



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hey there, my friend, welcome back to the podcast. I'm super excited to be recording this episode for you, first of all, because it's episode 200. I mean that's fun, right? And I had been thinking for a while, you know what? I should really do something special for episode 200. And then I realized when episode 200 is and it's actually one week after the election in the United States. And I just have a feeling that we're going to need some loving, some emotional loving on this day that this episode airs live.

So there is a lag time, there's a lead time. I have to record these before the day that they go live. So I don't know the results of the election yet. It's possible that when this episode airs, we still won't know the results of the election. But I want to just let you know that this episode today is going to be good and it's going to be super helpful whether you live in the U.S. or not, whether you care about our U.S. election or not. I mean, it seems like most of the world is actually pretty interested. But regardless, this is not going to be a partisan episode. It's really going to be talking about how to deal with negative emotions, because here's what I was thinking, no matter who you voted for or how you wanted the election to turn out, I'm guessing there's going to be some negative emotions. Because even if our person who we wanted to win wins, we might be not happy with how the other side responds.

And if we don't win, our side doesn't win, then of course we're going to have negative emotions about that. I mean, I can't remember a more heated election time. Although it seems like every time it gets worse and worse, maybe more and more intense. But I just know that dealing with negative emotions is something that a lot of us will be dealing with. And probably most of us will be dealing with to some point, and for sure all of us will deal with at some point in our lives, because we're humans. So this is going to be a great episode to come back to and refer back to as well. I want to tell you a couple other things that are going on. First of all, in the 199 episodes that I did before I managed to actually burn out my podcast microphone, which I guess is a cool thing, I was telling Ben, who runs the company that produces my podcast, that my microphone totally died. And he's like, "You know what? That's actually pretty awesome." I was like, okay, that's what I'm going to decide this means.

So I'm on my new microphone for the 200th episode. So great, right? I also wanted to tell you, those of you who are longtime listeners or have definitely listened to several of the earlier podcasts, you'll know that my office is what I call a glorified closet. It's slightly bigger than a closet, although many of you listening I know for sure have walk in master bedroom closets that are bigger than my office. 100% that's for sure.

And so I've been trying for about a year now to renovate our attic space into an office. I will spare you all the details about why it's been so difficult and challenging, but what I will tell you, the best news, is that the project has begun. You might also hear my dog whining in the background. I don't know why he is all of a sudden having a problem. It's actually so fun for me. This is the first day that I've had that literally has no other human beings in the house in, I can't even remember how long.

I have no kids doing school. I have nobody helping me around the house. I have nobody working on the attic. It's amazing. And of course I sit down to record and Augie is sitting here whining like a baby. So I might have to pause here in a second and let him out or help them with whatever it is he thinks he needs right now. But anyway, the attic project has begun and that's super exciting, and I just can't wait for it to be done. And, of course, when it's done, I'll let you all know, and then you'll for sure have to come to one of my free classes so that you can see me on video so you can see what it's like, because it's going to be so great. I'm so excited for it. Okay, one other thing that I was just thinking the other night, I was like, you know what? I need to mention this on the podcast. This is a little friendly public service announcement for you. I just have this feeling, my intuition is telling me, that somebody out there needs to hear this.

So I just wanted to let you know something that happened, because I think it might be useful for somebody out there. So my daughter is seven and we have pretty much since my oldest son, who's about to turn 15, since he was probably about three-ish or so, maybe two and a half, something like that, we really have tried to do family meals together, family dinners together whenever possible. And for the most part, we're able to do it. I mean, every now and then it doesn't work out, but for the most part, it is a tradition for us that pretty much most nights we're eating dinner together. And so it's just this thing we do. I don't think a ton about it. And my seven-year-old daughter said to me as we were sitting down to dinner the other night, oh my gosh, right as we're getting ready to sit down to dinner, I'm just so excited to do it, I'm so excited to sit down, and I was like, "Oh, is it because you're so hungry or are you just happy to sit down with all of us?"

