so that you can be like so-and-so or this group of people, but instead doing it because you want to feel a certain way living in your body. You want to have a certain amount of strength.

You want to be able to not have muscle pain from being weak, or you want to be able to do some physical activity that you can't do very easily right now, or you just want to have more energy or sleep better. Those are all really good reasons to lose weight. In fact, I read an article a little while ago, just some random article. So I don't even know how I'd find it again to quote the person, but it was a woman who said, I think she was in her fifties and she was saying how she had lost weight a whole bunch of times before, but this time seemed to be different for her and it seemed to be much easier to keep it off. And so she had been thinking about, well, what's the difference this time compared to the other times. And what she realized was that she was just doing it for herself this time.

Every other time it had been for an event or because she was going on vacation or because she wanted to have somebody think she looked good in whatever outfit or swimsuit or things like that, or wanting to be attractive to a partner or something like that. And when she dropped all of that and just lost the weight because she wanted to do it for herself so she could feel the way she wanted to feel in her body, it actually stuck, right?

I just, as a side note, I think that that's really powerful because I think that's when you really get to work doing this kind of stuff, for real, all the other stuff ends up being that diet mentality, that life is going to be better when you reach goal weight, which is another misconception that I'll get to in just a sec. But let's just finish up the mid-range, BMI discussion.

So what is the point of weight loss, okay? So if your brain is like freaking out about mid-range BMI, just stay with me here and let's back it up for a second. What is the point of losing weight? In my mind, sure, it's to have a healthier body, if that's a concern for you. Although I think you can be overweight and still be a healthy person. But also as a personal growth opportunity, because there's something that's going on in your life that you're not addressing that you're not really looking at and you're using food and possibly alcohol to avoid it, okay? I honest to goodness, do not care what you weigh. I have had clients who were like, "Listen, I got under 200 pounds. I feel amazing." So they're like 199. "I feel amazing. I look cute. My partner thinks I look awesome. My partner's totally into it. I just want to stop here." I'm like, "Great. Awesome. That's fine. Let's do that."

I honest to goodness, do not care what you weigh, but we are so focused on our goal weight and so obsessed with it that I'm like, "Okay, here, if you need something, here it is, okay." Really don't care what you weigh but what I do care about is you stopping neutralizing your emotions with food and alcohol. And so if you really have a hard time with the mid-range BMI thing, and you don't want to have a number as your goal, I'm all on board with that. It's totally cool. I'm never going to force you to do anything you don't want to do. It all comes from you, okay? But what I would suggest then is that you commit to stopping neutralizing your emotions with food and alcohol, to do all of the work that's required to feel your emotions, to eat in a way that fills your body and then let your body settle out where it settles out weight-wise, okay?

But what I find is that when my clients have their last 10, 15 pounds to go, that's when they realize, you know what? Now I have to stop with the little extras, the little overeating that I was doing here and there. And you know before it was okay, I could still lose weight and still have a little extra and sometimes soothe myself with food or alcohol and it didn't really make a difference. Well, those last 10, 15 pounds to get to mid-range BMI, that's when the rubber meets the road. That is when you really can't do that anymore. So I would just offer, maybe you can have a goal being, "You know what, I'm not going to neutralize my emotions with food or alcohol for a week straight." Set that as your goal. Then maybe me move it to a couple of weeks. Then when you've done that let's do a month straight. Then when you've done that, let's try three months straight. Let's do this, right?

What will happen is your body will lose weight and very often you will end up around that mid-range BMI, okay? So you don't have to have that number. It doesn't have to be like you pick that number and you can't change it. Let's just say that you're five pounds from mid-range BMI and you're like legit, I do not want to lose any more weight. I am not eating to soothe myself at all anymore. I do not like being this thin, great. Then you can totally stop losing weight. You don't have to lose it just for the sake of losing it. Even if you lose the weight and you just decide, you know what, I want to sometimes be able to use food and alcohol to feel better, great. But then at least, you know exactly what you need to do to get to that mid-range BMI or get to whatever that goal weight is that you're wanting or have always had in your mind is like the best number. And then know that this is possible for you.

