



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, welcome to the podcast, my friend. I'm so glad to be recording this for you today. I'm having quite the day. You may hear my dog in the background losing his ever-loving mind. I keep joking he needs a tranquilizer dart in his rear end today. He is just losing his mind. We've got someone here working on our attic so that we can turn it into an office for me, so excited for that. But he is not getting his naps and he is just like a toddler. He's overtired and losing his mind at every single thing. Also, on top of this, in the middle of recording this podcast interview, my podcast mic just stopped working. And then I tried using my AirPods and then that wasn't working either. And so now I'm on another microphone that I have that I've never used for the podcast before, and I hope that the sound quality is okay for you. We're just going to make it work.

So I think you probably just heard that door slam too. This is going to be the way it is probably for the next several months while I have workers here and just in and out and doing their thing. I don't see any way. Unless I just work at night and on the weekends or super early in the morning, I just don't see how it's possible to not have sound in the background, but 'tis the season, I guess this is how it is when we have so many people in our homes. And amazing things are coming out of this. I can't wait to share with you guys my fun new attic space. It's not going to be big. It's actually narrow and long, but it's going to be so much better than what I have now. It's super fun, so I can't wait for that.

So I want to tell you about who my guest is on this success story podcast. It's a really good one. This one is Kathryn Ray. She is an MD OBGYN. She lives in Illinois in the Chicago area, and she is someone who has lost over a hundred pounds. She's going to tell you the whole story, but she has really, really struggled and just tried all the things, as so many people, especially people who weigh in the triple digits or more overweight have done. And she really, as she will tell you, she'd basically just given up and thought, "You know what, I guess maybe I could try this thing and see if this works, because this does seem to be different." She's had incredible results.

She is someone who just has been so fun to watch blossom and bloom right in front of us, just to see her really develop and change has been so great. And of course, she has lost over a hundred pounds in the process of doing that as well. So I want to ask you to help me welcome Kathryn Ray to the podcast. She is just a terrific person who has a really compelling story. I think you're really going to enjoy it. So please enjoy my interview with Kathryn Ray. Talk to you next week.

Kathryn, I'm so happy you're here on the podcast. This is a really big deal. So thank you for being here.

Kathryn Ray: Thank you. I'm loving it. I'm so ready to go.

Katrina Ubell: Yay. Okay, awesome. And we'll get into why that's a really big deal. So let's just start off with you telling us a little bit about yourself.

Kathryn Ray: So I am OBGYN. I practice outside of Chicago in the suburbs here. I am part owner in my practice and have had probably a lifelong struggle since at least college of weight and identity. And this has been so transforming for me that I am daring myself to go outside of my comfort zone and talk to you today.

Katrina Ubell: Talk to me today. It's so good. And I feel the need to also talk about how much weight you've lost. You've lost over 100 pounds. How much have you lost at this point?

Kathryn Ray: I am at 107 now.

Katrina Ubell: 107 pounds down. I just don't want to gloss over that because that's a really, really big deal, and we'll get into that. It's truly, this level of weight loss is identity shifting. And I was just saying to you before we got on, I said to you, "I feel like you're a totally different person." And you were like, "I am a totally different person." And so it really involves this level of weight loss being willing to go through that identity shift, which has not been super easy for you. I don't think it is easy for anybody.

Kathryn Ray: No. And I'm still working on it. I'm still working on it. And I used to say that I was a person who had a reverse body dysmorphism, because if I didn't look in a mirror I thought I looked differently than I actually did. And then I'd go by a mirror and I'd look in a mirror and I'd be like, "Ooh, that's who I am? Wait a minute." And had this whole weird dialogue in my head about what that meant.

Katrina Ubell: So interesting. So your childhood, no issues with weight?

Kathryn Ray: I don't really think that I had issues with weight. I have always... I'm tall, I'm six foot tall. I grew up in a family that's all tall. And I think I've always had issues with just feeling big. I'm putting quotations around the word big. And I manifested that beyond being tall into being big and overweight. And it just became, well, that's who you are. You're a big girl. And that was what it was. And having to rewire my brain for how I think about that and who my identity is at a different weight.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, totally. Totally. So you were saying, so after high school was finished, would you say college?

Kathryn Ray: Yeah, probably after high school was finished. I was never a big sports person. I played volleyball a little bit in high school, but nothing ever sporty. I was not a sports person. I was a band geek, I was a theater person, went to college, and again still was not into sports.

