



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Oh, hey there my friend, welcome back to the podcast. I'm so happy to have you here. I'm so happy to be recording this episode for you. I am alone in my house, which feels like an absolute treat. My husband has all the kids off to piano lessons, which we've figured out a way to do piano lessons in a very safe and socially distance manner. So in case you're wondering, we have it all set up. And so I am here recording a podcast for you, and I'm so happy to bring this topic to you. I have coached on this subject so many times, I cannot wait to help you with this today.

Okay, let's talk about motivating yourself by beating yourself up. So many of us do this. I mean, dare I say that all of us do this. I think probably everybody listening to this podcast does this, at least to a certain extent. Some of us probably more than others. I know I did it a ton. And so many of my clients do it as well. And it's a habit that we tend to be reluctant to give up. We really deep down secretly believe that it really helps us. And we are really very excited about stopping doing it, except that stopping doing it as you'll see, as I explain more to you is just slowing everything down for you. It's... We wonder why we don't have what we want. And then we realize, Oh, because we're committed to making the process as slow and painful as possible. And we don't even realize it.

So you may be thinking, well, I don't beat myself up. I don't know if I actually do that. Do I do that? And beating yourself up can look like multiple different things. It can definitely look like just harsh inner self-talk. There's definitely people who are just going around thinking all day that you're such an idiot. You're so stupid. No wonder no one wants to be around you, things like that. Just really being obviously mean to yourself. So you may be aware of it in way. But sometimes it's much more subtle. I know for myself it was much more subtle. It was much more like I was just keeping it real. I was just telling the truth. Like if I'm not all having an inflated ego and thinking too highly of myself, this is what's really true about me.

This is what I was thinking, except that it was just me being mean to myself. So it can look like put downs, like self-deprecation, it can look like even just saying things like, well, with my luck then it's not going to work out. That's a really not nice thing to say to yourself because it just assumes that being you sucks. And of course, then that's your experience of it. Another way that you can beat yourself up is by just having kind of an overall negative feeling about yourself. Or experiencing a negative feeling overall when you are just kind of with yourself or just going about your business day to day.

So that can be like sort of feeling an overall disgust with yourself. You're just kind of overall all day long, just sort of disgusted or maybe very dissatisfied and you might be feeling disappointed in yourself really frequently, just overall negative emotions with you, just being with you.

I just want to point out that if that is something that you're experiencing, then it would make complete sense that you would want to ask food or possibly alcohol to make you feel better, because just being with yourself without the aid of the food or the alcohol is a very uncomfortable experience. It doesn't feel good to be feeling negative emotions just by being you, just being inside your body all of the time or most of the time. And so of course, you're going to be looking for some sort of outside solution to make yourself feel better. Okay. So just remember that connection there. So why do we even beat ourselves up? It's not like we're born as babies beating ourselves up. And I think that there's probably two ways that most of us started beating ourselves up in whatever way, shape or form we do that.

I think that it either started when somebody in our lives, like when we were children said something like that to us. It might've been another kid being like, you're stupid, you're dumb. You're ugly. Just something like that. It might have been rejection from someone we were romantically interested in. It might be some adult who said something mean to us. Or maybe you overheard someone else being on the receiving end of this talk. Like somebody spoke negatively to another kid and you realize like, Oh, this is how people talk about one another. Or you might've even heard someone just saying out loud what they think about themselves, just showing you like, Oh, this is what we think about ourselves. Like just even something like, Oh, I'm so stupid. Some people will think that, right. And say that out loud. And so as a child, you might've heard that and thought like, Oh, okay, making meaning and sense of your world as children do, trying to understand how the world works.

And then you start thinking, Oh, okay, this is a way that we think about ourselves. This is what adults do. So that's one way. I think the other way that probably many of us listening to this podcast, this is the second way is probably more likely. And it could be a combination of both, but if you needed to be corrected as a child in some way, shape or form, it's possible that nobody said anything mean to you at all, right? They were just correcting you or helping you to do better in their way, but your child brain, again, trying to make meaning, trying to make sense of the world made that correction mean that something was wrong with you or that you were bad. And those of us who are high achievers, I mean, I remember being in kindergarten and already having a very clear sense of the kids that got in trouble and how the teacher spoke to them.