So if at any time you would like to create it, it's available to you versus what I find most people are doing, which is thinking that's not possible. I could never do that under any circumstance. I'm going to be like, "Yeah, I know exactly how to do it and I'm just not going to, because I don't want to." Which is totally fine as well. The point is that you do the deeper work of figuring out why you're overeating and maybe drinking more than you should instead of feeling your emotions. Like what's actually going on for you. Why do we have to use food to make being with ourselves tolerable and let's work on that, okay? So you can totally change your goal weight. You can not have a goal weight and you can have different goals of just allowing your emotions and things like that. Like whatever you want to do, however you want to work it out. I'm game I'm on board.

I just think that some people use that mid-range, BMI suggestion, as a way to quit in advance or to say like, they throw out the baby with the bath water. There's like, "Oh my gosh. If that's what she suggests, then that's ridiculous and I just absolutely not in there." And they completely shut everything down and this is just a microscopic element of what actually needs to be done. Okay, let's move on to the next misconception. Next goal weight misconception is that when you get to your goal weight, you'll be "fixed". Okay? So we think that we won't have to do any more work on our brain. Like there won't be any more problems and that leads me to the next goal weight misconception is that you'll be happier when you reach goal weight. Okay?

So the way you create happiness in your life is by what you think, not by what size your body is. Okay? So when you believe that you'll be happier then, or life will be better, or you'll be "fixed", you won't have to work on your brain anymore. You're going to be really disappointed because you're going to get to that goal weight, or you're going to get to whatever that place is, where you weigh what you want to weigh and you're going to be like, "Hmm, this is actually really similar to what it was like 20 pounds, 40 pounds. How many pounds ago?" Like this is actually really, really similar. So when, again, when we put so much emotional weight on the goal weight and achieving that and we're so anxious to get there, we're really, really disappointed. And so does it feel nice to have your body feel different? Sure it does. But then there's also other issues that come up, right?

It's always going to be a 50-50 experience. It's going to be 50-50 positive experience, 50-50 negative experience. Whether you weigh more than you think you should or once you've lost the weight. So once you've lost the weight, that's when you have to continue doing what you've already learned. All the work that you've done on your brain to get you to that goal weight, you want to continue doing that, okay? If you're anything like me, my brain will just try to be like, "Oh, I don't need them anymore. I solved all that. That's no longer an issue for me." And you're going to be wrong. I hate to break it to you. You're going to be wrong. You're going to be disappointed when things start showing up for you again.

So all of this work that I teach you, you have to be willing to continue doing it ongoing, examining your brain, getting really focused on what you want to think, how you want to feel, what actions you want to take so that you can continue to create the result of maintaining your goal weight, okay? So that leads me then into the fourth common misconception, which is that you'll be able to eat "more normally" when you're at goal weight, right? You're going to lose the weight and you're going to white knuckle it, and you're going to be uncomfortable for now, but it's going to be okay because once you get to goal weight, you're going to be able to loosen the reins a little bit. It's not going to be so difficult. You're going to definitely be able to eat a little more normally. You won't have to limit yourself.

Like any kind of mental construct, that shows to me that you have so much more work to do on your thinking, right? You still have more desire for food than you should, that you are creating thoughts in your brain that make you feel restricted or deprived. We want to get to a place where the way you ate to get you to goal weight is so awesome and you're so happy with it that you're more than happy to just continue eating that way, ongoing, which PS is how you keep your weight off. Okay? So when you notice that your brain is going to like, "I'll be golden when I get to that goal weight. My life will be so different. My brain will be so different." It will only be different if you do the work along the way. And what I find is that when people are white knuckling their way through it, losing the weight, they will lose the weight, but they haven't really done the thought work or really the brain work that's required, they will struggle. They will really struggle.

When you really work on your brain, everything in your life gets better, including you losing weight because you've worked on your brain, not because you ate a certain way. Okay. So when you find yourself focusing so much and obsessing about the food and the goal weight and all the stuff, the mid-range BMI, like none of that's important. Let's get to work on our brains.

Okay. Have a wonderful rest of your week. I can't wait to talk to you next time and I'll see you soon. Take care, bye-bye.