



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, my friend, welcome back to the podcast. How are you today? Thank you for joining me. I'm so glad you're here. Super duper, glad you're here. And if you were new or newer to the podcast, then I'm even more excited to see you here. You are in the right place. This is what you need to solve your weight problem once and for all. All of this information that I help you with. I do have to tell you that I was getting ready to record this and I thought, you know what would be really good? Is some hot lemon water. I have become a fan of this. I'm like, who am I? But I really, really do like hot lemon water. And so I got myself some and the blouse I'm wearing today has these ties at the ends of the sleeves. And as I was putting the lemon in, I dipped the whole bow of one side right in there. I was like, go me. What a great start to the podcast. But yeah, it seems to have been dried off okay. I think we're going to be okay. I think we're going to make it.

I have two kids in school today. One, my high schooler is home, which sounds so weird to say that I have a high schooler. I'm way too young for that. Actually not by age, but I think in spirit, I'm way too young for that. And his school is doing it where they go to school every other day. And so he is on a homeschool day today but he just handles himself so I kind of feel like I'm home alone. He's just up in his room going to school. No problem. My two little ones are, I mean, it's week two and they're still going every day. Fingers crossed. Every week that they go I think I'm just going to be like, "Okay, we made it another week."

There's anything that COVID teaches us is it's to not take anything for granted, right? You just don't know. Before we were like, of course our kids are going to school. Now we're like, we'll have to see. Every day that they go is another great day. And honestly, it's been so good for them. I mean, of course it's always the transition that first week from summer sleeping schedule to having to get up and get ready and going. But they are, by the end of the first week, they were already getting used to the changes and they're just happy. They're happy to go, happy to have their routine, happy to see their teachers. They go to a Montessori school so this is, for one kid, his third year with the same teacher, and the other the second year. So the transition back is very easy for us. So anyway.

Okay. So I've been thinking a lot about what you all struggle with and what my clients struggle with. And I was thinking about how difficult it is for us to stop doing many of the things that we want to stop doing, right?

We want to stop overeating. We want to stop over drinking, if drinking is the thing for us. We want to stop overspending, if that's a thing for us. We want to stop procrastinating. We want to stop spending as much time on social media or watching shows, mindless YouTube, whatever kind of consumption you do. We want to stop doing that.

And we find it so incredibly difficult. I find so many people saying like, "Seriously, can you just help me with the nighttime eating? I just cannot stop doing that." And so I've taught before in this podcast, but if you haven't heard me talk about it, I'll just explain again, when we are in the moment, making a decision, since this is a weight loss podcast, let's just talk about food, right? So you've had dinner. If you have children they're in bed, or you've just kind of like settled yourself down for the night, you're not doing any more working and you're just trying to figure out what to do with yourself to relax a little bit before you head to bed. Even if you hadn't planned to have a snack or eat something, it very likely is going to come up for you that you want to eat something.

Your brain's going to suggest that this is a good idea. And so if you have that snack, if you eat something, there is a short term positive. And that is why you act on it, right? Your primitive brain in the moment is not thinking about the longterm negatives, the longterm downsides. It doesn't care about that at all. It's like, "Listen, tomorrow may never come. Right now, I want a snack. Let's have it, let's do it." And then you have a lot of cravings and urges and it feels very difficult to not have that. Now we understand intellectually that those short term positives are very short lived. We eat the food. How long does it take? I mean, if you're snacking on a bag of chips, it might take longer. It might be 15 to 20 minutes, something like that. But often if we're eating something else, I mean, five minutes, seven, maybe?

And then for most of us, immediately we start feeling guilty and feeling bad about ourselves for having eaten it. Right? But even if you don't do that, there's the longterm negative, the longterm consequence, which is, if you're trying to lose weight, you're going to have a harder time losing weight, right? Maybe you don't sleep as well because you've overeaten now, in the evening. Now your stomach is digesting food while you're sleeping, instead of repairing and regenerating and resting and doing all those things it's supposed to be doing at night when you're sleeping. There's longterm consequences, right? You don't feel as good of energy when you're eating things like that. So overall, even though you have a little bit of a positive in the short term, your longterm negative is much more intense, which gives you a net negative. So eating that food at night overall in sum is a negative for you.

