



# WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hello there, my friend. Welcome back to the podcast. So glad to have you here. If you're new here, then welcome as well. I'm so glad you're here. We're going to have some great help for you today, and it's going to be a great episode. I have to tell you something that's about to happen that I'm really excited about. For those of you who've been following along since the beginning or early on, you know that my office is the size of a closet. It's really, actually a closet might be more functional even than the space that I use. And so for over a year now, I have been trying to figure out a way to turn my attic space into an office. There have been many ups and downs, I will spare you the details, but let's just say where there's a will, there's a way. And I have gotten solutions focused about this.

It is already partially finished as a bedroom. I think it was probably finished maybe 30 or more years ago. It's really not functional as it is right now. So the good news is that tomorrow the person who's going to start doing the work is slated to come. Hopefully he shows up and start doing the demo. And I am hoping, I was like, oh my gosh, yesterday I thought, oh my gosh, what if this is done by the end of the year? I would be so excited. I'm going to be so happy. It's going to be amazing. So it's just always so fun when you've wanted to create something and you failed a bunch of times, right? You've tried things, they haven't worked and you just keep persevering and then finally it starts to happen. It's kind of like with weight loss, if you think about it, right?

What do you do? You try things. Some things work, some things don't, you keep trying until you get that result that you're looking for. This is just another example of extrapolating that exact same skill. So anyway, very excited. I am sure that I'll be giving you updates as we go along. I am slightly concerned about the dust and noise and I'm just going to deal with it because that's how badly I want this project done. And here's the thing, it's not like with COVID, it's so easy to go to a coworking space or things like that, or go work even at a cafe or something. So I'm just going to have to make it work. I figure I can always go into the basement. Then I'll be three floors away. That should probably do the trick. But I can't guarantee anything.

Okay. So what I want to talk to you about today is this quote that I came across. I actually scribbled it down several months ago as an idea for a podcast. I don't really remember where I found it. So I cannot tell you where it came from, but I can tell you who it's attributed to. It's someone named Edward Latimer, and this is what he wrote.

He said, "The longer you avoid voluntary discomfort, the longer you'll have to endure mandatory suffering." And I really want to dig deep into this today because this in one sentence is everything. Okay? And I'm not really even exaggerating here. It's really super, super important. So I'm going to repeat it. "The longer you avoid voluntary discomfort, the longer you'll have to endure mandatory suffering." So let's tease this apart a little bit. What is voluntary discomfort and how is it different from mandatory suffering? Right? We think about voluntary discomfort, it's something that we sign up for. It's something that we know is going to be difficult. It's going to challenge us. We're going to have to dig deep. We're going to have to grow. There might be some pain involved.

There might be a lot of pain involved. The pain may be physical, it maybe emotional. We know that this is going to be hard and that's what we're signing up for because it's voluntary. So there's some discomfort and it's going to be something that will be some level of unpleasant. And we avoid this all the time. How often are we like, well, I'm not really wanting to take care of this issue that would really, really help me, right? Like I don't want to take on the voluntary discomfort of actually feeling my feelings and not eating them or drinking them away. So I'll just avoid that right now and hope that things will result in a positive way for me, like this problem will just go away or I'll just deal with it later. I'll want to deal with it later.

But when you read the sentence, what it says is the longer you avoid that voluntary discomfort, the longer you'll have to endure mandatory suffering. So mandatory means it's not optional, right? It's not voluntary. And suffering is always optional, right? Suffering is pain plus resistance. Suffering is what really makes it bad. So we think, oh, you know what? I know I should get a handle on my eating. Oh, it's going to be so uncomfortable and I'm going to have to plan my food. I'm going to have to sort myself out with grocery shopping regularly. And I might have to prepare some meals in advance to support myself. We want to avoid all of that discomfort not recognizing that what we're doing is we're trading or swapping that out for much more pain and discomfort, and suffering, like really, really having a hard time later.

And we know this to be the case because the longer that we struggle with our weight, the worse we feel about it and the worse we feel about ourselves. The more self loathing is there, the more we start dipping our toe in, or even diving head first into worthlessness, the more we are really just not supporting ourselves at all. And it feels terrible. So when we think about the decision of, should I do something that is going to be uncomfortable? Like, what if I fail? I hear this all the time with my Weight Loss for Doctors Only program. What if I fail again? What if I don't lose weight in this program? Well, that's voluntary discomfort. By you not taking action, it's not like there's no effect of you not taking action. The effect of you not taking action is that the problem worsens, right?

