



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hey there, my friend. Welcome back to the podcast. I'm so glad that you're here with me today. I have an incredible success story for you today. I know you guys love these. I get so many emails from people going, "I love hearing people's success stories so much," and I'm so glad to be able to bring this series back. It's so fun to hear about how other people transform their lives, right? I have a really, really good one for you today.

So I know her as Pri, but her real name is Priyanka Venugopal. She is an amazing, amazing doctor who has made just tremendous strides and has just completely solved her weight problem and improved some really, really challenging relationships in her life, just totally has transformed her life for the better. I mean, she'll tell you everything. But she's like, "I came for the weight loss but didn't realize how much my life would get better being in this program." And so I just want you to hear about the amazing success that she's created for herself. Then you can think about whether maybe, possibly doing this work yourself would be helpful.

So if you listen to this episode and you think, "You know what? I do maybe want to find out more about what this program is about," just so you know, that free training that I'm doing this Thursday, the 8th, I will at the end let you know more about the Weight Loss for Doctors Only program that I will be starting in January. So if you are interested in just finding out more about it, getting the details, asking questions, things like that, make sure that you come to that call as well. Of course, if you're not interested in that, that's completely fine and I'm still going to get you amazing, good help.

Okay, please enjoy my conversation with Priyanka Venugopal.

Katrina Ubell: Priyanka, Pri ... I know you as Pri, but your name's Priyanka ... welcome to the podcast.

Priyanka Venugopal: Thank you, Katrina. I am so thrilled to be here.

Katrina Ubell: I'm so excited to have you. Tell us your story. We've already talked a little bit about it and I'm like, "Okay, we have to stop."

Priyanka Venugopal: I know.

Katrina Ubell: "We're going to waste all the good stuff for everybody." So let's just start with you

Priyanka Venugopal: Chatting forever.

Katrina Ubell: Right, exactly. Let's just start with you introducing yourself just briefly, kind of giving everybody an idea about who you are.

Priyanka Venugopal: Sure. My name is Priyanka. I am an OBGYN in northern New Jersey. I have two kids, a five-year-old son and a two-year-old daughter, and I'm living the life, doing the OBGYN thing and managing these two ... I like to call them jellybeans, but they're really turning into some jumping jellybeans because ...

Katrina Ubell: Spicy ones?

Priyanka Venugopal: ... they keep me on my toes. Absolutely.

Katrina Ubell: Tabasco jellybeans?

Priyanka Venugopal: Absolutely. Exactly, yeah.

Katrina Ubell: They are, yeah. I'm telling you, my youngest is seven now and I feel like we're coasting a little. There's periods where it's harder and then a little easier and oh my gosh. I've coached so many times on how much I struggled with my daughter when she was four and stuff. It's so fun to see they're really hard at this age and then it gets better, which is so great.

Priyanka Venugopal: I remember that, actually. Yeah.

Katrina Ubell: Yes. It was a real challenge.

Priyanka Venugopal: Especially now with back to school. We had kind of gotten into a little bit of a rhythm before this whatever semblance of back to school we have, and now they're back so we're ... new transition and new time.

Katrina Ubell: Yes, exactly, exactly. Do you have someone who takes care of them at home, or do you send them to school or daycare?

Priyanka Venugopal: I have a nanny, so whenever I'm at the office or whenever I'm on call, I have a nanny. My husband's working from home because of COVID. My son was supposed to start kindergarten this year, and so our town gave us the option virtual or a hybrid model, and just with him being five, the virtual thing wasn't really going to be a good fit for him, and we didn't feel comfortable yet sending him physically back in because we still see my parents and they're older. We really wanted to feel safe about whatever we did, so we decided, actually, to create a micropod. And so we're kind of just doing our own kindergarten. We have a couple of kids. We have a certified teacher and we're doing our thing with that.

Katrina Ubell: Cool. Love that.

Priyanka Venugopal: It's awesome.

Katrina Ubell: That is so awesome. Good for you. I love it. I love it. A good solution, right?

Priyanka Venugopal: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Every time.

Katrina Ubell: Okay, so tell everybody the story of your weight struggle. How old were you? How did this all begin for you?

Priyanka Venugopal: I would say, for me, I can't even think about how old I was, but from the earliest age that I can remember where I was even conscious of weight being a thing, and I think that was probably as early as elementary school. Pretty early, maybe middle school, where I never felt like I was at my ideal. At that age, I was never morbidly obese or even very overweight. I just knew that I didn't feel 100% with what I was. I even remember at one point ... I think I was like seven or eight ... me and my best friend were comparing our thighs.

Katrina Ubell: Oh my gosh, yeah.

Priyanka Venugopal: Like, "Look at my thigh. Look at your thigh." I might have been eight years old. Again, at that age, I didn't have the concept of weight loss or weight gain, but I just felt not 100%. I would say definitely in high school into college, that was when I started to really feel like, "If I was at," insert weight here, "Then I would probably feel better. Then I would feel complete." Like, "If I could just be at this weight." And I don't even think I had a number in mind, just less than what I am now. So I would say that it started from a young age and it just trickled. It was like a low buzzing problem, but never at the forefront of my mind.

I would say college I kind of did I gained and lost, gained and lost, and I would go through periods of time where I would be in the gym and I would do my workouts and watching what I was eating and looking at the calories and, "Oh, did I eat pizza Friday?" And then I would be going through periods of my life where I was not paying any attention to any of that and my weight would reflect that. Basically, whatever was happening in my life. Then at some point in college, me and one of my good friends, we started a dance troupe. It was an Indian

Katrina Ubell: Oh, fun.

Priyanka Venugopal: Yeah, it was an Indian dance troupe and we did a kind of mix of classical Indian dance and folk and pop and a little bit of everything, and that definitely helped just with me being more active and doing so much dance in college. But as soon as that ended, I graduated college, that structure wasn't there for me to do that. It started to creep back up.

So it crept back up, and then I would say about two or three years after college ended, I got engaged, so now we have a wedding. And so that was the next mile marker for me that I really wanted to lose the weight again. This was when I really started looking at the calories and looking at how much fat and how many carbohydrates. And I'm vegetarian, so now I'm thinking, "Oh, I really need to figure this out," and spinning and jumping up and down, like, "Let's just shake it all off. How can we shed the weight?"