And what you were supposed to do to be a "good kid" or be in the good graces of the teacher. My kindergarten teacher was... I think she was probably a really good teacher, but she did not put up with nonsense. Like she was not messing around. And I remember one time... isn't this... I mean, I remember this so clearly and I was probably five years old. So it just goes to show those of us with that achiever gene, right? Those of us who really like to achieve, how early it starts. We had these just things that we had to do, whatever our work was. And what we had to do was we had to color one picture on a page, cut it out, color the other page, and then paste the thing that we cut out onto that other page and using literal paste. We used paste. They did have paste, right. So we had to paste it on there. And so, I think this is actually quite smart.

I learned, well, the one that you're going to cut out, you don't have to take the time to color in the lines. Right? You can just color outside the lines really messy and it doesn't matter cause you're going to cut it out. And so this works for me, you know what's coming, right? Until the day that I had an absolute heart attack thinking that I had scribbled on the one that I was not supposed to cut out, right. The one that I was supposed to paste onto. And actually it turned out that I was doing it right. And it was all okay. But the panic that I felt, I was so afraid of getting in trouble with the teacher, for being messy and being sloppy and not taking good care to do good quality work.

I was just mortified. I remember that feeling. I remember the room, I remember the table. I mean, it was intense, right? So here we are as young children, even seeing how other people are spoken to, we just immediately make that mean something negative about ourselves. I was so embarrassed and so upset with myself that I hadn't been more careful, right. So I think that we speak to ourselves harshly in an attempt to help ourselves do better or be better. Like somehow we're not going to get in trouble or whatever negative outcome that might be on the horizon that we don't want, we start associating that speaking to ourselves negatively can help to prevent that or help to avoid that.

Now, I think that this way of thinking, this way of treating yourself can really be somewhat addictive and here's why. So first, after you're mean to yourself, right? So whatever it is that you're meaning to do or you want to do better, and then you speak harshly to yourself or you have these negative thoughts about yourself, you really do try hard to do better next time because of how mean you were to yourself. And so then often you succeed because you tried really hard to do better. Okay. Not because you were mean to yourself, but because you tried really hard to do better. But this creates this false belief, this false association, that the way to succeed is to speak to yourself harshly, right? If you want to do better, then you need to be mean to yourself. It's like true and unrelated but you think that it's related. So of course, you're going to think like, Oh, well, I have to do this if I want to do better, if I want to accomplish things, if I want to succeed.

Then secondly, when we succeed we think we're doing better, right? We're becoming a better person, or we're improving as a person we're getting to where we want to get to in our lives. Then the connection becomes strong that the way to improve as a person, the way to accomplish more, the way to succeed more, the way to achieve more is to beat yourself up and to treat yourself poorly. So we start building this connection of meaning. We think, Oh, this is the way to do it. And look, it works out for me in quotes, works out for me because I'm creating these results that I want. Like, maybe you're passing tests that were really important and you're getting good scores on them. And you're starting to think, Oh, the way I do better, or the way that I get myself to study is I have to beat myself up. I have to treat myself in a mean way.

And then the third reason why this can be addictive is that, this behavior is ultimately a manifestation of our anxiety and our fear. And if you're like, Oh, I don't have fear and anxiety. All of us as humans have anxiety and fear, right? So we have these deep dark fears about not being good enough, not being lovable, not being worthy. Right. We're afraid that we're worthless. That there's no point to us being here that we're not contributing in any positive way. And then when we're afraid, we lash out like a wounded animal, but at ourselves, right? So we have these fears. We have these worries, these anxieties. And then we lash out at ourselves and we take action from that fear and from punishment, right? Like if you had a wounded animal biting at you, you would try to get away.

