



# 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 you're here today. If you are new to this podcast, you are in for a treat. I am telling you what, this episode today, it's so good. You can't even make this stuff up. Oh my gosh, you're just in for a treat, trust me. Now, I believe that the day that this episode airs is Election Day in the US. And I know the whole world is watching this election. I know all of us are watching the election. I know when I was recording this podcast with Gretchen, who's the success story that I'm talking to today, we were both agreeing that we just wanted this day to come, so we could just move on with life. So, that day has arrived.

And so, I just want to encourage you, if you're in the US, to vote. Hopefully, you're planning on doing it, especially if you are at work or things get busy. I mean, if you haven't already voted or done absentee, I just do want to encourage you to get out there and have your voice heard, it is, of course, important. I can't wait to find out what the result is. As Gretchen and I were saying, there's going to be something we got to manage our minds around, so what is it going to be? We just want to know what it's going to be.

Okay. So, Gretchen, who is my guest today, I'm telling you what, when I think of someone who has had incredible results from learning what I teach on this podcast and everything I teach in the Weight Loss for Doctors Only program, and actually applying it to her life, it is Gretchen. She is incredible. She has completely transformed her whole life in so many different ways, you're going to be shocked when you learn, and hear, and see what she tells you about. I mean, it's incredible.

And I'm so excited that she was willing to come on and talk about her transformation, to talk about all the progress she's made. There's literally not one area of her life where this coaching work hasn't helped her. And so, I know that it's always so interesting to hear other people's stories and where they're coming from, and how they create the success that they have. I love hearing stories like that, and I know you're going to love hearing Gretchen's story as well. So, please enjoy my

conversation with Gretchen, and I will talk to you next week.

Gretchen, thank you so much for coming on the podcast. I'm so excited to have you here.

Gretchen: Yeah, I'm so excited to be here.

Katrina Ubell: All right, we have a lot to cover, a lot of ground to cover. So, we're not going to waste any time. Can you just start off by giving everyone who's listening just a brief introduction?

Gretchen: Sure. I am a gynecologic oncologist at Mayo Clinic, and I'm also the Residency Program Director there. I've been out of fellowship for a little over seven years now, and I did work for a short time in Virginia before I came back on staff at Mayo. And yeah, I guess that's mostly about me. I have a husband and two girls, who are teenagers.

Katrina Ubell: I mean, you look so youthful, we're going to say, I'm always like, "How do you have teenagers?" It's quite crazy. But people will say that to me, too. Because my son is almost 15, and they're like, "Did you have him when you were 15?" I'm like, "No, I did not."

Gretchen: I've been having to clarify that with people. I tell them how old my kids are, and they're looking at me kind of funny. And I say, "Well, my first one was when I was 28. I'm not as young as I look."

Katrina Ubell: I'm like, "This is a good problem to have, that people think—"

Gretchen: Definitely, no question.

Katrina Ubell: I'll take it. Okay. So, let's just start with a brief summary of your weight struggle, because you were similar to me when you found this work.

Gretchen: Sure.

Katrina Ubell: You were like, "Listen, either this is going to work, or I'm just going to say, "Screw all of it, I'm not doing this anymore. I'm not going to try to lose weight anymore.""

Gretchen: Yeah. So, I was a normal weight until I went to college, gained, kind of the freshman, 15. And then, since then, have been vacillating up and down 60 pounds since I was 18 years old. And I have tried I think, everything. I think I tried every kind of diet. Once I started to realize, oh, I go on Weight Watchers for a year, and I get it off, and then, within three months, a lot of it it's back again, I was like, "Okay, maybe I just need more wellness. Or maybe I need to do mindful eating. Or maybe I need to just have a coach, or something like that." And so, I had multiple coaches, I had two wellness coaches, two mindful eating coaches, and had them each for eight months to two years, and I never lost the weight.

I would feel better, or I would eat more mindfully, but the weight just didn't come off. And also, these coaches would kind of get to the point where they would be like, "I don't think we can help you anymore." Or they would say something to me, like, "I think you're just going to overeat at night forever. I don't think that that's really going to go away for you. I think that's just who you are." And I was like, "Nah ah, that is not what's happening." I was like, "I got to try something else." So

Katrina Ubell: But I don't think... You believed in yourself even more than they did. Because they're offering you this belief, right? You're like, "I want help." And they're like, "It's not fixable." And you could have just believed them but instead

Gretchen: Yeah, it's true.

Katrina Ubell: ... you're like, "I don't know, that doesn't sit right with me." Right? Probably, we can call it intuition. We can call it whatever. But you just knew, like, "Nope, that's not the answer."