And I would say that's probably the lowest weight that I ever got to, was my wedding. Then right after my wedding, I started medical school.

Katrina Ubell: Was it pretty healthy, you think, how you got to that weight, or no?

Priyanka Venugopal: Yeah, I was definitely normal BMI. I finally got to normal BMI. I had not probably been at normal BMI maybe in a long time before that. I lost probably 15 or 20 pounds just before my wedding, and I would say at my wedding, I was a little bit over mid-range normal BMI.

Katrina Ubell: When you think about

Priyanka Venugopal: And I felt good.

Katrina Ubell: You felt good?

Priyanka Venugopal: I was like, "Oh, I look good."

Katrina Ubell: "Oh, I look good."

Priyanka Venugopal: "I look so good. I wonder how long this is going to last?" I really was like, "I wonder how long I can stay like this." It was such a question. I crossed my fingers and I just thought to the universe, "Can I please just stay like this in this mid-normal ...". And I felt good. I remember physically, I felt comfortable. I felt like the way my clothes were fitting, the way that I was moving, all of it felt good. That's why I was crossing my fingers like, "Please, universe, can I just stay in this weight range?"

Katrina Ubell: Now, what you had to do, though, to create that weight, do you think that was healthy?

Priyanka Venugopal: No, because it was kind of desperation. I had this timeline, I was getting married in March, and it was like I had this

Katrina Ubell: It was like an external motivation, right?

Priyanka Venugopal: Yeah, it was, absolutely.

Katrina Ubell: And then the wedding's over and then what?

Priyanka Venugopal: Absolutely.

Katrina Ubell: Now you don't have that as that deadline or that big event that you're about to approach where it motivates you.

Priyanka Venugopal: Yeah. Which is why I went to wishful thinking with crossing my fingers.

Katrina Ubell: Oh, I have done that, too, a million times.

Priyanka Venugopal: Yeah. Like, "Maybe it'll just stay like this magically." I think I said, "Maybe it'll just stay. I don't have to do anything and it'll just stay." And I think before then when I had the wedding and I was preparing for losing the weight for that, I really was every moment thinking about, "How can I lose weight?" It was like every moment. It felt frenzied. It really felt frenzied in that process, and that's why, when the wedding was over, I went to crossing my fingers because frenzy was gone. The frenzy was totally gone.

Katrina Ubell: Right, exactly. And you said you then started medical school right away.

Priyanka Venugopal: Yeah. Six months later, I started medical school, and that was definitely the start of the weight coming back, absolutely. Because now, I had a lot of thoughts of just ... First of all, the newness of medical school. I was in California. I'm from New Jersey. I was in a different place, newly married, new family dynamics, all of that. And I think, of course, the piece of being new at something again. It's like, I had figured out college. I got through that. I figured out how to have a job. I did that for a couple of years. Now I'm starting something new again. I felt really unsure about myself, and I think that because I felt so unsure, what would I do? I would do the cheese and crackers at night. I would just make myself feel better because I did not feel so great, I think, going through medical school and going through all the things. So that's where that started.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, yeah. Okay, so you were in medical school. How much weight do you think you gained during that time? Or was that also up and down?

Priyanka Venugopal: Probably about 16 or 17 pounds, I would say. I started residency, say ... yeah, it was about 17 or 18 pounds in medical school, and that was really slow. That's, I think, the other thing. It crept. It was a slow creep. It wasn't like I gained 10 pounds and I was like, "Whoa, I better do something about this." I never thought I needed to do something about it because it was such a slow creep and I was wearing leggings all the time, and so I don't think I even realized that my pant size was different except whenever I would come home, California to New Jersey. My family would see me and my mom would be like, "So hey, how you doing over there?"

So I think that that was probably when I gained my first creep of weight, medical school. And then in residency, I stayed ... I know because in residency, I was a small scrub initially for a month or two months and it very quickly became a medium-sized scrub. That's how I know, just the size of my scrubs turned into a medium. In residency, I think that the time that I really gained the weight ... And again, I gained a little by little in residency, but the time I really gained the weight was when I became pregnant. So I had a baby at the ... well, let's see ... fourth year. Fourth year was when I had my son, and I seriously gained weight. A lot of weight in pregnancy and postpartum, all of that.

Katrina Ubell: Now, let me ask you this, though, because you're in training to be an OBGYN and you know that gaining a ton of weight when you're pregnant is not advised. So tell me what was going on for you in your head about that.

Priyanka Venugopal: I will say, I was one of those delinquent patients that did not really go in for my OB visits.

Katrina Ubell: I freaking love that.

Priyanka Venugopal: So in terms of me, I was a delinquent OB patient. I would never recommend to my patients what I did, which is every once in a while, I would see my provider in the hallway and she's like, "You need to visit." I'm like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm feeling well, baby's moving, love it, no contractions." "Oh, well, let's take a quick blood pressure at the nursing station." Like, "Let's do a quick urine dip." So in terms of actually checking my weight, I didn't actually check my weight all that often in pregnancy. And because scrubs are so forgiving, I was a medium scrub for some time, and then I definitely got into the large scrubs towards the end and I was like, "Oh, that's normal. My belly's so big. Of course."

Katrina Ubell: "I'm pregnant," right, yeah.

Priyanka Venugopal: "I'm pregnant. Of course." But I wasn't actually monitoring my weight. I just felt like, "Well, I'm kind of okay. I'm not eating crazy. I'm kind of okay." And I actually think that a part of me was ignoring it. A part of me was like, "I know I'm gaining the weight, but I'm also kind of just going to ignore that."

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, you just didn't want to even face it. Yeah, it's just denial.

Priyanka Venugopal: I didn't have a solution for it.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, so powerful. And it's kind of like if you really realize how much you're gaining, then you might have to do something about it and you don't want to do that.

Priyanka Venugopal: I didn't. I just wanted to ignore it. If I could just tuck it away into a deep, dark closet, then I can do all the other things. I can look for a job and finish residency and think about board exams. I had all these other things. I wanted to just put this weight that I was gaining just in a deep, dark corner and deal with it tomorrow. That was, "Deal with it tomorrow. I'm not going to deal with it now. I'll deal with it later."