And she's like, "The second one." I was like, "Oh." And then she made another comment the next day about how much she loves to sit down with all five of us every night at dinner. And we have data on this. All your pediatricians out there know, and probably a lot of you non pediatricians know too, there's actually research on how important family meals are to children and how much it helps them with their development. But it was just cool to hear it out of the mouths of babes, out of her mouth saying, "You know what? This is actually my one of my favorite times of the day and I really appreciate this." And so my point is that it's worth the effort. And you might be like, "Listen, there's no way we could do that every night." And that's okay, but maybe you could do it once a week, or maybe it doesn't have to be dinner. Maybe it's family breakfast or just something special on the weekend that you guys do every weekend.

Something that your kids know is going to be a time where everybody comes together, nobody's distracted by their phone or TV or things like that, and we can really connect on a deeper level. So I just wanted to let you know that if you've been thinking that maybe you should focus on that, maybe you should. It could be really awesome. Not only for your kids, but also for you.

Okay, I think I have Augie settled down. We shall see here. I don't know. Our neighbors in the back, they've got a bunch of patio furniture. This last summer, as I think so many people did, because you couldn't go anywhere, so it's like, "I want to be really comfortable in my own yard." Well, anyway, they winterized it and put these big covers over it, and for days he's just been standing at the back, looking through the fence and barking at it. I think that's what it is. He's like, "What is happening? What is that thing over there?"

Anyway, okay, let's talk about our negative emotions and what to do with them and how to know if they are the negative emotions that you want to spend some time in or if they're the kind of negative emotions that you want to work to get yourself out of. And so, like I said, I anticipate that as this episode airs live, there's going to be a bit of an election hangover for a lot of people. And we think about four years ago, there was a lot that happened in terms of people's opinions and marches and all kinds of things. There were lots and lots of thoughts that everybody had about what was going on. And so I want to introduce you on the podcast this time a concept that I've actually been coaching on for several years with my clients and in my programs, and I realized I've never really talked about it on the podcast.

I thought I would bring that to your attention, because I think it's really, really helpful, especially in a situation that is pretty emotionally charged, such as an election being over. So the concept is clean pain versus dirty pain. So follow me on what the definitions are of these two. So clean pain is a part of having a human life. This part is inescapable. If you are a human being on this planet, you will experience clean pain. Now, I'm talking about emotional pain here, so basically negative emotions, uncomfortable emotions. Clean pain is necessary pain. This is something that is helpful to us. It's actually very healing. It's very cleansing. It can be very cathartic. So what it does is it facilitates our growth. It actually moves us forward. The more we're willing to stay in clean pain, the more we're actually able to progress and move forward.

And so in a strange way, clean pain actually feels good. It feels right. Even though it feels bad, it feels right. And so in a strange way, it's what we want. So here's some examples of clean pain. But before I get into those, let me just first say that really any emotion can be clean or dirty. What you have to do is see what's happening for you as you're feeling that emotion. What is the result of you feeling that emotion? What actions are you taking, and is that resulting in something that's moving you forward and that's facilitating growth for you? If it's not, then it's going to be dirty pain. So this isn't like a hard and fast, 100% of the time these emotions are clean pain and these are dirty pain. There is some overlap. But for the most part, these are examples of clean pain. Grief, this is the first one. So as much as we hate feeling grief, we don't want to feel it, we want to try to avoid it, anybody who's been through significant grief knows that through is the only way.

There's no way to escape it, and I have mentioned before on this podcast that when my daughter passed away, I read this one quote that I will remember forever, which is, "Grief is patient. It will wait for you." And this is really the truth. It really is a type of clean pain that facilitates growth for us. It is very, very healing and cathartic, and it really does move us forward. And it makes sense if you think about it. If someone that you are very close to our love deeply dies or is hurt or is in any kind of danger, we don't want to feel good about that. We don't want to feel like it's not a problem and who cares and everything's fine. So deep down, we do know that we opt in on purpose to clean pain, to negative emotions, and grief is a great example of that.

Another example is disappointment. This is one of those things where it's just a feeling that we're feeling. We wanted something to go a certain way and it didn't go that way, and we feel disappointment. Now, the election is a prime example of this. You might be disappointed in who won. You might be disappointed in how certain people are responding to who won. There's lots of opportunities for disappointment. And so disappointment itself can be clean pain. It really can allow you to be with yourself, working on the acceptance of what is, and moving away from what you thought would be. I personally have experienced disappointment a lot. A couple of years ago, I was doing some coaching with a great coach, and it was just like every day, every time we talk she's like, "And then what emotion are you having?" I'm like, "Disappointment, again. Wow, okay, I feel this a lot." So you may be similar and it really can be a clean pain.