Gretchen: Yeah, it's true. And one time, I just completely burst into tears, and I cried for an hour and a half, and I was like, "Okay, I know that that's not true, so let's move forward. Maybe she thinks that's true, but I don't think that's true. So, let's do it." So, I actually had heard about your podcast, kind of what you do, as part of being in ACOG and being on the program committee to make a meeting. And you were going to come in December, I think of '18. You did come in December of '18 and talk to our group.

And as part of that, I kind of looked into your stuff, and I was like, "I don't know, she says not to eat sugar or flour, that seems really extreme. So, I'm just not going to listen to it." And then, it just so happened, one day, I got in my car, and you know how your phone connects with Bluetooth, and the podcast you did with your husband about ... came on. And I was completely transfixed by it. I was like, "Oh my God, this is me. I could fix this." And then, I just went back to the beginning and started listening to every single podcast from number one, on. And by the 10th or 15th then, I was like, "I have to be in this group." So, I signed up.

Katrina Ubell: Okay, cool. Right? Because you already were part of the program when I came to visit, right?

Gretchen: I had already signed up. I started in January of '19, but I had already paid. I was in.

Katrina Ubell: You were already signed up. Okay.

Gretchen: Yeah.

Katrina Ubell: Okay.

Gretchen: Yeah.

Katrina Ubell: Awesome. That's so good. I love that, it's like... I can be the same way where I'm like, "This resonates." I just know within me that this is what I should do, and then it's just like action taker. It's like, "How do I give you all my money?" That's what I'm like with other people. I'm like, "How do I ... you as quickly as possible because I know this is what I need." I love that. Okay.

Gretchen: The other thing I think is important is that, when I signed up, I was completely at the end of my rope with my weight. I was 40 pounds heavier than I am now, I was generally unhappy with my size, but I knew I had tried everything I could think of. And I was like, "This is it. If this doesn't work, that's it. I'm just going to figure out how to love my body in the way it is. I'm going to have to figure out how to love overeating at night. This is it." And the thing that actually convinced me to sign up was... In one of your early podcasts, you said something like, "If you want to just love your body the way it is, that's great. I'm all for it. But if you want to love your body and lose the weight, this is the work for you." And I was like, "Okay, where's the link?"—

Katrina Ubell: That's what I want. Oh, I love it. I love it. So, you also had some binging, purging

Gretchen: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Katrina Ubell: ... kinds of habits as well.

Gretchen: For years.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. So, you purged with exercise, overexercising, right?

Gretchen: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Katrina Ubell: So, just talk a little bit about that.

Gretchen: Not fasting, it wasn't even healthy version of fasting. But yes, overexercising, and then not eating for an entire day ... in addition to the exercising.

Katrina Ubell: Okay. And did that start in college? When did you start doing that?

Gretchen: Oh, gosh, it must have. I think maybe high school, actually. I think it probably started in mid high school. And that's something I didn't even bring up until I was five months into the program, because I was just so—actually, no, it was more than, I was a year into the program. I just was so ashamed of it, and I felt like that was just quote, unquote, me, just who I was, and I wasn't going to be able to fix it. So, I didn't even try. And then, after 11 months or so, I'm working on lots of other things, I was like, "maybe I could start doing that. That would be great."

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, well, it takes so much time and energy, right?

Gretchen: And then, I did. Oh, my gosh, an incredible amount of time and energy. Yeah.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. I mean, well, yeah, so, we'll just... Spoiler alert, you don't do that anymore.

Gretchen: I don't, it's been... So, January 19, 2020 was the last time. It used to be multiple days every week. After a little bit of work, completely went away. It's amazing.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Oh my gosh. Don't you love it when you think it's so insurmountable, and then, you actually put some time and effort into it, and you're like, "Oh, my gosh, this is it?"

Gretchen: It wasn't even that hard.

Katrina Ubell: It wasn't even that hard. Oh, my gosh. So, when you started though, were you thinking, "I'm going to get help on all these other areas of my life? Or were you like, "I'm just here for the weight loss."

Gretchen: No. Oh, no. I was just here to get back to a mid range BMI. And at first, I actually thought... Before I listened to your thing about mid range BMI, I thought I was going to be like... I would be golden if I was 15 pounds heavier than I am right now. But then, you were like, "No, how about mid range BMI." And then, I was like, "All right, that sounds fun. Let's do that."

Katrina Ubell: Because that always is everybody's reaction to that. So, you have kept the weight off now, you've been maintaining for a year and a half now, basically, right?

Gretchen: Mm-hmm (affirmative) Yep.

Katrina Ubell: Oh, my gosh. Which is really, really awesome, right? Because I think people are like... The weight loss is one thing. I mean, I think you have a very similar story to mine. I can get the weight off, right? I could always lose it, but I just couldn't keep it off at all.