It does not create the results that you want in your life. It does not create freedom around food. It does not create a sense of control. It does not create a body that you feel comfortable in. It does not create a body that serves you to its highest ability, right? You're not feeling the energy that you would like to have. Maybe you're not thinking as clearly as you would like to. Overall, there's this net negative. And so we understand this. We understand intellectually, yet we still, in the moment, are like, screw it all. F it. I want the snack. I want the glass of wine, right? This is a really good deal. I've been wanting this kitchen gadget, whatever it is. This adorable top, these cute shoes, whatever it is that you like to buy, or I need to find out what my favorite influencer is doing on social media. Whatever it is, right? There's that net negative. But we still cannot bring ourselves to, in the moment, deny ourselves that short term pleasure, that short term positive experience.

We really just want to have the instant gratification right then. So then what do we do? What we do then is we make a plan, right? We're like, "Hey, I have a protocol. I have a whole plan on like, when I can shop, when I can eat, what I'm going to eat, how much wine I can have, or other alcohol, how much am I going to spend on social media." But then very often we don't follow through in the moment. I hear this all the time. We're like, "I have the plan and in the moment I was just like, 'Screw it all.'" And we go right back to having that short term positive. So that can be like, we plan eating our lunch on plan, right? We have a lunch that we're going to do. And then in the moment, someone's brought something in, or we're driving past our favorite fast food restaurant, or there's some other treat that seems like it would be great idea. And then we end up convincing ourselves in the moment, we can have that.

Except because we know it's not really what serves us best and we're not really a hundred percent all in on having the thing, we don't actually even get all the pleasure out of it that we could if we just completely wholeheartedly, let ourselves just unabashedly and without shame and without guilt completely just enjoyed the thing. Like, let's say you stopped and got an ice cream cone. If you were like, I absolutely deserve to have pleasure from time to time and this is planned and this is amazing. I'm enjoy every single lick and bite and taste. It's so good. Right? That's a very different experience than, "Oh my gosh, I'm going to have that," eating it kind of fast to get rid of the evidence and then feeling totally bad about yourself and feeling guilty afterward. Right? It's the same thing for eating your dinner on plan, same thing for nighttime eating. You promise yourself. Right? I always think of it like, I pinky swore with myself, I'm not going to eat something tonight. Then the nighttime rolls around. I'm like, "Well, what about just like one of those," it's just the sneakiest little thinking, right?

And same with weekend eating. You have a plan for what you're going to do for the weekend, but then you have all these other ideas about, "Yeah but I'm supposed to be able to relax and everyone's having fun and oh, I don't know what else to do with myself." And then before you know it, the plan goes out the window. So there's lots of ways to deal with this. But the one that I want to identify and discuss today is what I call positive stacking or stacking the positives. So the way that you approach this, when you utilize this, is when you're making your plan. Okay? So you're making your plan about what you're going to do and you know it's going to serve you. You know that following that plan is going to give you the results long term that you want. And stacking the positives is a tool that you can use to help you in the moment to not give in to those cravings, those urges, to do all the things that you know you shouldn't be doing.

So what that means is you create your plan, let's just use food again. You create your plan for what you're going to eat the next day. And then you decide what are all the positives of following that plan, right? Like we know what they are but we don't take the time to actually identify them, to lay them all out, to discretely have them listed for ourselves so that it's obvious. I don't know if you're anything like me but I think you probably are, in the moment if you don't have this all laid out for yourself, your brain will forget. Your brain will be like, "There's absolutely nothing good for me following this. Screw that. Who cares about fitting into my jeans? I don't care. I just want the thing in the moment."

So what stacking the positives does is it directs your brain on what to think. It lays out for you, why you're doing the thing that you're doing and helps you to reconnect to the net positive you get when you deny yourself that short term pleasure, right?