Another example is sadness. Certain things happen, there are certain outcomes for our patients or people that we love, and we're just sad about it. Our hearts just hurt, and that is very, very cleansing and very clean pain. The next example is fear, and fear is one where people get a little confused. They think, "Really? That's clean? That seems like maybe that be more of a dirty pain." But true fear that you're not resisting, allowing fear, allowing yourself to be with that pure fear, is actually very clean. It allows you to understand what it is that is the problem for you. Fear is what keeps us alive in a lot of ways. There's a book that, gosh, Oprah had the author on a million years ago, it's called The Gift of Fear. It really is something that's useful to us when we are aware of it and pay attention to it and can be in pure fear, not judging it or adding other layers of dirty pain on top of it.

In the case of the election, you might have some fear about what's going to happen next. Either way, whichever side you're on, you may have a lot of fear that there's going to be a problem. In the United States, we just had another Supreme Court Justice sworn in and a lot of people are experiencing a lot of fear about what that's going to mean on all kinds of different subjects and issues. It's okay to be in that fear and allow yourself to feel the fear and to process it. So they don't all have to be deep, intensely uncomfortable emotions for clean pain. I think that less deeply painful emotions such as boredom can also be clean pain. I've done an episode of the podcast before on boredom. It's very, very useful to be bored at times. Even though it doesn't feel good, it does for sure facilitate growth and it for sure moves you forward if you don't try to neutralize it away with food or TV or social media or whatever else you like to do to avoid feeling your emotions. So boredom is another example.

Another example is loneliness. Loneliness can actually be quite painful or it can just be a little bit more minor, but loneliness itself. That message is that there's companionship, that you're wanting, and that feeling and being willing to be in that feeling and processing it and then maybe deciding, "You know what? I want to move forward from this," can definitely move you forward and facilitate growth. You can definitely go and look for that companionship that you're wanting. And another example of clean pain is defeat. I think so many of us are so worried about feeling like a failure and trying for something, and then it doesn't work out for whatever reason. And the election, same thing. Somebody is going to be defeated, that's for sure, and I think that defeat really can be a clean pain.

You tried really, really hard or someone that you admire or support tried really hard to achieve or accomplish something, and it didn't work out. And I think defeat can tie into disappointment too, and sadness.

But it didn't work out, and that defeated feeling can be very clean, just allowing yourself to stay in that place of, "I really wanted this and it didn't work out." That's okay. It's okay to be in that clean pain, because that allows you to move forward. Once you've spent time in that defeated place, you can decide, "Okay, what's next?" That's how we facilitate growth and move forward. So these are all very cleansing. And this is by no means an exhaustive list. These are just some examples.

Now, let's talk about dirty pain. So dirty pain is actually the resistance that you have to clean pain. So the clean pain is there. We said it's inescapable, it's necessary, you can't get away from it. But then what we do is we resist that. We don't want to feel the clean pain, and so then we create dirty pain for ourselves. Now, dirty pain actually hurts worse than the pain itself, than the clean pain. So we're making it harder than it has to be. We're making it worse than it has to be. I find that dirty pain is usually quite disempowering. It keeps us stuck and it keeps us spinning. It's like a self-perpetuating cycle that we get stuck in where we keep thinking thoughts that create these emotions that are more like a dirty pain. We're resisting all the clean pain, we don't think that it should be happening that way, and we give all our power away to others to determine how we feel, and that's very disempowering. So like I said, it's self-perpetuating. It tends to just keep going in a cycle.

Dirty pain prevents growth. Where clean pain facilitates growth, dirty pain prevents growth. And where clean pain moves you forward, dirty pain holds you back. Like I said, it keeps you stuck, it keeps you in this cycle. And often dirty pain feels really right. It feels like we should feel that way. And most people around us will also be feeling that way so we'll think, "Okay, this is how we feel. This is how we think and these are the emotions that we create when whatever this thing that happens, happens." But it feels terrible. Like I said, clean pain feels cathartic and cleansing and it feels good and right. Dirty pain feels terrible. It does not feel good. So let's talk about some examples. First of all, anger and blame. And anger, now, some people will say, "Well, can't anger be clean pain?" And I think it can be, but usually what's behind anger is fear.