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, yeah. I think so many people are in that similar circumstance because there's just so many other big things in your life. I'm sure people feel that way now. They're like, "Listen, with COVID and everything that's happening, I can't do it right now," or, "It's just too much right now." And that's, of course, not that case then because ... When you're just like, "I'll deal with it tomorrow," there never comes a day where you actually feel motivated to deal with it ever.

Priyanka Venugopal: Absolutely not. And I was coming from a place of fear. The reason I didn't want to deal with it today, right this minute, is because I felt scared. I felt like I just didn't know how. How could I ever figure this out? It's too big of a problem. I've never really fully dealt with it. Sure, I dealt with it for a moment when I got pregnant, but it felt too much for me, and I think that's why.

Katrina Ubell: So how much do you think you gained that pregnancy?

Priyanka Venugopal: Well, because I didn't really weigh myself, let's do a little bit of a guess. I would say that I probably gained maybe 35 pounds, maybe 38 pounds in the first pregnancy. And my son was only six pounds, 10 ounces, okay? Let me tell you, after he was born

Katrina Ubell: Well, that sounds about right. That's about what I gained, low 40s, and my biggest baby was seven pounds, four ounces.

Priyanka Venugopal: And I was like, "Where's the rest?"

Katrina Ubell: I know.

Priyanka Venugopal: Maybe amniotic fluid and the placenta.

Katrina Ubell: It's so disappointing.

Priyanka Venugopal: Oh. And I'm an OBGYN. You would think I'd know the placenta doesn't weigh 20 pounds. I know that. I know my logical brain knows that, but there's a small piece of my mind that thought, "Oh, in a week or two, the water weight ..." The "water weight," the swelling, "Once that all gets peed out, I can just be somewhat back to something." I was literally seven pounds lighter.

Katrina Ubell: Me too, yeah.

Priyanka Venugopal: My son was six pounds, 10 ounces. I was only seven pounds lighter. I mean, I'm like, "Not even the placenta."

Katrina Ubell: It was so disappointing.

Priyanka Venugopal: Like, "Where is it? Did I gain weight? What's going on?"

Katrina Ubell: I know. Like, "What happened?" I know.

Priyanka Venugopal: So whatever weight I was postpartum, I stayed that weight for a very long time, and I was exclusively nursing. This was the other piece of it. I was exclusively nursing and pumping when I went back to work. I went back to being a resident and I was exclusively pumping and all, and I thought, "This is going to be the magic. I'm going to nurse and pump, and the weight is just, as people say, it's just going to shed right off."

Katrina Ubell: It'll fall right off, yeah.

Priyanka Venugopal: My mom would say this to me in Hindi. There's a way to say it in Hindi. She would say, "It'll just shed right off," and I'm like, "Oh, okay, Mom." So it did not just shed right off, let's just say. I would look at my stomach and be like, "Is there another baby in there?" Like, "What?" I couldn't believe it. I was in a lot of denial over what my weight was at that point.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, totally. Oh my gosh, yeah. I resonate so much with that, with just being like, "It's all going to come off," and it's just not at all.

Priyanka Venugopal: It's not.

Katrina Ubell: I mean, I also remember

Priyanka Venugopal: And then I was hard on myself, too, after that.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. I remember also, though, nursing. So my son, my first child, was the kind of kid who would nurse for minimum 45 minutes. I mean, there was never just the quick ... If I had to sit down to feed him, it was like an hour-long affair, and so I really did miss meals in my defense. But I remember sitting in that chair nursing him and my mom coming in and literally feeding me things, just putting it in my mouth because I'm this new mom and I need both hands to hold him and all this stuff and I didn't even have a hand to feed myself. And so she's like, "You need to eat," and then realizing

Priyanka Venugopal: That was the other thing. My mom was giving me these delicious ... let me tell you. She got the recipe from her family in India. They're called ladoos. It's like this sugary, very special for milk production and postpartum healing. I was like, "Give it to me." I had a tin.

Katrina Ubell: Right, like all in.

Priyanka Venugopal: Tin by my bed. And I'm like, "But I'm eating so well. Why am I not losing the weight?" Here I am eating sugar balls, balls of sugar. Katrina, balls of sugar ...

Katrina Ubell: "This is so confusing."

Priyanka Venugopal: ... and I was wondering why I couldn't lose the weight. "Why am I not losing this weight?" I was eating sugar balls.

Katrina Ubell: Oh my gosh, right.

Priyanka Venugopal: But really, the worst part for me ... So even after having my son, I would say a year after having him, I graduated residency, I got a job, and I was thrilled with where I was working. I have the best colleagues, like the best. We moved into our house. Things were just ... Okay, I'm out of residency now, I'm starting attending life, "Let's get this show on the road." And I went to the space where I thought I knew how to lose weight because I did it that time when I got married, which means I need to be at the gym. I need to do all my spinning classes and watch what I'm eating. I kind of went into that space again and it's not that it didn't work. It did work in that I lost maybe 10 pounds, which felt really good. I saw the number on the scale going down. The number on the scale is not neutral for me. Like, "Ooh, this is working. It's feeling so good."

But I noticed that I kind of got stuck there. I lost the 10 pounds with that effort and I just wasn't able to lose more. I think that after a few years, then I got pregnant again, had my daughter, and that was when I ... I mean, I gained probably 45 pounds. Again, I didn't really weigh myself. My poor partner. I went to

Katrina Ubell: You didn't gain it and go in again.

Priyanka Venugopal: Listen. And again, I'm going to my own practice. One of my colleagues delivered me and I was like, "Oh yeah, yeah, I need a visit, need a visit." It was one of those things again, "Let's just check a quick blood pressure. We're good. Fundal height's okay," right?

Katrina Ubell: Yes.

Priyanka Venugopal: Like, "Quick heartbeat." And I think that clearly I had not worked on my mind, obviously, because I was still avoiding the number on the scale. I was still like ... "I don't feel good about this number." I was almost 200 pounds, I would say. So after I had my daughter, I was around the 200-pound mark and ... let's see, where was I? Again, exclusively nursing, exclusively pumping, back at work, and now

Katrina Ubell: How tall are you?

Priyanka Venugopal: I am 5'7 1/2". Give me that half. Don't take it away.

Katrina Ubell: Okay. That's right.