You would be like, no, let me do something else. Let me create a different experience for myself. And then we're taking action from that place. So if you're thinking about the thought model, if you're new to the thought model, new to this podcast, let me briefly tell you a little bit more about it. We have five components to it. The first is the circumstance. These are the neutral facts. This is what everyone would agree upon. And it goes on that circumstance line. This is what has happened. And we have a thought about the circumstances as the meaning that we assign to what is happening around us. And then our thoughts create our feelings. Okay? So our thoughts create our feelings. Our feelings are what drive our actions, what we do, what we don't do, how we react. And then our actions of course, create our results.

And so if you're thinking about fear, where does fear go in the model? It goes on that F line, that feeling line, okay. And our feelings are always driving our actions. So the actions, we know what we want to take, right? We want to study for that test. Or we want to do all the research that we needed to do to write that book chapter, or write the article, or put together our proposal for a study that we want to do, or whatever it is, right? Losing weight, things that we want to do in order to lose weight, those are actions. So we can have fear driving us to take those actions, right? Fear that things aren't going to work out, fear that we're going to be found out as a fraud, fear that we are going to get terrible type two diabetes complications.

And we're going to be living our lives in a wheelchair with no toes and on dialysis and blind, if we don't get a control over our overeating, right? You can have fear driving you, but that feels terrible. And that's why it's not sustainable. Okay. What I want you to know is you can take the same actions. You can still do all the studying. You can still eat in a way that serves your body. You can still do all of the things that you want to do, but have a different feeling on the F line, that feeling line in the model, driving that. And then your experience of taking those same actions is so much better, so much better in fact that you might want to continue doing them. And that's a consistency that we need in order to have permanent weight loss, in order to continuously succeed in those endeavors that we have in our lives.

So you might be thinking, well, what are the feelings that could create this? Because honest to goodness, you might literally be like, no, I don't know what feelings that would be positive could drive these actions, I only know how to do this from a place of negative emotion. So some options, some thoughts might be patience, right? Possibly love. What about encouragement? You could think about feeling excited or just having positivity, driving those actions, right? We're so often thinking like, well, if I don't do this, all these negative things are going to happen. Instead of thinking, well, what are all the positive things that are going to happen? I want those things to be what's propelling me forward and driving me to create these results that I want. So you're doing the same things. You're still getting those results that you want, right? The chapter is written, you've passed the test, right?

You took your boards and you passed, you have lost the weight, but at what expense. Like if you lose the weight, but the experience of it is awful because your emotions are so negative. You will not be able to keep that up permanently. You will end up going back to the old habits that you have of overeating and possibly over-drinking because that's how you were dealing with the negative emotions that you have in the first place. That was your escape, was by eating and possibly drinking. Right? So you have to see and basically experiment. You essentially have to sort of test it out and try it out. Like, what could this be like?

I mean, is Katrina right? Could I actually take these same actions, but do it from a positive emotion? So many of my clients are reluctant to give up the negative self-talk because they're afraid that they won't accomplish anything then.

I hear this all the time. How do you get yourself to do anything if you're being loving of yourself, if you're accepting yourself? Literally they're like honest to goodness, I don't understand. Then I'll just sit around and watch Netflix all day and skip out on work and end up living under an overpass as a homeless person. It's literally where our brains go. That's how committed our brains are to the idea that beating ourselves up is the way to success, is the way to motivate ourselves to do better. So here's what I want you to consider beating yourself up to motivate yourself is like having a race car, super fast race car, and then slashing the tires. So can you move forward? Can you go down the track? Yes, of course you can, but you're slowing yourself down dramatically.

Think about flat tires and driving, you can't go very fast. You're like thump, thump, thump, thump. It's very uncomfortable and it's bouncing bumpy, and you can't steer very well. And it takes a lot of effort. But when you have full tires that have all the air in them, you're able to just race down that track so much more easily. But here's what happens, after a long time of driving on flat tires, you don't even remember that tires could hold air. You're thinking that flat tires are just tires and that's just normal for you. You don't get to have a car that has air filled tires that don't leak. You don't even recall that there's another way of driving for you. You see other people racing by and you just think they're special, right? Or their car is just genetically blessed. Right? And meanwhile, all you have to do to have that same success to just speed by is just to patch those tires and fill them with air.