And I think it's the fear behind anger that's actually the clean pain, and it's the resistance to the fear that is the anger. That's the dirty pain. That's the resisting the fear and going, "Hey, you," or me if I'm angry at myself or whatever I'm angry at, "you're not right. You're doing it wrong." There's a lot of blame involved here, and that's a problem. That's what I'm going to focus on. This is the emotions that we often feel so righteous about. We're like, "No, that person's wrong. They're not doing it right. They should have done it differently," and we feel totally justified to feel the way that we feel. And, of course, you're always justified to feel any way that you feel, because your emotions are created by your thoughts. You can always choose to think something differently if you want to, but you don't have to. But just understanding that choosing anger, choosing blame is a form of dirty pain.

It feels terrible, it prevents growth, and it holds you back. It's very disempowering, because if you're angry at the other person, then they need to change so you can feel better. And if you're angry at yourself thinking, "Oh, if I get angry enough at myself, maybe I'll change," that's not how it works. You're actually disempowering yourself. That's not how you're going to actually make meaningful change. Another example of dirty pain is hatred. And I am just guessing here that there's going to be some hatred spreading around.

There's going to be some vitriol in the United States after this election and I just want to offer to you that hatred feels terrible, and we usually hate the people who we think are spreading hate, which actually just creates more hate in the world. Hating somebody or something or some institution or some situation does not make it better. It will not solve any problem.

Augie is underneath my seat whining. So there you go. I think he's very upset with me. Okay, so hatred, another example of dirty pain. Another example is judgment. So we are often really, really good at judging others, judging ourselves, saying that people should do things differently. Any time there's a should involved, that's a judgment. They should do this. They shouldn't do that. It should be different than it is. It shouldn't have happened this way. Anytime we have that judgment, it's all resistance, all, all, all resistance. And so what's behind there, behind that dirty pain judgment? The clean pain is much more something to the extent of disappointment, sadness, or fear. And maybe we can find that. Instead of judging others or judging ourselves, really looking at it like, "The reason why I think it should be different is because I'm afraid that this result that we've created or that this person has created is actually going to be a real problem for me."

Another example of dirty pain is worry, and this is one that I've often told you about is an indulgent emotion, because it doesn't create anything useful. And I completely still stand by that. So we think about worry, what's behind worry? It's actually fear. But worry is this idea, if I have enough anxiety then the thing that I don't want to happen, maybe it won't happen. And logically, intellectually, of course, we know that that's not the case, but the fear behind that is the clean pain, and we can stay with that fear and really understand that fear, and when we understand it, we can allow the worry to go. We don't have to stay in the dirty pain of worry. Another example is righteous indignation. And I think so many of us as doctors are really skilled in righteous indignation. We just think that we are right and they are wrong, and we are indignant about it. And that is just how it is.

And, again, just resistance here, resistance like crazy to other people being the way they are or situations being the way they are. And so the clean pain behind this is, again, possibly some disappointment or sadness or fear. Maybe even some defeat. But you can drop the indignation and move to the sadness and allow yourself to feel that. We think that by going to righteous indignation, we won't have to feel the sadness or the disappointment. But it's still there. We still aren't processing it. We're just layering the dirty paint on top. Another example of dirty pain is helplessness and hopelessness. And so this happens often where we are just totally just giving up. We're just like, "Screw all of it. It can never get better. I guess I'm just destined to live this horrible existence." And that is, again, usually going to be based in sadness, disappointment, fear, maybe some loneliness possibly, but that is not going to be useful for you to be thinking that there's no way out, that there's no hope, that the situation can't be helped.

Another example of dirty pain is cynicism, and we see this a lot in the medical profession as well. Lots of people with all kinds of cynical judgments, thoughts, beliefs, thinking that this is somehow going to protect us again from the grief, the disappointment, the sadness, and the fear that are just inherent in a medical practice. The cynicism, it really does feel somehow protective. It's like I'm going to resist that these negative emotions, like the disappointment and sadness and fear, and grief, if you're at it long enough as a doctor, it will happen, I'm just going to resist those and I'll just protect myself from feeling those by being cynical. Except that dirty pain feels terrible.