You don't give in, in the moment, you allow yourself to be disappointed for a short time while you don't get to have the ice cream cone, right? I mean, you get to have whatever you want but you decide you're not going to eat it. But then you get all the positive longterm results, right? So, your body feels good. You feel like your clothes fit in an appropriate way. If you have weight to lose, the weight comes off. You're feeling energetic in your body. Those are all those net positives. But in the moment we're like, screw all of that. My energy is fine. I sleep good enough. I don't need any of that stuff.

So what you do is you make your plan and then you think of as many things as you can that are positives that will happen when you follow this plan. I suggest at least five or seven. I mean, 10 or more would even be amazing. And I also suggest that you don't just keep repeating the same ones every single day. It's kind of like with doing gratitude. I don't know if you guys have ever picked up on this but a lot of people talk about gratitude. Well, if you write down three things you're grateful for every day but most days it's the same stuff. It actually doesn't have the same impact than if you have to come up with something new every single day. Like yeah, the low hanging fruit, the things that are obvious I'm grateful for, I've gotten those out of the way. Now, what am I really grateful for?

You know what I'm really grateful for? I'm grateful for an amazing pen that writes so well. You know what I'm grateful for? I'm grateful for technology that works. Like things like that, right? You have to start really getting creative. And what that does is it opens your brain up to, yeah, it's not just the usual obvious things that are awesome in your life. It's like, actually, there's so many awesome things that I just don't even think about. I don't appreciate. I'm not grateful for it. So it's the same thing here. You start building up this arsenal of what all the positives are. It's not like, "Oh yeah, the scale will go down eventually. My roll won't hang over my pants so much. I'll be able to wear whatever size in scrubs that I want to wear." You know, things like that. Those are the obvious things but then you start picking up on what are the other little minor, minor things?

And they're not even really minor when you dig into them. Like, how about the respect that I'm going to have for myself for creating a relationship with myself where I know I'm going to do what I say that I do. And then I do it, right? Like, things like that. That's meaningful. That's like deep stuff but it's going to take some time for you to get to that once you get through those easy ones in the beginning. So what you do, let's just talk about it in terms of planning your food for the next day, you plan out what you're going to eat and then you think to yourself, "Okay, what are all the positives of me following this plan?" Okay. So we start listing them off.

I eat the right amount of food. I eat nutritious food that serves my body. I eat food that allows me to have energy throughout the day so I don't feel like I need to snack. I am eating food then that fuels my brain so that when I'm at work, I'm able to think at a very high level and very clearly and make decisions quickly. And when I'm at home, I'm able to manage my mind. I'm not riding the highs and lows of a sugar high and a sugar crash. I'm feeling energetic in my body. My digestion is good. My sleep is better. I have so much more respect for myself. I am so much more easily able to think positive thoughts about myself. I am showing myself that I am continuing to prioritize myself and my own health and my own wellbeing. I am showing myself how important I am to myself. This is an act of love for myself. This is an act of self care for myself. I mean, I could go on and on. Right?

You just think about all of these positives and you make sure you have them in an easy to access spot. So if you like doing paper, maybe just like fold that up, have that by your phone or have it in your pocket or something like that. If you are a digital person, then maybe just put it in your notes app or wherever you keep track of your food journal or things like that. And of course you need to just expect that you're not going to want to follow your plan when the time comes. Right? I mean, if you are still expecting to follow your plan or to want to follow your plan, you're not going to most of the time. Sometimes you will. I think actually the more that you follow your plan, the more you want to, but in the beginning, for sure, you're not going to want to follow it.

So nothing's going wrong when you don't want to follow it. Everything is going perfectly when that happens. So you don't want to follow your plan. And then you access all the positives. You've stacked up all of these positives. It's not just like a couple of wimpy positives that you're like, "Eh, whatever." You're like, "Oh my gosh, look at this long list of all these things. These are all the reasons to do this. These are all the reasons to deny myself this instant gratification right in this moment. Can I get connected to these outcomes? To these things that I want? Can I just spend a little time thinking about what it's like to have all those things that not eating this extra food right now will create for me in the long term?" Get really connected to how that feels and then allow yourself to not have the thing, right?