And what that means is stop beating yourself up and treat yourself lovingly and accept yourself. Stop judging yourself. Okay. So when you're like, yeah, but I've gotten all these things done because I've been beating myself up, like this negative self-talk is how I created all these other things. Think about what you might have created if you hadn't, right. We're presupposing that the good things came because you beat yourself up. What if that's actually the least good that you could create? Because you were beating yourself up so much. What if you were so supportive and loving of yourself and you could create twice as much, three times as much, four times as much, 10 times as much if you stopped doing that. I'm telling you this is how it works. Okay.

So I have five steps for how to stop beating yourself up to motivate yourself, because I know many of you are going to be like, but how Katrina? I don't understand how, you have to tell me out. Okay number one, first you have to recognize that beating yourself up is an inefficient way of achieving, that feels terrible for you and makes the process go much slower. Okay? You have to know why you'd even want to stop doing this. You have to get behind this idea and believe that there could be a better way. That maybe the way you're doing it, isn't the best way, there could be a better way. Step two, become aware of how you beat yourself up.

Like I said, people do it differently. For me, I thought it was just keeping it real. I thought it was just the truth about myself. So it could be kind of sly. You have to really become aware and get onto yourself on, Oh, okay. Ooh, that actually is not a nice way of thinking about myself or talking about myself.

So really understanding how and where you're beating yourself up. Step three, is practice loving on yourself and practice positive self-talk, when you've done something you're happy with. Okay? So you need to increase your capacity to receive love and kindness and acceptance from yourself. So we're not going to start doing it when you've done something you don't like about yourself, you're going to start doing it when you've done something you do like, okay. You're going to start praising yourself from that place of love and actually practicing, believing what you say to yourself about yourself. This sounds like maybe it's easy or it's unnecessary. I'm telling you do not skip this step. It's very, very, very important. You have to be able to accept the love and kindness from yourself.

Step four then, is to practice speaking to yourself lovingly, after you've done something that you're not happy about, right? So you're not feeling like you want to go study for your boards. And rather than telling yourself how you're going to fail, and you're not going to be able to get hospital privileges and you won't be able to be board certified and then you're going to lose your job. And then all this will be for nothing. And then how will you pay your debt, right? That's not a nice way to talk to yourself. Instead thinking, you know what? You totally have got this. You're smart and amazing. So let's get going, let's start doing some reviewing. That's a very different way of approaching yourself, right. So rather than judging yourself negatively for not being motivated or wanting to study you instead are like, of course you don't want to study love and that is totally okay.

But guess what? So many good things are going to happen when you do it. So how about we get to work? Let's just do it. Totally different, right? And then step five, is practicing thinking thoughts that promote positive feelings before taking the actions that you want to take. So then notice how the experience of taking those actions is different. So again, when you think about the thought model, when you know there's certain actions you want to take, you can decide in advance, how you want to feel, and then you can choose thoughts on purpose that feel true and believable to you. That make you feel the way you want to try feeling, to motivate yourself to take those actions. This is going to be something you're going to have to practice. You're going to have to take some time with this.

But the cool thing is the more you experience this, once you start getting a little bit of evidence like, Oh my gosh, I did do that stuff. Just like in the past, I would have beaten myself up, but this time I didn't and I still did it, and it was amazing. And it was so much better than it would have been had I been mean to myself. And you start to build up that evidence and that confidence, you know what? This might actually be a better way of doing things. Maybe I could consider doing this all the time. And then with enough practice, it just becomes the way that you do things. It just becomes your standard operating procedure. So if you are a decades long beater upper of yourself, like most of us are, this is some of the best work that you can do for yourself. Because not only does it help you with your weight loss and help you to keep the weight off long term, but it helps you with all of the other things that you're working on achieving in your life. So this is one of those skills where you learn it in one area of your life, and then you can extrapolate it everywhere. And it's so worth it.

All right, friends, have a wonderful, wonderful rest of your week. And I'll talk to you next time.