Gretchen: Yeah, totally.

Katrina Ubell: And so, a year and a half of maintenance, this is who you are now, right?

Gretchen: And I'm talking maintenance, up-down, one to one and a half pounds, and it's not even hard for me. It's really crazy different. And I have times where I go up three pounds, I'm like, "Oh-oh, what is going on in my head right now?" But it used to be like up, down, up, down, 10, 15 pounds, over and over and over again, who wants to do that? I mean, this is so much better than that.

Katrina Ubell: When you are weighing yourself regularly, then you see the three pounds and you don't need to wait till your ... clothes to go, "Ah, what's happening? Is something going on for me?"

Gretchen: Exactly.

Katrina Ubell: You're aware. You're like, "Okay..." And I just love what you said, like, "What's going on for me?" You're like, "Oh oh," realizing that there's something emotional going on for you. There's something in your thought process that's creating this, not like, "Oh-oh, I've gained three pounds."

Gretchen: No.

Katrina Ubell: It's like, the three pounds just indicates that there's something going on that you need to address.

Gretchen: And you helped me get there. The scale was never neutral for me. But maybe a year ago, I started repeating to myself, "This is just data, this is just data, this is just data," every time I step on the scale, and it really is just data now. When I look at it, I'm like, "Okay, well, there's something going on, let's figure that out."

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, I always think of it... It's just like lab tests, right?

Gretchen: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Katrina Ubell: We're not like, "You're a horrible person because your sodium has changed. We're like, "Interesting, huh? I wonder what's going on there." Yeah. That's what this is. Okay. I love it.

Gretchen: The other thing that I really got to recently is that, I really believe I'm never going to be bigger than this now. After every other diet, I really was like, "Well, this is going to last for a little while." But now, my brain is so different, and I've been at this exact weight for long enough that I can't imagine ever being bigger than this. It wouldn't be possible. I would have to have brain transplant of some kind, or stop doing the work for a long time, and completely ignore whatever... Which I can't even do anymore.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, yeah. It's like you can't... There's the after part of your life, you can't go back to the before.

Gretchen: No, not with this work. Every other diet, you could easily go back to the before, because your brain was exactly the same as it was before you started.

Katrina Ubell: Exactly. Yes. Totally. Okay. So, if that weren't enough, I mean, because already... Okay, you stopped binging. You stopped purging. You stopped overeating. Actually, let's just talk about the overeating at night, because that was something that did take longer.

Gretchen: Oh, yeah.

Katrina Ubell: That was definitely... Right? Because we were like, "Oh, it's so easy to stop purging with exercise, whatever." But the overeating at night was something that you dug into for a while. Let's talk about that process.

Gretchen: So, when I started, I was overeating sugar and flour every single night of the week. And then, I got down to four to five times a week. And then, I got down to two to three times a week. And now, if I am doing that, if that pops up, it's because something's happening, and I can immediately think, "Okay, what's going on? What happened in that day? What did I not address in my brain that made me think that food was the answer?" And I think that that will be my go-to comfort for the rest of my life, except I'm starting to have things that are more comfortable and comforting, but even then food, which is exciting.

Katrina Ubell: That is so exciting.

Gretchen: So, that's what changed for me. What changed is, now I've got other things that I love, like just stopping and listening to my body, and being loving to myself. Like you say, "It's okay, love. What's going on, love?" That kind of thing.

Katrina Ubell: A deep connection with yourself. Yeah.

Gretchen: That feels better than potato chips. It does.

Katrina Ubell: Well, because

Gretchen: So, when you can get there-

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, after you eat the potato chips, you feel like crap, right?

Gretchen: Yes.

Katrina Ubell: Holy crap, too much salt, and it's just like, you physically don't feel good. It's not anything that benefits you, even though we really, really hope it will, right? This time, I really think it might work.

Gretchen: It's going to be great.

Katrina Ubell: It's going to be great. Oh, my gosh, that's so awesome. Okay. So, there have been so many things that you have worked on and improved, so many different areas of your life. And I just want to kind of go along and touch on a lot of them. I mean, I don't even think we have time to touch on all of them. They're certainly different things.

Gretchen: Sure, yeah. No, I don't think so either.

Katrina Ubell: But just to give people an idea of kind of the breath of change that you can create for yourself. I love it, you're just like, "Okay, what's next? What's next? What's next?" You just keep looking. What is the next thing you need to work on? Okay. So, religion was a big thing for you?

Gretchen: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Katrina Ubell: Were you raised in any religion?