I did play intermural volleyball in college. And then when I went to medical school, I did play intermural volleyball in medical school and that was probably the first time that I was able to lose weight in short spurts through different programs. I'd been through so many programs I could probably list them all off to anyone. I've had success in some that lasted for a while but my old habits always come crawling back.

And I'm an emotional eater who eats for lots of different self fulfilling reasons, and this whole program has been the one time that has gotten me to realize that I really do have control over what I do. I don't have to let the other pieces of my life control what happens to me. In so many ways, not just food. And that's been the most life-changing of the whole thing. The food was the piece that showed me how I could do it, and I spent the whole first year doing it. And the second year has been about, how do I take the pieces that I learned on how to manage myself around food and now put it into how I manage myself and the rest of my life?

Katrina Ubell: I mean, so just to give everyone an example, I think of it as like you were really keeping yourself in a really restricted kind of a life, I feel like. It was like you kept your life small.

Kathryn Ray: Yes.

Katrina Ubell: Would you agree?

Kathryn Ray: Yes.

Katrina Ubell: Because how long were you in the program before I coached you live?

Kathryn Ray: Actually, you coached me live in March, which was my third month in the program, so three months into the program, which was also, I had signed up for the coaching program the Sunday before and then my father passed away. And so I was sitting at home at my mother's dealing with the grief of having lost my father and not wanting to lose my coaching spot, and having a coaching call. But I took it lots of different places in my mind, because then after that coaching call, I took it to, "Oh, I was such a sad coaching call. She didn't smile, she didn't laugh. She laughs with everybody else." And then someone pointed out to me, recently when I said that to someone recently, they pointed out and said, "You were talking about your father dying. Why would she be laughing?"

Katrina Ubell: Oh, my gosh, isn't it impressive how our brains can beat ourselves up and be like, "Oh, see my coach, this is how she responded." I mean, I probably would have been pretty inappropriate for me to laugh and joke around if we're coaching on your dad dying, right?

Kathryn Ray: Exactly.

Katrina Ubell: Oh, my gosh.

Kathryn Ray: But I will say that I know that one of the things you always say is grief waits for you, but it's always there. And it still finds ways to find me, but finding the thoughts that help me understand what happened in the moment that it happened was also life-altering in getting through just coming back to work, being able to function, being able to be in the life that I still had to live. I'm a practicing physician. I could only take so much time off.

Katrina Ubell: Totally.

Kathryn Ray: And you still have to be able to figure out a way to compartmentalize that so that you can work and then take the time to figure out what you put in that little compartment later.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. But you really took... So in masters, we spend some time building confidence and talking about daring yourself to do things, and you really have taken that to heart. I love that. You're just like, "Okay, I'm going to dare myself to be coached." I loved it because you were scared to death to be coached. And I'm like, "Okay." And then you were like, "I'm raising my hand." I'm like, "Look at her. It's working. Look at her confidence." It's like I could see it growing and developing. You would be so nervous on a coaching call and now you're like, "Hey, let's coach." I'm like, "Awesome, let's do it." You're so much more comfortable. I feel like you're so much more of who you truly authentically are.

Kathryn Ray: That was—

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, being really stuffed into this cave and not allowed to come out before.

Kathryn Ray: That, and I'm a recovering people pleaser and perfectionist. And the realization that I didn't even know what it was that I really liked because my choices were always, "Well, what does everybody else want to do?" Or, "I can do anything because I like a lot of things." Well, it'd be nice to know what I really... If I really got to choose, what do I want to do?

Katrina Ubell: Right. It's like almost not even allowing yourself to have an opinion. Your opinion is so low of yourself that you don't even get to have a decision or a thought or an opinion about what—

Kathryn Ray: But I think some of it was more I wanted to make sure that I was liked and I wanted to make sure that I was loved. So in order to do that, you let the other person do what they want to do, because then in your mind, that's going to return that love and that thing to you. But then start to feel, "Well, nobody ever does this for me," And then you start to... It spirals into lots of different things and just mess with you.

Katrina Ubell: Right. Well, it's that whole manual. It's like, "Hey, I'm going to do all these things for you, but then you better respond this way to me." And then when they don't, you get to be mad, and hurt because you're not getting that positive reinforcement that you're looking for. And then you get to be all victimy and, "Poor me." I would say that, I mean, I don't think you have this more than anybody else. Certainly not more than I did when I was in practice, but definitely some victim mentality.