Because now, not having it, the short term negative, is not as a negative because you've created all these positives out of it. What you're doing is you're connecting yourself in the short term and the immediate moment to the longterm positives, to those longterm outcomes that you want. So you're in a way identifying with your future self, who's going to have those results. And you're thinking about what it's going to be like to be her. And you're very quickly identifying with her and doing what it takes to support her, to create that thing. Before you know it, you are that future self because of this work that you've done in the moment.

So how does this apply to other things? Let's talk about procrastination. I hear this all the time, right? It could be any task that you have to do. I often hear about it when it comes down to needing to write an article or write a grant or write a chapter for a book or create a presentation or anything like that. It can be any number of things you're procrastinating, but the reason why you don't want to do it in the moment is because of course your thoughts about it. But in the moment, it seems like it's going to be a really bad experience, right? We often tell ourselves, I don't know enough. I have to think about it more. I need more help. Whatever it is. That's basically convincing ourselves that in the short term, in the moment we can't do it right now, or we don't want to do it right now, or it'd be really, really hard and uncomfortable to do it right now.

And then we're of course signing up, by not doing it, signing up for the long term negative of having to rush, having to do it at the last minute, having to do it through the stress of not having as much time as we would like. And that creates a negative experience all in all of having done it. So when you are setting a goal and you know you're going to procrastinate and the way you're going to know is because everybody procrastinates at least somewhat. And if you're not super jazzed or excited to get started immediately, if you're thinking, I need to do more research, I need to think more about it. You're probably going to try to procrastinate. If you have thoughts, this is going to be really hard. This is going to be really time consuming.

You're probably going to try to procrastinate it. You make your plan for when you're going to do the thing. When you're going to spend time and effort and energy on creating whatever it is, you anticipate that you're not going to want to do it in the moment. Same thing, right? Same as following your eating plan. And then you stack the positives.

So what are all the positives to you actually spending time working on this? I mean, it could be any number of things. First of all, moving the needle forward, getting that much closer. If you aren't sure what you need to know, you're that much closer to figuring out what you need to know or what you need to research to figure out what that is, what you need to learn next so that you can do the thing. You are showing yourself that this is a priority to get going. You're showing yourself that you can do hard things. Even when you don't want to. You are committing to not having it be a super painful and rushed experience at the end, right? These are all these positives that you can stack up.

You're going to have time to have someone proofread it. I mean, so many different things, right? That are going to come up if you get going on this right away. So when the time comes for you to work on it and you don't want to do it and you want to procrastinate, you've got those positives all stacked for you. And you identify with those. You can even have maybe a little plan for yourself in there. Like when I want to procrastinate and not do it, this is what I'm going to do. And this is why. I'm going to do it anyway. I'm going to set the timer for 20 minutes or 25 minutes or 30 minutes. And all I can do is work on it for that time. Even if I have nothing and no ideas and I can't even begin, I'm just going to write about why I can't begin and what's missing and what I need so that I can move forward.

Because even that moves you forward in the project, right? Stacking the positives, getting really connected to why you're doing the thing in the moment, even when you really don't want to, that can be so helpful. When you think about spending too much time on social media. I hear this all the time. People are like, "I'm on there all the time and all of a sudden I look up and I've been in this vortex." So as soon as you have that trigger, that urge to get on social media, which by the way, if you have a problem with this, you should really bury that app in your phone. Meaning you need to put it on the second or third screen. You need to put it in a folder and then have it not even on the first page of the folder. So it's like, there's lots and lots of tapping.