Gretchen: I was raised Christian, Presbyterian, but I kind of always knew it wasn't for me. And in fact, we have this confirmation thing that we did when we were 16. And even at that time, I said to my mom, "I don't think I should do this. This does not feel right to me." And she was basically like, "You're doing it." We can talk about this when you're an adult. So, anyway, I did it. But then, when I was about 18, 19, I started going to Judaism, and Hebrew classes near where I lived. I had no other reason to do it at that time, except I wanted to. And then, I met my husband when I was 25, and then decided to formally convert, so I became Jewish then. And it was a whole nother language to learn. And we're conservative, and so we do everything in Hebrew. And I learned how to do all the prayers and read the Torah and all that kind of stuff.

But I always felt like a fraud, I think because I had converted. And I had not really ever worked on it until I was in ... and I was like, "This is really uncomfortable. What's going on here? Why do I have so much emotion tied up around this?" And it took one or two coaching sessions, and that is completely gone, and some thought work. I don't even think about that anymore. I feel like 100% Jewish and I do what everyone else does. I mean, I can't tell you how much that has changed my opinion of myself even.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, and then also, just how connected you feel within the Jewish community, right? Like you saying that you were volunteering for some things and getting more involved.

Gretchen: Yeah, exactly.

Katrina Ubell: You didn't have to withhold your involvement because you weren't the right person.

Gretchen: I also didn't have to prove anything to anyone, and that's what I was trying to do before. Yeah. Always trying to prove.

Katrina Ubell: And then, from a family dynamic standpoint, I'm sure that's helped so much as well.

Gretchen: It has. It has helped a lot. Especially with in-laws who are Jewish. I happened to meet my husband in a bar, and he was Jewish. So, that was amazing. I met him—

Katrina Ubell: I met my husband in a bar too.

Gretchen: It's because we didn't have the online stuff yet.

Katrina Ubell: Exactly. Old people, this is how we met—

Gretchen: Yeah, exactly. Exactly. But his whole family is Jewish, and so I was always trying to prove to them also that I was Jewish enough. Whatever, I don't even think about that anymore.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, this is not even remotely an issue. I love that. Okay, well, let's kind of pivot from there and go right into relationships some more. So, relationships with your in laws, relationships with your mother, that was a lot that you spent time on. You want to speak to that?

Gretchen: Yep. And my mother-in-law. I mean, I was just constantly putting myself in that victim mode thing, like someone's doing something to me. And getting out of that, and realizing I get to be who I am, and they get to be who they are, and we get to just enjoy each other has been amazing. I don't fight with them anymore, ever. Because I don't engage in it. I don't get all upset and whipped up every time they say something. And my mom, I never argued with, but our relationship is incredibly deeper after all the work that I've done here, and just... Kind of like, it's crazy different, crazy better.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Better than... I mean, I always think of it. It's like, you couldn't even have dreamt it could be

Gretchen: Nope.

Katrina Ubell: ... as good as it is.

Gretchen: I couldn't.

Katrina Ubell: Right?

Gretchen: Exactly.

Katrina Ubell: So often, we come into this work going like, "Hey, if I could just get to neutral, that would be like my dream come true." We're like, "I just want to stop detesting this person, basically."

Gretchen: Yeah, exactly.



Katrina Ubell: But the idea of actually loving them, or thinking highly of them, we're like, "That's just like a pipe dream. There's no way that that's going to happen." Yeah. But it's possible.

Gretchen: All the time. Because they don't actually need to do or say anything for me to love them. It doesn't matter. It's completely up to me.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, I love that. Okay. Now let's talk about work. So, you used to stay late

Gretchen: Yes, oh my gosh.

Katrina Ubell: ... charting like forever, right?

Gretchen: Yes.

Katrina Ubell: Talk more about what it used to be like.

Gretchen: Yeah. So, it used to be that I would chart at night. Just like you talk about, I would get home, get the kids to bed, get a glass of wine, and sit down with my computer, which of course is not efficient, because you're drinking wine. But try to kind of get through my paperwork and stuff. Or, I would be at work until 7:30 or 8:00 trying to get charts done. And I just didn't even realize how much I was creating that. I see the same number of patients now, if not more, because I'm further along in my practice. And I'm never in clinic late. I finish my notes before I go to the next patient every single time. They don't have to be perfect. It's awesome.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. So, no more overworking-

Gretchen: Mm-mm (negative).

Katrina Ubell: Talk about challenging days. I mean, gynecologic oncology is not a walk in the park, in my understanding.

Gretchen: Yeah, it's true.

Katrina Ubell: I mean, you have some challenging days. And so, you changed your whole attitude around your job being hard.