Being a cynic does not feel good. Another example is stubbornness. So many of us are so stubborn we don't want to do a different thing. We think, again, that we're right, they're wrong. It should be my way. I know better than them, and we just argue for our dirty pain when we do that.

Another example of dirty pain is catastrophizing. And so many of us, especially if you have any tendency toward anxiety, we can be really, really good at this. And I know for myself, my brain will just create a story of the worst case scenario, the catastrophe that I don't want to happen, but then it will just decide to believe that, that is what's going to happen. And it feels true. I mean, our brains are so powerful. Mind management is so important, because you have to be onto yourself. You have to know, oh, look what my brain's doing? Look what it's trying to do. It's creating the story, it's trying to make meaning of what's actually happening here, and then it's just going to decide to believe that that's the truth, when you actually don't have evidence that that's the truth. All right, another example of dirty pain is a combination of being stuck, paralyzed, and or indecisive.

I told you about this before, when you're resistant to that clean pain, you're not moving through. You are just disempowering yourself and perpetuating the same cycle, which holds you back, which makes you feel stuck and paralyzed and indecisive, because you're in this merry go-round cycle that you can't get off of. So when you're feeling stuck, it's usually actually a protective mechanism. Even though the dirty pain of feeling stuck doesn't feel good, it's scarier to actually go to the fear of making a change, of taking a step and being wrong, of actually experiencing defeat or disappointment. All right, and then my final examples of dirty pain are shame and guilt, which so many of us are familiar with. And if you're not, it's probably because you are maybe neutralizing your emotions a lot. But so many of us, this is just what our brains go to. Remember, guilt is, "I did something wrong." Shame is, "I am wrong. Something is wrong with me."

And that, again, often feels like the right thing, the meaning to assign to what's happening for us. But again, I would argue that, that is just a dirty pain emotion. The clean pain behind that is the sadness, the sadness that it didn't work out the way we wanted it to, the fear, the fear that maybe it really is true that we aren't good enough, that something is really wrong with us, the grief that comes when something doesn't work out the way we wanted to. But instead what we do, rather than feeling those emotions, is we turn it inward on ourselves. Something's wrong with me, or I did something wrong. And then we focus on that. And again, that holds you back, it prevents growth, and it just feels terrible and keeps you spinning in that cycle. Whereas when you can identify what is the clean pain behind this and actually allow yourself to feel it and process that emotion through that moves you forward. That helps you to progress, it facilitates growth for you.

So after all of this explanation, I want to encourage you to think about where you are right now. Now, if you're listening to this in real time and it relates to our election, then think about where you are, what your emotions are that you're experiencing lately. Maybe you can think of, what are your top three or top five emotions you've been feeling, and how many of them are clean pain and how many of them are dirty pain? And can you move away from the dirty pain and move toward the clean pain and work to process it so that you really can move forward from this place in a healing cleansing cathartic way? And if you're listening to this some other time, you can just do this exercise anyway. What are the top three to five emotions you've been feeling over the last several days, and how many of them are dirty pain?

And then what you can do when you start recognizing, okay, these are the typical dirty pain emotions that I tend to go toward, then you can start to become more aware of them. Okay, I am in total judgment right now and that's sturdy pain and that is holding me back in these ways. So what's actually going on for me behind this judgment? What am I really feeling? What is the real concern behind this? And find out what that is, and then work to process it, work your way through. Many of us are like, "I'm not afraid. I'm fearless." Or, "I don't spend a lot of time in sadness. I don't see what the point is." But then we spend a ton of time in these dirty pain emotions, thinking that, that somehow is going to keep us from feeling the fear or the sadness. That's not how it works. The more you're willing to move toward those clean pain emotions, the faster you can move through the whole process and move on.

And, of course, it just creates a so much more pleasant experience of your life when you are in a place where you can feel your emotions in a clean way, process them, and move forward. So, can't wait for you to try this out. I know it's helped so many my clients in lots and lots of different scenarios.

All right, my friends we're going to get through it, whatever has happened in the future. I'm excited to find out what it is. We are going to get through it. We are resilient, we definitely are, and it's going to be good. It's going to be all good. We're going to be here for each other, we're going to love on each other fiercely, and it's going to be amazing.

All right, well, on that note, I hope you are able to experience some clean pain and maybe some positive emotions as well today. And on that note, I will talk to you next week.

Take care. Bye-bye.