Priyanka Venugopal: 5'7 1/2". So I was definitely now in the obese category. If you calculated my BMI, I was absolutely in that category. And now that I'm an attending, I'm wearing actual clothes and they're not fitting anymore. So before I had the scrubs and the leggings and all that. And let me tell you, I rode those leggings out for as long as I could. But my shirts, they felt tight on the sleeve. You could feel it in the sleeves. I could feel it in the shoulders. And again, there was a definite part of my brain that just wanted to ignore it. I didn't know what to do, so I just kept spinning in my confusion. I tried the gym and I tried watching the calories and the carbs and the protein and the fat, but it only got me so far, so I don't know what to do. That was absolutely my heaviest. I was stuck there, even with all those things that I was trying to do.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. And I think that's such a common story, too, where when we were younger, exercising a lot really did give us the results that we wanted, and then as we get older, it just doesn't work anymore. Which is what the data shows us anyway, but it's so disappointing. And then it is so confusing and frustrating, because it's like, "Well, now I don't know what to do." I mean, "Do I just need to not eat? Do I need to develop an eating disorder? What needs to happen so that I can solve this problem?" Yeah.

Priyanka Venugopal: And I thought I was doing all the things. I thought I was doing it. I thought I was eating well. I mean, I had a tin of sugar balls near me and I still thought ... My brain really convinced me, like, "Why are you not losing the weight?" I was really telling myself this story, and I hadn't had that opportunity to really figure it out. I was not in a solutions-oriented place at all. I was in like, "Let's hide this number. Maybe it'll go down on its own. Let's cross our fingers again. Universe, I'm crossing my fingers. Please let's help me out here." And that definitely is not the way that it worked.

Katrina Ubell: Didn't work. So then what happened after that?

Priyanka Venugopal: At this point, now I was about six months postpartum. I was back at work and we were having some serious childcare issues. Massive, massive childcare issues.

I mean, I was really at a low point at this point, particularly because I think being back at work with the two kids, something about just having my daughter, the dynamic of how the family changed, my older son, how he was behaving, how he was in preschool ... Actually, when I heard your podcast about your daughter, I remember thinking, "Oh, it's not just me. Okay." So it's not just me with a three-and-a-half year old that's going through all these things. He was a little bit younger then. But really, I thought that I was doing something wrong. Just how he was, I'm like, "What am I doing? What am I doing wrong? What am I not doing? I must be not doing enough for him. I must be doing something less than for him to be this way. What's going on for him?" And I really made it about me. Like, "What's going on for him?" I thought I was asking myself that. It was totally about me. And

Katrina Ubell: Like, "How am I screwing this up? How am I not mothering him appropriately?"

Priyanka Venugopal: Yeah, because I'm a working mom, I'm like total mom guilt. Total, absolute, "I'm lacking in the mom world, I'm trying to go back to work, we're having some serious childcare issues right now, that must be why my son is ... Maybe they can sense the energy of what's happening at home with the nanny and with my daughter, who is a new member of our family, all of it." I was really at a low point and I was feeling terrible about being, again, almost 200 pounds. So I was feeling physically just really sick of myself. I could feel it. Emotionally sick of myself and physically sick of it.

I happened to be on Facebook ... and I think this is how a lot of people might have found your podcast. But I was on Facebook and just the word ... Somebody wrote the word, "weight loss," and it just caught my eye and your podcast was mentioned and there were so many comments, like hundreds of comments saying, "This podcast is this amazing, amazing podcast. It's changed my life." And I was like, "What is this magical solution here? It's a magic pill. I have to take a listen to this." And so the next morning driving to work, I started listening to your podcast. End of March 2019. And I, I think like so many others, just started binge listening to it. And now I had a few years to catch up on because you had started this podcast a few years ago. I just discovered it and I think that I felt this space open up in my heart, just listening to your podcast.

It was the first time that I think I thought that my world was happening to me. My brain, my thoughts, my whole world was happening to me. And after listening to ... I think it was just the first episode, the first few episodes ... I, for the first time, started to realize, "Oh, I just have a human brain and I just have these thoughts and that's it. That's all it is." I just didn't know. I just didn't know that I could do this.

Katrina Ubell: Right. That's how I felt. I'm like, "No one told me. I didn't know." Yeah.

Priyanka Venugopal: It created this ... I felt it really in my chest, this feeling, "Oh." This light bulb went off for me. It's not happening to me. My world is not happening to me. I get to choose. What? What? I get to choose? I have a human brain. Of course, I'm doing all of these things. But I totally have ownership here. I think that I probably spent four or five months, April to August, listening to your podcast, implementing all of the things that you were talking about, and really ... I mean, I think I lost about 20 pounds before I even joined your program. 20 pounds.

I mean, I was sharing it with patients, I was telling everybody and everyone about it, and massively changing just my life. I think that listening to the podcast was the first time that I started taking some ownership of my experience for the first time. And I think, even as I was listening to your podcast, at the end I was like, "I hope she's still coaching," because I hadn't gotten to the end of your podcast. I was like, "I hope she's ..."

I think that listening to your podcast started to help me create thoughts of belief in myself. Before your podcast, I had gotten to the point where I had very little belief, very little. It was dwindling, which is why I was at such a low. Listening to your podcast, it's like it planted the little seed of belief, "Maybe I can believe in myself again." And I think that that has just been watered and it's turning into a plant now, that belief in myself. It's just grown and grown and grown, and it's because of working with you, absolutely.

Katrina Ubell: So why did you decide to sign up for Weight Loss for Doctors Only? You were having all these great results just listening, and I'm just curious, because it had to be at some point where you're just like, "I'm going to pull the trigger and actually join this program." How was that process?

Priyanka Venugopal: I think that the initial piece of me listening to your podcast starting to believe in myself, I still didn't fully believe in myself, but I did believe in you. I somehow was not only inspired by your message and by just the things you were saying ... You were saying all the things that were in my mind, so I was inspired by you. But I started to just believe you. I started to believe in you. You as a person, you as a coach, you as a program. And I think that I chose to think that when I believe in you so much, maybe I can start to believe in myself as much. So it was almost like I was using your program to learn how to create belief for myself. But the thing that helped me really do it, it was belief in you.

Katrina Ubell: That's so cool. I always feel like I have so much belief in the listener who needs me, right?

Priyanka Venugopal: Yes.

Katrina Ubell: Like, "I wish they'd just borrow some of my belief because I know you can do it."