Gretchen: Yeah. I can tell you about a Pop-Tart story. So, in our cafeteria, there is a vending machine that dispenses Pop Tarts. And I would often, after a long day... And I'm saying long, because that's how I thought of them, long, hard, exhausting, whatever. My brain would offer to me like, "You should go get some Pop-Tarts." And so, I probably got most of the Pop-Tarts out of that machine for a long time. Not recently, but maybe almost a year ago, I started to think, "Well, what if I didn't think my day was long? What if I just thought it was exactly the right length? And what if I just changed my thought about that?" And I did, and I seriously have not touched the Pop-Tarts since then.

I don't even have an urge to overeat after a long day, or quote, unquote, long day, anymore. If I talk about, I've been here for a lot of hours doing a lot of stressful surgery, or having a lot of stressful conversations with patients, it's like, "Yeah, that's what my days are like, they're perfect. They're exactly how I want them to be." And just that little shift, completely, the Pop-Tarts are gone. It's amazing.

Katrina Ubell: Amazing. Right. And it just shows again how it's not about the food, right?

Gretchen: Not at all.

Katrina Ubell: It is only just like, "I need some sugar and flour to try to make this better."

Gretchen: Yeah, exactly. Pop-Tarts aren't even really food, I mean

Katrina Ubell: They don't taste good.

Gretchen: They're like chemicals in a bag. Okay. Enough about the Pop-Tarts.

Katrina Ubell: Okay. And then, you also oftentimes felt like you were missing out what was going on at home, if you were in at work. So, let's talk about that.

Gretchen: Yes. Yeah, that just added to wanting to overeat, because I would think, "Okay, I'm going to get home at X time," but it would really be Y time, and I would maybe miss dinner. And as soon as I'm missing out on dinner and bedtime, there's like this time scarcity thing constantly. And I actually, made a protocol for that, just like a food protocol, for nights when I don't get home when I'm going to expect to. And really, it was about accepting the sadness that I wasn't there for dinner. And it's like, yeah, okay, occasionally that happens. It's not a big deal. And I can feel the sadness. I don't need to make it go away. It's fine. If I just let it be there and say, "I feel sad right now," it will go away all by itself. It doesn't need food to make it go away.

Katrina Ubell: Exactly. Yeah. And I think that has been a lot of your work, is learning to allow the emotion, and then I feel like... From my perspective then, once you get that, you're like, "Oh my gosh, okay, I can feel this." You're like, "Yeah, problem solved."

Gretchen: Yeah, exactly.

Katrina Ubell: You're willing to feel the emotion, you don't need an escape from feeling that emotion.

Gretchen: Escape is the word, the operative word for me. I mean, I always wanted to escape emotions. And of course, that's still where my brain goes, like, "Hey, how about if we escape from this?" I'm like, "no, it's going to be easier if we don't."

Katrina Ubell: Right. Exactly. Ultimately, it's less work to not.

Gretchen: Yeah. Right.

Katrina Ubell: Yes, totally. Okay. So, you also have a leadership role, so being assertive, and assertive enough was something that you struggled with. So, let's talk about that.

Gretchen: Yeah, I think... When I applied for this role, one of the... They do a survey of the entire department to kind of get their ideas about how you're going to do. And one of the things people said, they were afraid I wouldn't be assertive or confrontational enough. And for sure, that was a worry I had about myself too, because I didn't really like confrontation, or I felt like everything was a confrontation, if you had to say something to someone. But through this work, and through coaching, I really... I'm not afraid to be assertive. I know sometimes I'm going to mess up, because all leaders mess up sometimes. But if you're not assertive, nothing gets done. And that has completely changed in the last 18 months for me. It's been amazing, really incredible.

Katrina Ubell: Has anybody noticed? I'm just curious if anybody noticed.

Gretchen: Yes. Yes, actually. So, in our annual reviews, my chair was like, "How are you doing this? How are you having such rapid and amazing change? And how are you just effective so quickly?" I was like, "I have a coach. That's what I do, I've got a coach." I mean, that's just how you have all this amazing stuff happen.

Katrina Ubell: Right. And fast, that's the thing, right?

Gretchen: So fast.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. So fast. Okay, let's talk about parenting-

Gretchen: Yes.

Katrina Ubell: ... because that's another one. So many of us, right? We're like... It doesn't come with the instruction manual. I remember the day when I finally realized, you know what? I think all of the parents are just winging it, and they always have been. My parents were too.

Gretchen: Yep. Yeah. I worried a lot about my girls' social lives. I don't know why that was the thing I worried the most about. My girls are a little... They're not shy, but maybe on the shyer introvert side, no idea where they get that. So, I was always obsessed with, how often are they seeing their friends? What are their friends saying to them? And I would be so angry if their friend said something mean to them. And I would worry they're not trying enough. And I would have just been able to completely drop that. And so funny, sometimes my husband will be like, "I don't know, she hasn't seen her friends in a while." I'm like, "She's fine. She's going to figure it out. It's good for her." And he's like, "Who are you?"