Kathryn Ray: Definitely.

Katrina Ubell: And did you—

Kathryn Ray: I still find myself falling into it every once in a while and I have to think myself out of it. But it was in relationships with the people I work with, in relationships with the hospital staff that I work with, my own family, just little pieces of how I would subtly think that I wasn't the one in charge of what I was doing. Most recently we switched to a new EMR at work and I got coached on how I allowed the switching of a new EMR and the fact that other people didn't know how to use it, just like I didn't know how to use it make me a victim. Which meant I really didn't know how to use it. It slides its little way in there everywhere.

Katrina Ubell: Right. But I think it really is just a habit. Right?

Kathryn Ray: Yes.

Katrina Ubell: It's just like, "If other people have the power to make me feel good, then they also have the power to make me feel bad. Therefore, if I feel bad, it must be their fault."

Kathryn Ray: It must be somebody else's fault.

Katrina Ubell: "I'm sure I can find a way to blame them."

Kathryn Ray: And a lot of times your mind doesn't want to go to, "I did this to myself. It must have been somebody else that did this, because if I did this to myself, then I caused my own suffering. And what was the purpose of that?"

Katrina Ubell: Yes. Right. But I also think that very few of us were raised with that kind of a mindset of taking personal responsibility for your experience. I know that I was raised with much more of just that victim mentality, blaming other people, other people are the problem and just looking at it that way. And it's like, if you think about it that way, or you see everybody around you, all the adults around you thinking about it that way, then you're like, "Oh, this is ... life."

Kathryn Ray: Then you automatically go there.

Katrina Ubell: It's the path of least resistance. If you just let your brain go downhill, then yeah, then you can do that. But if you realize there's a better way and it gets you to the peak, the mountaintop, it's like, "Okay, it's worth the trudge to get up there to finally get to that place." That's totally amazing. So you still have some more weight you're working on losing, and so how are you approaching that now? Let's actually talk about—

Kathryn Ray: So let's start at the beginning.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, let's talk about losing the beginning.

Kathryn Ray: So starting at the beginning, I found your program through a Facebook pop-up. I'm not even sure how I got into the thread to get the Facebook pop-up because I know that Facebook picks things based on what you're looking at, so how it even got there, I don't know. And it happened to be your How to Lose 100 Pounds and Keep It Off podcasts. That's the lecture that it was that I signed up for, and right around my birthday, which is usually when I start to mentally fall apart anyway. So I listened to it and there were so many pieces in it that rang true as far as the processes of the mind and thinking and actions and feelings, as well as the idea that I'd already done some of the no flour pieces of it and had gotten myself to the point where I cut out fat to point where nothing would happen.

I did Weight Watchers. It worked for a little while, then I gained it back, then it didn't work anymore. I did a program here where they give you specially made foods that you pick up twice a week. I did a personal chef for a while, but it never worked because it wasn't coming from me. I wasn't choosing what I was doing. The fact that I got to pick the foods that I put on my protocol and pick and decide what I ate, the fact that I got to control it, I jumped in feet first, no flour, no sugar, raised my fat level and went, "All right, this is it. If this doesn't work, nothing's going to work. Why not give it a try?" So I did. I never picked an end point though until probably 75 pounds, I picked a goal weight. I know you always said

Katrina Ubell: I actually it's okay. I think it's totally fine.

Kathryn Ray: And I don't even know that I remember hearing BMI. I set a goal and said, "I've done this before in the past when I've lost weight, so I want to try to get as close to this number by this point as possible," and started in that direction. And then I had to learn that things happen when they happen, and by putting a time limit on them you often time put yourself into habits that are not quite what you meant to be such as diet mentality habits. So I had to work through those. And I don't think that the idea of this becoming a reality was until I hit about 75 pounds. When I hit 75 pounds and realized I was 25 pounds away from 100 pounds, then it was, "Ooh, I've learned something, that I can really do this."

And this year has been a lot slower than the first year, but that's okay. I've worked on so many other things. And I think mentally in my mind I knew that. That's why when I came into the program, I said, "You know what? I come into this to lose weight, so I'm going to lose weight, and whatever I gained from that I'll work on later." So that was where I went to. But right now my biggest thing that I'm working on because the weight's coming off so much slower is having to spend a lot of time focusing on the little things that I let creep in for buffering and my hunger scale.