Priyanka Venugopal: That's right. That's right.

Katrina Ubell: It's so interesting, yeah.

Priyanka Venugopal: And I think that that's ... I really think that people that are listening to this podcast, they're listening to it, they're considering, "Is coaching for me? Is this program for me?" ... I think that if you have even the smallest seed of belief in yourself, if you want to create a different future for yourself ... I did the work. I will take ownership of the fact that I have been the one in the driver's seat. I have been the one changing my life. But it was working with you that changed the course of my life. So coaching and shining the light onto a different pathway is what totally took me down a completely different road. I didn't know that future me could be different until I started working with you.

Priyanka of 2019 was full of doubt and overwhelm and confusion and mom guilt and, "I'm not doing enough," and, "I don't know if I'll ever get the weight ... Maybe I'll cross my fingers." And then the day I chose to sign up, the day I hit the button, "I am doing this," I decided to do it with everything. I jumped into your program with both feet. I did not look back. And I think that, to be successful in this program, you have to come in with that energy. You might not believe in yourself 100%, but you believe in yourself just enough to do it, to pull the trigger and decide, "I'm believing in my coach. I'm believing in this process." And as you believe in that, you discover who your future self is. I started to discover who is Priyanka of 2020? I had no idea, but I totally figured out who she was while I was coaching with you.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. What I think is so good, too, is I think people think in order to jump in with both feet, you have to understand everything and know exactly how it's going to go, know exactly what weight you're going to end up in, you need to know what the end result is, and you don't. What you need to know is, "I'm just going to keep showing up. Whatever the next obstacle is, whatever comes up for me, I'm going to ask for help." I would love it if I could do the work for my clients, right?

Priyanka Venugopal: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Katrina Ubell: And be like, "Listen, I'll just handle it and I'll do your transformation for you," but it just doesn't work that way. I really think about it like, I'm here to guide you, but you have to meet me, and that's exactly what you did. You're like, "I'm here, I'm ready to go," and that's the most fun person to coach.

Priyanka Venugopal: Absolutely.

Katrina Ubell: Because it was just like, "Let's go. Let's do it."

Priyanka Venugopal: I think that also, if you don't see results right away ... This is what happened to me. I would be at the same weight for a month and I'm doing all the things. I think that it's that piece of it, this idea that the scale has to go down for this to be very successful. I mean, I have lost now almost 60 pounds.

Katrina Ubell: Amazing.

Priyanka Venugopal: In the last year and almost year and a half, I've lost 20 pounds prior to your program and then 40 pounds during, and it's because I didn't let that number on the scale ... Now, it's still not neutral, right? I'm still working on neutrality on the scale, but when the number on the scale didn't go down, that wasn't me meaning that it wasn't working. I think that this idea that, "But the number on the scale's not going down, what's going wrong?" Nothing's going wrong. I love your analogy, like, if you know it's in the mail, right?

Katrina Ubell: Yeah.

Priyanka Venugopal: That belief for me happened the day I signed your program. The day I did it, I'm like, "It is happening. I believe in Katrina and this program," just because I had to.

I think I felt like, "If I'm going to believe in something, I'm going to believe in this and I'm going to believe in this with every fiber of myself," and to come into a program with that energy ... I'm putting it all out there. If it happens in a month, if it happens in a year, I am all in. I'm 100% doing this.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, I love it.

Priyanka Venugopal: Coming from that place.

Katrina Ubell: And that's totally how you showed up. Because here's the thing. You lost all this weight, but what we really coached on was a whole bunch of other things.

Priyanka Venugopal: Oh my goodness, yeah. Oh yeah.

Katrina Ubell: That's so funny, you know? I didn't really talk to you about your weight.

Priyanka Venugopal: And I didn't know we were going to do that. I thought, "I'm joining this program to learn how to lose the weight," and let me tell you, my life is a totally different experience right now. Yeah, I'm at a smaller clothing size, but I feel like I'm a totally ... I'm a different person than I was a year ago.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. So we dealt with lots of things. We talked about all different kinds of relationships, relationships with your kids for one. You want to speak to that a little bit?

Priyanka Venugopal: That was probably the first thing that I coached on, was this idea that ... I talked about my son, and really thinking that, "What is going on for him? How am I not doing enough for him? What am I doing that's making this be a difficult experience for him?" And I realized that I was trying to change him to make myself feel better, and that was the first thing that we did written coaching on, actually. It was in Ask a Coach, and I did a lot of written coaching, actually, around my son. I think you said it at the very beginning of that. That line of coaching for me was, "Why does he have to change for you to feel better?" It was such a simple question, "Why does he have to change?" And I thought, "Because it would make my life easier, Katrina. That's why."

Katrina Ubell: Duh.

Priyanka Venugopal: "It would really be easy if he just was the social kid that went and played and went to school and no phone calls from school. It would be so much easier." But it was working on ... Something about that question and me really deciding. "I'm going to dig into the parts that I'm a little ashamed of. I want to change him. He's my son and I want to change him. I love him, but I want to change him." And there was definitely some shame around that. And obviously, it's not something you talk about like you're just hanging out with friends ...

Katrina Ubell: Right, with your friends, right.

Priyanka Venugopal: ... and you're like, "Hey, guys. Let's talk about ..." It's different getting coached on it from the way that you coached me, and I think

Katrina Ubell: You don't talk to your girlfriends about it in that way. If anything ...

Priyanka Venugopal: Not in that way.

Katrina Ubell: ... they believe your same story. They're thinking the same way, and so they're corroborating that terrible way of thinking.

Priyanka Venugopal: Yeah. I think that there's some of that, and there's also some of ... When I would look at my friends and my friends' children, they didn't have the same kind of dynamic with their kids that I did. I felt like, "Oh, look at their kids. Their kids are all being social and they love to play with each other and they're going off to school, and here's my kid and why is he having the hard time? I'm the working mom. Why am I having ..." I made it mean because I am a working mom, I'm a physician mom, fill in the blank. "I am not here. There's somebody else here with him," that it means that I am doing something wrong by him. He deserves better.