Katrina Ubell: So, speaking of that, your husband, I mean, when you're married, often, this person knows us better than anyone else, or close to better than anyone else, how would you say that his perception is of you?

Gretchen: I mean, he really can't believe it. He also is starting to tell me he changed his thoughts about something. So, I would always tell him like, "Well, I just changed my thoughts about that, so I'm fine now." And he's like, "I don't understand that. How are you doing that? It's like magic." And the other day, we had something stupid going on, and it's something he's believed for a long time, and all of a sudden, he had a different belief about it. I was like, "How did that happen? How did you do that?" He's like, "Well, I just changed my thoughts about it, like you said. I just-"

Katrina Ubell: Living by example, look at this. Amazing.

Gretchen: Yeah, exactly. So, yeah. And he can't believe just the change in me and how much more chill I am. I mean, I'm still a ... so I'm still a little not chill, but how chill I am where I can be.

Katrina Ubell: And the thing is, is the point of coaching is to help you be the best version of you. And if you're someone who has a level of intensity, that's a good thing. I probably want my cancer... Hopefully, I'll never need a cancer surgeon, but I want my cancer surgeon to have some intensity. I want him to be like, "whatever-"

Gretchen: Whatever.

Katrina Ubell: "No big deal." I kind of think it might be a big deal. I don't know. Okay. So, also, you used to do things out of guilt. You would feel sort of guilted into doing things, you stopped doing that. Can you talk about that?

Gretchen: Yep, totally. Yeah. Guilt was maybe one of my main drivers. And it doesn't work really, because you can't be very effective or efficient if you're coming from a place of guilt and fear, is what you taught me. Fear just makes you do the bare minimum, while also having a stomach ache. Trying to let go of that. Really, come from a place of love, and I love this. I love what I do. I love myself. Let's get it done. It's like leaps and bounds. You can get 10% done versus 100% done if you drop the guilt.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Oh my gosh, so good. Okay. A new relationship with exercise, right? Because exercise used to be a way for you to counteract your overeating and your binging

Gretchen: Yeah, oh my gosh. Yes.

Katrina Ubell: So, you stopped with that kind of exercise. Can you speak to that, how you transitioned to exercising now in a way that really supports you?

Gretchen: Yeah. So, I pretty much stopped exercising except for walking during the time that I was losing those 40 pounds. And that was really helpful because the weight literally... I mean, I followed the plan with the basic things you suggest, and the weight fell off of me. And then, once I had lost all that weight, I started adding back in some exercise, but not... I wasn't crazy person exercise anymore. I used to do running, or the elliptical, or spinning, or bar, or something, every single day. I would wake up at 4:30 in the morning to make sure I was doing an hour of exercise every single morning. And it was a huge relief to be like, "Nah, Katrina says not to do that right now. Okay."

But now, actually, I do yoga for 20 minutes every morning, often half-dressed in my work clothes, because I don't get sweaty or anything, it just gentle yoga. And I go to bar maybe once a week because they have these masks required classes right now. I was going twice a week before that but the masks required is once a week. And occasionally spinning because I really love it, and I have a Peloton, and it's my favorite high intensity exercise. But I don't do it to make myself feel better. I always thought that I had to exercise to stay sane, it turns out that's not true. You can just make yourself sane and exercise because you like it.

Katrina Ubell: Yes. Oh my gosh. I couldn't even say it better. So good. Oh my God, I love it. Okay. You've touched on a little bit, but let's talk a little bit more on the self-worth that you've done, really working on loving yourself. I think a lot of people get stuck there. They're like, "I see the value, I would like to do that, but I don't know how." It's funny, right? Because we do know how, we think loving thoughts about ourselves. But our old beliefs make it basically impossible, right? Because

Gretchen: It's true.

Katrina Ubell: ... every time we think a positive thought about ourselves, that belief comes back with that little whisper of like, "That's not true. That's not really who you are." Can you talk about that a little bit?

Gretchen: Yeah, it's like that dark, rotten, core concept that you talk about a lot.

Katrina Ubell: Yes.

Gretchen: So, I really believed that I was at my core, a bad person, and I had this very fancy shell that I kind of gave out to the world. And that's how I kept people kind of on my side or whatever. And really

Katrina Ubell: You kind of fooled them. So many even don't know who you were.