You eat more food, or you gain more weight, or you don't learn how to manage your mind like most people and your thinking just evolves and you're more in victim mentality, you're more in emotional childhood. You're feeling worse and worse, blaming others in the outside world for how you feel, thinking that they're the problem. I actually just had someone say to me that what he always says is, "If it weren't for people, I'd never be disappointed." I was like, hmm, I know you're joking, but also that's a terrible way to think about it. Right? Then you're trading solving for the problem, like in this case what he was saying is like, if I could just take responsibility for myself, then I can't blame other people for it.

It's like the easy way out to be like, I'm just going to blame other people for my disappointment that I experience in my life that's due to the thinking that I create with my own brain. Right? It's not what other people do. And this applies to so many areas of your life, not just with overeating, or drinking more than you'd like, or dealing with your overweight issue. Think about the discomfort of having to tidy up your house at night. That's always something that I'm struggling against. I want the result of the tidy cleaned up house, but I don't want to put forth the effort. Can you relate? I'm just going back and forth.

Do I want the voluntary discomfort of having to take a few more minutes on my feet to tidy everything up, find a place for things, wipe everything down, or do I want the suffering the next day when I look around and it's a total mess and nothing's been cleaned up, and my brain just wants to blame everybody else for all their crap? You know what I mean if you live with other people and they have stuff, because this is how it goes. So it applies there. It applies with work, right? How many times are you avoiding a difficult conversation? The voluntary discomfort of that. And instead, you just stew inside. You just allow yourself to boil from the inside, to cook yourself from the inside with the fury, with the rage, with the disappointment, with the frustration.

That's the mandatory suffering, because you're not willing to have the discomfort of having the difficult conversation or proposing a change that could really help and knowing that there's going to be resistance to it by others, right? When we just want to play it safe and we want to fly under the radar, we're avoiding the voluntary discomfort. We're avoiding the growth that is weighting us. And instead we sign up for mandatory suffering. So this is what we don't realize. And in the moment, our brains just like to forget. Well, if I am not doing the thing in the moment, that's hard. We believe like there's no downside, but of course there is the downside. There's always the mandatory suffering.

I feel like this is why whenever I find a new area to work on from a coaching perspective on myself, I'm always really glad and excited like, oh good, there's another thing that I can work through because I know it's going to be uncomfortable. It might be very uncomfortable at times. I might be very confused. I might not know what to do. I might feel like I'm not making any progress for a while. But I know that if I keep at it, I will make progress for sure. And if I don't deal with this issue that I now have awareness around, all that will create for me is mandatory suffering. The mandatory part comes from not being willing to do the work to prevent it. Like we think, well, I'm just choosing not to do this. Well, no, you're also choosing to suffer later. There's two choices in there. There's a little PS where you get on top of it.

Yeah. You don't have to do this hard work right now, but guess what? It's going to be really uncomfortable for you later. And I know you don't want to think about that, but it's just the truth. And we know this to be the case. When the mandatory suffering comes later though, we will just blame ourselves, our lack of discipline. We'll blame our family, the people we live with. We'll blame our whole environment. Our work situation. We'll blame the world. We'll blame politics. We'll blame whoever has a target on their back, right? We will think that that's the reason that we're suffering when the reason you're experiencing mandatory suffering today is because of the voluntary discomfort you were unwilling to feel in the past. This today, the mandatory suffering that you're having is the result that's been created by your thought in the past.

This isn't a big deal. It won't matter. I don't want to do that right now. That's not important to me. Well, it is important to you because now you are wishing that you could create a different result. Now, this is the power of doing coaching and understanding the thought model. Understanding that your thoughts create your feelings, your feelings drive your actions, your actions create your results. Because rather than just choosing a thought and waiting to see what the result is, you can find out in advance. You can run a thought through the model, find out how you feel, what actions you take or don't take, what you're doing, what you're not doing, particularly what you might be avoiding, right? That's another not doing. And then what the result will be for you if you take those actions or inactions.

And then you can decide, am I okay with that? Is this something that I want? If it's not, you can skip the mandatory suffering part and you can decide to go all in on the voluntary discomfort today. I know this is a hard sell. This is why people don't go back to the gym after they haven't worked out in a while. They're like, "I know I'm going to be sore. I know I'm going to hurt." That's the voluntary discomfort. But if you've ever exercised regularly, you'll know and it doesn't have to be the gym. It can be any kind of exercise that you like to do, loving movement for your body. Once you get through that first week or two where your body is readjusting, you actually feel great. The mandatory suffering by you not going back to exercising is that you might have injuries. You might have aches and pains that could be avoided.

You might have a bunch of muscle tightness. You might not sleep as well. There's all kinds of issues that arise when you don't take the step to welcome in that voluntary discomfort. This is just like a fact. This is just how it is. So what I suggest that you do is you take a little inventory for yourself and your life. What are the voluntary discomforts that you're taking part in right now? What are you voluntarily doing that is uncomfortable. One example might be taking overnight call, right? It's not comfortable mostly. It's not comfortable to be woken up in the middle of the night if you have to take in-house call, that's probably not your first choice in how to be spending your evening, right?