This whole idea of deserving, that was the next thing we talked about. Like, "Why do you think he deserves any different than what he has?" And I was like, "Because. Just because. Because I said so. I don't know." But that was ... I mean, I had to really push myself there because I really, I think for years, believe that he deserved more than what I could give him, than what I was giving him. And challenging that, it was a fundamental piece of who I thought I was as a mom. I had to challenge that, and I think that that was so foundational that it created enough shift in my just belief structure around my humanity as how I show up with my husband, with my mom with my in laws, at work. How am I showing up? It was like that initial crack that I think got it all started.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Well, and it's so interesting when you think about the mom guilt of being a physician, a working mom, right?

Priyanka Venugopal: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Katrina Ubell: It's like, "Hey, listen, I would like you to change so that I can feel better about myself," and recognizing that other people act doesn't determine how we feel about ourselves. It's all our thinking. We can just

Priyanka Venugopal: I didn't know that.

Katrina Ubell: I know.

Priyanka Venugopal: I didn't know that.

Katrina Ubell: We can just cut out the middleman, let your son just be who he is without getting constant message from his mom that something's wrong with him and he should be different, right?

Priyanka Venugopal: Yeah.

Katrina Ubell: And then get to decide, like, "I just get to love him, no matter whether he's having trouble at school or with his adjustment or anything. I can just love him as he is."

Priyanka Venugopal: You know what's so crazy, is before we ever coached on it, I'd never thought that I was ever giving him that impression. It was always like I thought it was just in my mind, I'm just like, "What's going on? What's wrong? I'm still showing up the same way with him." I never said to him explicitly, "You need to change. What's wrong with you?" What's so interesting, after we coached on this and I started to question my belief on how I wanted to show up, I started to change my thinking. This took a lot of coaching. We did a lot of back and forth on this, and challenging a lot of what I was coming in with. As I changed my thinking around him, he started to change. I don't know. It was like

Katrina Ubell: I know. Isn't it so fun? We can't change people, I know.

Priyanka Venugopal: It's like my energy around him. Yeah, my energy helped

Katrina Ubell: We can't change them, but then they change when we stop trying to change them. It's so fun. Yeah.

Priyanka Venugopal: He just sensed, I think, that it was just a sense that the vibe I was putting out to him is something he must have been picking up on, and

Katrina Ubell: Well, I think about it, too, just when I was a kid. There were things that my parents didn't explicitly say, but it was understood.

Priyanka Venugopal: Exactly. Exactly.

Katrina Ubell: And so it's the same thing, right?

Priyanka Venugopal: Yeah.

Katrina Ubell: It's like you don't have to explicitly say it for kids to perceive that and pick that up.

Priyanka Venugopal: It's body language. It's our face expressions. It's the things I don't say.

Katrina Ubell: It's the tone, yeah.

Priyanka Venugopal: It's the things I'm not saying to him. Really, I think that that's ... So that was probably two or three months, really, of working on that. I saw such a change, not just in him, but in my contentedness. I was so much more content with being the working mom because I changed my relationship with him, and that's what then led to me really starting to believe more deeply in this work when I saw that. The number on the scale's going down, sure, which is amazing, but this is what I bought in really heavily into the, "Our thoughts create our feelings, our feelings are driving all the rest of it." That's what got me to work onto all the other things.

Katrina Ubell: And then, I mean, you did some really amazing work on your in law relationship.

Priyanka Venugopal: Yes. Oh yeah.

Katrina Ubell: So you want to speak to that some, too?

Priyanka Venugopal: What's interesting is ... So I've been married for almost 15 years and I think since the very beginning, I've always hesitated around my in laws. That's how I would put it. I've hesitated around being myself and being exactly who I am because I always used to think that there was something disapproving of me. And because there's something disapproving of me, let me just not show up. What's so interesting, again, just because of coaching with you and doing all this work, I realized that I actually have a lot of people-pleasing tendencies in so many areas of my life, and it definitely came out with the in laws. It's come out in school. I want the gold star in school. If I don't get the gold star, then I'm less than. If I don't get the approval of my in laws, I am less than. I am not the daughter-in-law that they wanted, and so that means I'm just going to not show up.

My communication with them for years was ... I like to call it background communication. My husband would call them on FaceTime and I'd pop in the background, wave, "Hey, how's it going?" I would never initiate because I was hiding. It's like the same thing with my weight. I just wouldn't weigh myself because I was hiding. Again, I never knew this, but I have a tendency to hide who I am.

Katrina Ubell: Well, it's like you're rejecting them before they can reject you.

Priyanka Venugopal: Oh, absolutely. And I'm rejecting a part of myself. As I hide myself, I'm totally rejecting who I am. I'm not showing up. I remember ... I think this was just a few months ago. It's actually fairly recent work that we did, was this idea of challenging myself, daring myself to do something uncomfortable. And the idea of 50/50, the emotions of how can we feel our negative emotions. That's still something that I'm working on because I'm trying to feel. I feel like, again, as physicians, we are operating so much out of our heads. I don't even know how to feel sometimes. I'm trying to reconnect my brain and my body.

My work with my in laws was me dealing with dread. That is what it was. When I identified it, the idea of calling them brought up that feeling. The challenge for me was, "I'm going to call. I'm going to call every week, and I'm going to do this from a place of, number one, compassion for myself, and number two, to teach myself that I can totally handle dread. Nothing is going to happen to me if I do something that makes me feel dread." I still remember the very first time I was sitting. I had my phone, I had dialed the number, I felt my heart racing, I felt that tingly feeling because I have never called them. In 15 years, I have never actually initiated ... that I can recall, I've never initiated the phone call and I dialed the number and I called, and I felt it washing over. I felt awkward, I felt weird, just like, "Oh, hi. It's me. It's Priyanka." I felt so weird, but I did it anyway.

I remember I ended the phone call. I had a great call, by the way, with my mother-in-law. It was a lovely chat. I was fearing it. It was just fine. And when I hung up the phone, I remember thinking, "So that's what dread feels like and here I am. I just handled dread and here I am. And if I can handle dread, what else have I been holding back from? Where else in my life have I been holding myself back from doing the big things-"

Katrina Ubell: Thinking that you can't handle it there or that you can't feel better—

Priyanka Venugopal: Thinking, "Oh, that's too much. That's too big for me. Oh, that? I can't even imagine spending that much money on that." Like your program. Even just before I pushed the button, there was a moment of, like ... "Am I doing this?" And then doing it anyway. Like, "I handle this. I can handle a negative emotion." That was massive for me.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Let's talk about studying for boards, too, because that's a big thing where it comes up so often where people are like, "But I'm studying for boards so I can't do the program right now," or, "Now's not a good time for coaching." I'm always like, "Listen, when you're studying for boards is exactly when you need to be coached."