And I've had people be like, "Oh yeah, but my fingers work fast." I'm like, "Yeah, but your brain has to figure out where that is and you've got to find it." It's a couple more seconds to give you that moment to go, "You know what? Wait. Do I really need to be on social media right now? What are the positives of me getting on here? Or you know what? I'm going to do it but I'm also going to set a timer for 10 minutes. As soon as that thing goes off, I'm going to be done. And when I don't want to stop, here are the positives that I've stacked up to me stopping. These are the things I'm going to do with myself instead. I have it all stacked up. I know exactly what I'm going to be doing." Right?

And when you think about overspending, it's the same thing. I mean, if you're getting all the ads and I mean, everybody's got sales right now and all the companies are trying to move inventory and things like that. If you're spending time on there looking at this and convincing yourself you need to buy things. What are the short term negatives of you doing that? What are the longterm positives? Stack up those positives?

I was thinking about, even if you can afford it, it's not even always about affording it. I mean, of course you end up often with a bunch of junk and stuff that you just don't even really want or need any way or a closet stuffed full of clothes that you couldn't even begin to wear. You know, especially it's like, you're buying a bunch of clothes and you live in sweats and scrubs most of the day.

It's like, well, is that probably the best use of your money? Maybe not. But when you really think about it, what else could you be doing with that money? Even if you have the money, you have plenty of money, it's not even like, oh, you're going into debt or anything like that. The issue is, think about all the good that you could do when you spend that money on something else. And so just here's an example. I'm not even saying that this is what you should do at all but it just came up for me yesterday and so it seems relevant. I decided years ago, I actually started doing this after my daughter passed away. So, she's been gone now over 10 years. So we've been doing this a long time. What I do is, I'm connected with a charity that allows you to sponsor children and you can choose gender and birthdate and location and things like that.

Well, so what I do is I sponsor a child somewhere in the world who is the same gender and has exact same birth date as one of my kids. So like my son, who's almost 15, there's a boy that we have been sponsoring, he's in South Africa and he has the exact same birthdate as my son. And I just think it's a fun connection. I think it's fun for the kids to know we do that. We actually had one girl in Malawi that we were supporting for a long time. And her village basically graduated their whole program is on their own now. So we had to get somebody new, which is awesome for her. And just love to support her. It makes me so happy. But anyway, I was just in there yesterday actually signing up for another kid because we needed to rearrange some things so that each one of my kids has a child who is their same gender and same birth date that we sponsor.

And so we sponsor them every single month. It comes out automatically. We don't think about it at all. And it's the easiest way for me to give money to a positive end result, right? I know that I don't need that additional hundred plus bucks a month for anything, although I could easily spend it on so many things, right? So many random things on Amazon or whatever it is that I don't need. But instead when I don't do that, I have this money that goes and helps someone else. So it may not be anything like this at all for you. It may not even be a charity. It might be wanting to save up to be able to give a big donation or to have an endowed professorship or something.

I mean, there's just so many different things that you can support with your money that maybe that would be something you could really connect to and you don't need to be getting those dopamine hits in the short term from buying a bunch of stuff you don't need. And instead you can save up to have the dopamine hit of doing something really positive in the world with the money that you have, the extra money that you have, right? When we have an abundance, we can share that. And that is lasting. The top that you got on sale is not lasting positive gratification, right? We don't even think about it a couple of weeks later. So think about positive stacking, stacking the positives. This is something that can really make a difference for you if you are struggling with following through in the moment. And I know so many of you do, I think we all do at certain times with certain things.

So think about what all the positives are and get really connected to them. It really shouldn't take long. This is just a quick brainstorming session and get as many out as you can and then make sure that you access them. Because if you write them out the night before and then it's 24 hours later, and you're expecting yourself to remember those, you're probably not going to. Right? You have to have them so you can be like, you know what? Then before I over eat this, or before I have the snack, I need to get really, really connected to all the positives of me not having this. I'm going to spend five minutes thinking about that, dreaming about what it's like to have all of these positives. And then I'm going to see if I still feel like I need to eat this thing. It's really just a way of somewhat hacking your brain and getting yourself connected with that future self.

All right, my friend, thank you so much for joining me today. I always, always, always love coming and talking with you and I will catch up with you next week.

Take care. Bye, bye.