Gretchen: Yeah, exactly. And it came to a head last January when I... My relationships with my friends, I was feeling physically ill about them a lot of time, about absolutely nothing. And then, I was like, "I'm feeling ill about this, there has to be something there." And started looking into it. And really realized, I need to like being with myself. I need to think I'm a good time, which now I totally do. And then, once you think that, you think, well, if people want to be with me, that's great. But if they don't, I'm a good time. I can have fun by myself.

Katrina Ubell: Exactly.

Gretchen: Loving myself and really valuing myself made all of my relationships easier, all of them.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, right? Just that one thing, and then it improves all of it.

Gretchen: It radiates out. If you can fix the center, it just radiates everywhere. If you can fix what you believe about yourself, it's amazing.

Katrina Ubell: And just to be clear for everyone listening, it's not fixing the quote, unquote, rotten core, right?

Gretchen: No, mm-mm (negative).

Katrina Ubell: It's realizing that that's just a thought that you have about yourself that you believe. And it's not the truth, it's not like that there's fixing to be done

Gretchen: No.

Katrina Ubell: It's recognizing the thought and no longer thinking that thought, and still replacing that thought with something else.

Gretchen: The best thing that one of the coaches ever said to me was like, "What if you're wrong about that? What if that's not true?" And it's just like, "Ah, oh, what if that's not true. That would be amazing. Let me look into that."

Katrina Ubell: I know. I love that question. It's like when you get something that is painful, but you think is just a fact. And then, you're like, "Wait, what? Are you telling me that's not true? My gosh, that's amazing." Oh my gosh, so good. Okay. Now, let's talk about something else that you went through literally, a couple of decades worth of therapy on, and we're still really stuck on. So, how about you just share when you were a child what happened.

Gretchen: Sure. Yeah. So, I had some experience with childhood abuse, sexual abuse, when I was a little kid with a piano teacher. And I kind of finally got to the point of starting therapy for it when I was 20. And then, did about 15 years of weekly or bi-weekly therapy for that, and got to the point where I could function, where I wasn't thinking about it all the time. And I was obviously, going into medical school, and doing my job, and all that kind of stuff. And it was actually around the same time that I stopped therapy that he finally went to jail, because enough people started reporting him.

And so, there was some relief there. But I still had it, it was still always vibrating in my chest. It wasn't really gone. And one of your other group members started working on an issue like that, and I was like, "Oh, my gosh, I could work on that here, let me try. Let me see what happens. Let me see if I could make this even better than it is now." And after 15 years of weekly therapy, it took me maybe two months to get to the point where it's gone. The anxiety, everything about that is gone from my life. And it's like having a different life. It's like I got a new brain. I really did upgrade it.

Katrina Ubell: And that's been with you for so long, right?

Gretchen: Exactly.

Katrina Ubell: It's been this ... for better or for worse, and finally being able to let go of it.

Gretchen: Yeah. And it changed my parenting too. I mean, I was terrified. I've two girls, I've been terrified for their whole life, super overprotective, all that kind of stuff. And I really, really let it go. And I really know that everything's going to be okay now. And with my mom, I really blamed her for not protecting me. I really did for two decades. But two months of thought work, and she and I have... And discussions and everything, completely repaired that, and I don't blame her at all anymore. It's like, I just didn't even know this was possible. And I know, I thought that because I had this, I was never really going to stop buffering, I was never really going to stop overeating, that kind of thing. But if you can clear out all the cobwebs, you can really work on it.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. What I love about this is like, there's things that seem like really big, like sexual abuse, and then there's minor things like the Pop-Tart vending machine.

Gretchen: Yes.

Katrina Ubell: You know what I mean? And it's like, all of it factors in, and all of it deserves your attention. And so, whether you're somebody who's had some sort of trauma in your life that has influenced all this, or totally not, where you're like, "Listen, my life has been pretty amazing, I still don't understand why I struggle with this." You can get amazing, tremendous results regardless of where you're coming from.

Gretchen: It's true. Another thing I've really worked on in this program is shame. So, not wanting to talk about the abuse, not wanting to talk about bingeing and purging, not wanting to talk about the things that feel shameful to me, like I should hide them, I've really gotten them out in the open. And I really know now, there's no issue too small or too big... You're not weird just because you've got issues, we've all got issues.

Katrina Ubell: Everybody.

Gretchen: And you can be super productive and super high powered and still have issues that maybe you'd be happier if you resolved them. It's amazing.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. I love that, right? It's like, it doesn't mean, you can't be someone who's already having this amazing life with tons of success. If you're struggling with something, it's still... You are worth your time and effort to resolve that and create a different life for yourself.

Gretchen: Totally.

Katrina Ubell: I just love how you just keep being like, "What's next?" If that ... what's the next thing that I can ..."

Gretchen: It's true.