Priyanka Venugopal: It's the best time. Actually, I was studying for boards when I joined your program, and that's why 2019 was that low of lows because I was almost at 200 pounds, I was having serious childcare issues, I was having issues with my son, but I was also studying for my OBGYN oral board exams, and I was ... When I tell you overwhelm, I felt like real ... like under the water, every once in a while coming up for a breath of fresh air, just enough to survive. A part of me did wonder, "Should I wait? Maybe I'll take my boards and then I can really commit." I had that thought, like, "Maybe I can really commit once I've taken care of this thing," one thing at a time. And then I think the inspired piece of me, the one that was inspired by your messaging and your podcast, the part that believed in you so much, that voice said, "But if you just do it now, you can just handle everything. You can make the time for everything."

I think that it was I let the inspired voice speak louder than the confused voice, the one that's like, "Maybe next time. Maybe in the next round." And now I can look back and say, "Why would I ever want to wait for my future self? Don't make her wait. I want her to be here now." And I think that anyone can eventually get to their future self one day. Coaching gets you there so much faster. So now I get to be here. I get to be her right now.

Katrina Ubell: It's like the fast lane for the ... yes.

Priyanka Venugopal: Yeah. I get to be my future self right now. I don't have to wait for her anymore.

Katrina Ubell: A year and a half later, after you've just ...

Priyanka Venugopal: Oh my God.

Katrina Ubell: ... the very first time you even found the podcast.

Priyanka Venugopal: Oh my goodness. Yeah.

Katrina Ubell: Right? This is really, really quick if you think about all the things that have changed. And, all of this through ... I mean, we haven't even talked about COVID and any of that.

Priyanka Venugopal: I know. Oh yeah. It's like my brain chemistry has changed because of this work, and me changing my brain chemistry in this process supported me through studying for boards, it supported me through COVID, it supported me through my nanny just told me a week ago that she's leaving, so let me tell you, we're having all that.

My drama's coming up again, but I'm in such a different place now than I was when I had to deal with it last year. It's just my brain chemistry is different now, so I can support myself. And I think coaching and learning that tool, that technique, has helped me support myself.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. One thing you mentioned just before we even started recording that I thought was so great was you were talking about how it's so easy to think when you listen to the podcast, you're like, "I've totally got this. I'm getting amazing results. I've lost weight. My life is so much better. I don't even need the program because I've gotten so much out of listening to the podcast," because I think there are really a lot of people who've had that experience. So share with the listeners, will you? What do you want to say?

Priyanka Venugopal: Let me tell you. I was just telling you before we started recording. I had a delivery this morning. I'm driving in. It was like 5:30 in the morning. I'm driving in, and I was just thinking how we're going to talk today, and I realized that the piece of the coaching part of this, the way that I like to think about it now is, as physicians, when we're trained, we think about, "See one, do one, teach one." For me, my experience with your podcast was me seeing one. So when I was a fourth-year medical student doing all my OBGYN rotations, I'm watching the attending teaching the interns and the second years how to hold a needle driver, how to start, how to do their thing. I remember thinking, I'm watching, "I got this. I know. You got to turn your wrist. I'm holding the needle driver."

Katrina Ubell: Like, "Step aside. I can do it."

Priyanka Venugopal: "Come on now. I've got this. I've got this." And I did, of course, seeing one, learn a lot. Just watching from these attendings and residents, I learned so much. But let me tell you, the first day that I held that needle driver myself, me doing one myself was ... Like, "Did I turn my wrist? No, I didn't." So it's like actually doing it myself was where the biggest part of my growth happened.

I think it's very similar with your podcast. I listened to your podcast for four or five months. I lost 20 pounds before I even joined WLDO. I mean, I changed so much of my thinking. But when I joined your program was when I started doing. That was when I started taking serious action from a place of real energy and inspiration. I think that actually, that's the one piece of ... In coaching in general, every time I think I see growth, every time I see growth, I want to choose it again. Let's choose growth again. So for example with your podcast, I saw that I grew so much with your podcast. I want to act big now with your program. I saw so much growth with your podcast, with your program, with every step that I've had change to keep choosing change again and again and again to do the hard thing.

Katrina Ubell: Right. I think that's so good, though, you talking about that, because I think so often people are like, "I'm going to do this program and then I'm just going to be fixed and I'll never need to work on myself ever again and I'll never want to work with a coach again," whether me or someone else. But what we're talking about is that you make progress and then you choose growth again. What is the next step? What is the next thing that you want to do? Or what is the next area of your life where you're struggling? Because new things happen and people in your life change and you change and what you want changes, and continuing to choose growth knowing that, often it's hard and uncomfortable in the beginning ...

Priyanka Venugopal: Absolutely, yeah.

Katrina Ubell: ... in order to have the benefit of the result that you want on the other side. And living a really big, broad, expansive life. That's what we really all want. We don't want to live some really small, constricted life, yet we don't want to go through anything that's difficult. It's like, well, but that doesn't work. It doesn't work that way. Now, what you were saying is that you felt like in the program, in Weight Loss for Doctors Only, you were learning how to coach yourself, too, which is like the teach one, to be able to teach yourself ...

Priyanka Venugopal: Right, exactly.

Katrina Ubell: ... and continue coaching yourself as you go on.

Priyanka Venugopal: When we go from, "See one, do one, teach one," I think that the program ... In the very beginning, I didn't really even understand the concept of self coaching and learning how to do a model and all of that. But I think as you would ask me questions with our written coaching ... The written coaching piece of it really helped me understand how to do some of that. I started to understand what a thought download was. I thought I was doing it. I thought that I understood. "Oh, actually, I can do all this in my mind. I don't actually need to write any of this down." This was pre-coaching with you, and I would think, "Oh yeah, I'm figuring this out. That's a thought. That's a feeling." It was really writing it down, really spending some time on that that I learned how to coach myself.

So even as I'm typing in to Ask a Coach, as I'm typing I'm like, "Oh. I'm able to see some of this now with a place of clarity and learn how to coach myself." So for me, that's the, "See one, do one, teach one." Really learning how to coach myself is the teaching myself. Continuing to teach myself.