So you take that voluntary discomfort willingly because you want to avoid the mandatory suffering that comes when you don't have a job to provide you with money, or fulfillment, satisfaction, right? Things like that. So there are plenty of things that we do that we don't really like to do so that we can avoid mandatory suffering later. One thing that comes to mind is changing a toddler's dirty diaper. If you've ever been around a toddler who's filled his or her diaper, right? Do you ever want to go up there and like, I say up there because we would change diapers upstairs so that the whole first floor didn't smell bad. But do you ever really want to get in there and clean that diaper? No, of course not. It's totally uncomfortable to have your face right in that mess, but you do it voluntarily so that you don't have the mandatory suffering for you or the child.

Right? Terrible diaper rash, having a sore bottom, the child fighting you, having to deal for days on healing up the raw skin from letting it sit. That's the mandatory suffering that comes when you're not willing to take on the voluntary discomfort. So there's lots of things where you are all in on the voluntary discomfort. So take inventory of what those things are, what are the things that you're doing right now that really are voluntary discomfort?

And then check in with yourself on what is the mandatory suffering that you're avoiding by choosing voluntary discomfort right now? Sometimes we don't really realize that that is what we're doing. We're saying, yeah, I'm going to go to work on a day when I'm really not feeling it. Maybe you're not feeling well, maybe you're really tired. Maybe you just don't want to do it.

Maybe it's an environment that you're not loving right now, but you do it anyway because you want to be someone who's employed. You want to be someone who even could just have a positive work record going to the next place or something like that. There's lots of mandatory suffering that you're avoiding. Now, then next, take an inventory of the situations that you have in your life right now that are mandatory suffering. Meaning if you chose voluntary discomfort, you could avoid the mandatory suffering. If you chose to do something about this, to solve the problem, to take away the suffering, while that action and doing that work would create discomfort for you, it would be something that you're choosing and with a more desirable outcome in the future ahead of you if you decide to do that.

So take inventory of what are you doing that's moving you forward, creating those desirable results, creating a net effect that is positive for you and your life? And what are the things that you're avoiding that you're just wishing would just go away, hoping and praying that maybe it'll no longer be problem soon? And I laugh, but we've all done it. We all are just like, maybe this will just go away. Maybe it just won't be an issue for me anymore. Maybe suddenly I'll become one of those people who can eat everything and is real thin. We know that's not going to be the case, but we sure hope it would happen. Wouldn't that be fun? It would be fun probably. But what are we doing that is something that we know is not creating a result that we want, but in actuality, it's a choice that we're making.

We often think it's happening to us or that it's just like a fact or something we just have to deal with, but it's not. So when we understand that this is mandatory suffering that we're choosing because we're unwilling to take the voluntary discomfort option, now you're in a place of awareness and you're in a place of taking ownership of your part in creating this experience for yourself in your life. And then from that place, you can decide, do you want to switch from mandatory suffering and instead choose the voluntary discomfort in order to create a better outcome for yourself and less mandatory suffering for yourself in the future down the road? There's no right or wrong answer to this. We all are like, well, sure, of course I don't want mandatory suffering, but depending on what the situation is, maybe it really isn't the right time for you.

But just having awareness and having done this contemplation allows you to be that much more ready to choose voluntary discomfort when the opportunity arises or when you are ready, when you get to a place where that is the right decision for you, rather than continuing to blame outside forces or potentially yourself, making it mean something negative about you, that you're weak. That you're just this broken person who's not able to be fixed or is just helplessly broken. That's not the case at all. And I just think that this is something that can be a very powerful exercise for you just recognizing this is the mandatory suffering that I signed up for because I was unwilling to do the work before. But then not beating yourself up over it, owning it, understanding it, and recognizing that you always have a choice. And at any moment, at any time you can change your mind and do something different.

It's what I always say about lots of different things, but I always say, listen, I reserve the right to change my mind. So if something feels right for a long time and then suddenly I have an epiphany and I want to change my mind, I reserve that right. I'll change my mind. I've done it many times in the past. And you can do that with your mandatory suffering as well. You can say, "You know what, right now, this is what I'm going to do, but I reserve the right to change my mind anytime I want to and choose the voluntary discomfort instead." And I think that once you recognize that you're choosing voluntary discomfort already and creating a better result for yourself than and if you didn't choose it, you will likely be more convinced that, oh my gosh, okay. I am taking my power back.

Rather than blaming the situation on others, I'm going to take my power back and understand that actually I have control over all of this and I think I'm going to make a change.

All right, friend, have a wonderful, wonderful rest of your week and I'll talk to you very soon.

Take care. Bye-bye.