Katrina Ubell: I'm just, What's the next top level? I love that so, so much.

Gretchen: I'm an eternal optimist. I always have been. And even when I started this program, I thought I was a happy person. I am a happy person. I loved my job. When I started... I love my job, I love my family, I love my life, but it's better now, even better.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, it's even better.

Gretchen: And I can also come to happiness from a pure place, as opposed to from a place where I'm stuffing down negative stuff with food.

Katrina Ubell: Right. It's like you can be happy because you've handled the negative stuff by overeating. Right.

Gretchen: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Katrina Ubell: Right. Right.

Gretchen: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Oh, my gosh. The mic has dropped. I'm like, "Okay." Well, I'm at a loss for words, it's like, "Wait, what's happened here?" Okay. So, as we're wrapping things up, if you're thinking about somebody who was like you, who was just like, "I've tried it all, even the experts already have given up on me, told me it's impossible," what piece of advice do you have?

Gretchen: Yeah. I would say you could at least try. So, you say that to us a lot about how you are very resistant to new ideas. But then, you say to yourself, you could at least try. Like, "This is not going to work." Well, maybe not. But you could at least try.

Katrina Ubell: You could at least try.

Gretchen: Yeah, exactly.

Katrina Ubell: I'm glad you're bringing that up because I think everybody thinks that I'm just like, yeah, all in for everything. My default is always that's never going to work. That's the first thing... My first thought is like, "That's a terrible idea, it's never going to work." I'm like, "Okay, hold on, let it pass. Maybe I can try it."

Gretchen: I mean, that's even how I felt about your program at first. I was a person who carried snacks in my purse and had snacks in my car, and just always had snacks for emergencies, whatever that means. But I really, really was like, "Okay, I'll try it, and we'll see what happens." And I would say to people, maybe it won't work for you, but you could try. You could see what happens. Your life might become completely amazing, even more amazing than you ever dreamed it could be.

Katrina Ubell: Oh, my gosh. Yeah. And it's just taking a chance on yourself, and keep thinking that you're worthy of your own time and effort. I think that's for a lot of people, thinking like, "I'm not home enough, I should go spend more time with my family," and things like that. And I think it's the opposite, right? We need to be making sure that we're whole, and feeling cared for by ourselves, right? I mean, we are caring for ourselves so that we then can really approach all the people that we love in our lives in the best possible way.

Gretchen: I mean, I can't imagine anything better than having a life like this.



Katrina Ubell: Yes. Ah, so good. Oh, my gosh, okay. Any final parting words? Anything else?

Gretchen: Yeah, I would say, you can be free. I know that before I started, I felt stuck. I felt like I was in overeating jail, whatever that is. I couldn't stop overeating. I couldn't be a normal weight. I kept trying but spinning in circles. You've done hard things, everyone has done hard things. All you have to do is follow the blueprint and do hard things in that direction, and you can actually get out of the cage. It's incredible. And fly around.

Katrina Ubell: Right. It is. It's kind of like... You know what they say about free range chickens? Most quote, unquote free range chickens, it says on the egg, or on the chicken packaging, or whatever, that they're free range. But what they say is that the little chicks and stuff are kept inside. The chickens are never really allowed to go outside until they're full grown. Well, if they have never experienced outside, and then they're in this big... It's not a warehouse, but whatever those chicken things... I don't know what those.

Gretchen: Big chicken places.

Katrina Ubell: These chicken buildings are, where they're all running around, they'll have access to the outdoors. But there'll be one door in a small little area, they'll never go out there because they don't even know, they're like, "That's scary, I don't even know what that is." And it's like, hey, there's bugs and sunshine, and the best chicken life you could ever imagine out there. And they're like, "I don't really know." But maybe there is that one chicken who kind of goes to the door and is like, "What's going on out here?" The one brave one.

Gretchen: "Hey guys, it's pretty good out here."

Katrina Ubell: It's good out here. Exactly. Exactly. It's like you have to take the chance on like, let me just check this out and see if this really could possibly be better for me. Because most people will be like, "Listen, the life inside the chicken building is a great life-"

Gretchen: It's pretty good.

Katrina Ubell: "No need to run around. There's food on the floors, you get to eat whatever you want." Right? I'm taking that metaphor probably a little too far. But it's okay to be like, "I have this great life, but I still want more for myself. I want to explore what else is out there for me, and see what I could create." And every now and then, you completely shock yourself, which is ... You're like, "What the heck? Who knew this could happen?" Oh, my gosh, that's so amazing. Oh my God, I love it. Gretchen, thank you. Thank you, thank you so much for sharing your story and just coming out to the podcast. I appreciate it.

Gretchen: It was my pleasure. Thanks for having me.