Katrina Ubell: You can take what you've learned and go on.

Priyanka Venugopal: Absolutely.

Katrina Ubell: Whether you're working with a coach or not, you know how to get yourself through things day to day.

Priyanka Venugopal: Yeah. I don't think that this is meant to be ... This doesn't need to be a program forever. And, I mean, again, you can do your program forever and ever and ever. VIP and beyond. But really, for me, part of the skill, one of the skills ... Again, if you jump in with both feet, if you choose your future self every minute of every day and do the hard thing, you learn how to coach yourself. You learn how to coach yourself. For me, that was probably the biggest unexpected gift, was me learning that and me learning now when something hard comes up, I can handle dread. I mean, if I can handle that, what can I not handle?

Katrina Ubell: And you're like, "Oh, I'm dreading that. Okay."

Priyanka Venugopal: I can do the uncomfortable things.

Katrina Ubell: "And?"

Priyanka Venugopal: I can handle uncomfortable things. And I think that that's actually what helps me choose my future self every minute of the day. I think part of being successful in your program or any coaching program is saying, "How can I think about that future version of me? She is my best friend. She's someone I want to hold as close to my heart as possible. How can I choose her right now? Choosing her right now, what hard decision do I have to make today? What uncomfortable decision do I have to make today? Where am I doing something that's out of my comfort zone, letting go of the wubby nubby, letting go of the safety blanket. How can I do this? How can I do this hard thing? Choose her. I think that that's the biggest piece of it.

Katrina Ubell: So good. Oh my gosh. So you obviously are so inspiring, and then you became a coach yourself because you were loving this stuff so much. You became a coach, and then now, tell everybody who you coach.

Priyanka Venugopal: I coach working moms that want to lose the weight, drop their mom guilt, overcome their overwhelm. Yeah, this has been part of the ... I think it felt like a natural part of my journey, just from where I came and went. I'm taking the teach one to the next level.

Katrina Ubell: To the next level. Exactly.

Priyanka Venugopal: I'm like, "I'm going to start coaching."

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, you don't have to become a coach, but you decided to.

Priyanka Venugopal: Absolutely not. Absolutely not. But I think I just found myself coaching my patients. I just felt it, really. I felt so inspired by it that I wanted to keep doing it. And yes, I became a certified life coach and I launched my own business recently.

Katrina Ubell: That's so great.

Priyanka Venugopal: The Unstoppable Mom Brain. I'm so excited about it. Yeah.

Katrina Ubell: So how can everyone find you? How can they find more information about what you offer?

Priyanka Venugopal: They can come to my website, theunstoppablenombrain.com, or join me on Instagram, find me there. Again, for me, right now, I am really loving to connect with people one-on-one. I'm doing private coaching and if they're interested, they can reach out to me like that.

Katrina Ubell: Amazing. So good. Okay, so as your final piece of advice for someone listening who's like, "I don't know if I can really do it. I don't really know. I'm on the fence. I just don't really know," what would you tell her?

Priyanka Venugopal: I would say if you imagine who your future self is, imagine who she is, close your eyes, take a moment to think about who do you want her to be. And I'm not just talking about the weight. I'm thinking about the weight, about her life, about her relationships, every single piece about her. If you hold her close to your heart, how would you make a courageous decision for her? How would you choose her? And if you chose her and you kept choosing her, you will become here. So do that. If you're even remotely contemplating coaching, this is that time, I think, to keep believing that idea that the seed has been planted, now you have to water it. You have to let it grow. It's not going to grow on its own. You have to take action. So taking big action from a place of belief is going to give you big results. Absolutely, if you're considering it, it's one of the best investments of my life. And actually, that's the other thing I would say. I think that that can be a big objection for people, the cost. "I don't know. I don't know. I have to check. Is the cost ..." And for me, when I think about my experience, this has been a priceless experience. I can't actually put a price tag on the past year. I mean, and this is with coach certification and your ... I mean, this is not a ... It's a monetary cost, but what I have taken out of it is completely priceless.

Katrina Ubell: Totally.

Priyanka Venugopal: I could not even put a price tag on it.

Katrina Ubell: I 100% agree.

Priyanka Venugopal: And completely with unexpected outcomes. If you could have asked me this time last year, "You're joining Katrina's program. How's your life going to be?" I'd be like, "Yeah, hopefully I'll lose some weight. Cross fingers. Cross my fingers. I hope to the universe. Hopefully I'll lose some weight." No. If you could

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, so much else has changed.

Priyanka Venugopal: Could never have imagined it.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. And I think that's part of it. It's not even like, oh, your dreams will come true. It's like, you can't even begin to dream it. You know what I mean? It's like your brain won't even let you see the possibility.

Priyanka Venugopal: Yeah. And

Katrina Ubell: Someone has said to me that recently, like, "Think about your first year in business. Could you have imagined what you're doing now?" I'm like, "I couldn't even imagine what I was doing the second year in business, let alone what I'm doing now. Absolutely not." I couldn't even begin to contemplate it.

Priyanka Venugopal: I think that the other piece is this. The idea of dreaming and dreaming big, but then realizing you get to make your dreams. Normally when I dream, it's like I don't get to control what I'm dreaming. This is the experience where you fall asleep and you're choosing the dreams that you want to have. You are in the driver's seat. You take your power back in your life. That is what this experience has done for me. I got to take my power back, and I get to choose my dreams. I get to go as big as I want just because of this.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Oh, so good. Okay, we're going to leave it at that. That's a mic drop moment right there. That's amazing. Pri, thank you so, so much for coming on and sharing your story.

Priyanka Venugopal: Katrina, thank you. I have you here so I have to just say you have been the biggest inspiration to me, just ... I mean, I don't want to even get all teary eyed and start crying, but I will just say, you have changed my life in so many ways. You, your coaches Emma and Zoe and Lynn, have changed the course of my life. Things would have been great beforehand, but things are going to be so amazing now, and it's because my course has totally changed because of you. Thank you so, so, so, so, so much. Nothing could ever

Katrina Ubell: Thank you.

Priyanka Venugopal: Nothing could ever, ever, ever take that away. It's been a priceless experience for me. Thank you.

Katrina Ubell: Oh, thank you, Pri. Thank you so much.