And we have a group of us that talk after the masters life program so we support each other. We've had a lot of conversations on, "How do you judge the hunger scale?" Because I could never really figure out what was the difference between plus three and plus four. I'd just automatically be at plus four or plus five. I'm like, "How the hell did I get here? Two minutes ago I was not here. How could I be here now?" And then Sara Dill, one of the other coaches in the program had once said, "Well, I take a big sigh. And when I sigh, that's my mindset that it's time to start thinking, is it time to stop eating?"

And I started using that for a while, but then I got to the point where I'd sigh and I'd go, "Well, am I just sighing because I'm relaxing?" I would keep eating. So then I decided that it was more if... One of the other people said, "Well, if my mind even brings up the thought that I'm done eating, it's coming up for a reason." So now if the thought comes into my head that, "Am I done eating? Have I had enough?" Then maybe I help out enough. And I'm learning to say, "Well, if I've had enough, then I can stop eating now. And if I want to put it in a leftover container and have it for later, that's fine. And if I'm hungry later and I'm truly hungry later, I can eat again."

I had a very rigid schedule that I started with, and now I'm I think morphing into an intuitive eating plan. I do have set times when I want to eat, but if I'm hungry, I'll let myself have a day that I have breakfast instead of not eating breakfast, or I'll change my times. Instead of 12:00 and 6:00, I'll eat it 10:30 and 5:00 or whatever. But I generally have two meals a day unless I'm planning it to be a different kind of a day. I mean, I love the idea that get to plan it to be whatever I want it to be. That's life altering.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, totally. What I think is so good about that is I think we often need the structure in the beginning so much, and then over the course of time, because you've been at this now for a while, over the course of time, you start realizing like, "Okay, there is more nuance to this," but you're ready to examine and understand the nuance because you've done the other work before it. Because I think about this all the time. Just so you know, I think about all the time, like, should I change it? Should I add this in at this point? Should I do this? Should I do that? And I still think that for anybody who's struggled with their weight for any kind of reasonable amount of time, there are still foundational principles that you need at first to build that relationship with yourself, to see how you feel when you follow through on that.

And then maybe you're someone who loves that rigidity forever more, or maybe you're someone who really wants to have more flexibility in there. So by rigidity, we're not talking about, I give you the plan and it's super strict and you have to follow that and you've got to figure out a way to make it work. Instead, you're deciding, "No, this plan is going to work for me in my life." And the way you have clinic or the way you're operating or whatever is working for you or the way you work, and then you follow that every single day. You figure that out for yourself. Now, some people though can't do a schedule like that ever, like some of our friends who are shift work people working in the ICU or working in emergency or things like that. They've always got to be able to have that flexibility, and we're able to do that as well. So anyway, I just want to point that out, because we all come to this in different places and we can—

Kathryn Ray: And you figure out what

Katrina Ubell: Oh, my God, I can't do that.

Kathryn Ray: No, no. But you figure out the protocol that works for you, and what worked for me, I mean, I do some shift work. I'm an OBGYN, so there are days I could leave my house at 7:00 in the morning and not come home until the following day at 6:00 in the evening. And I had gotten to a couple of times when I had no more food, I ran out of food that I brought and I had my A through J backup plans—

But I finally decided that for me, the best prep for me was to once or twice a week, I prep all my proteins, I cut up all my vegetables, fruit's a little harder for me to get into my plan periodically, and whatever fat I was going to use in my meal. And then it's all in my refrigerator in ways that I can go, "Okay, I'm planning what I'm going to have for the next two days, this is what I'm having." So I grab it all, I throw it in my cooler, I take it to work.

But I thought the funniest part was dealing with my staff because at the hospital and in the office, they all want to give you food. They want to go get it for you, they want to go to parties and have so-and-so's birthday, so-and-so this. And so for me, the hardest thing and the first thing I had to deal with was how do I work my mind around that? And that was all about choice.

That was all about, instead of saying, "I can't," or, "I don't," it was, "I'm choosing not to." And I consciously caught myself telling my staff, "I can't eat that." Or they would say, "You can't eat that." And I would say, "No, no, no, no, no, I'm choosing not to eat that today. I could turn around and need that if I wanted to, but I know where my end point is, and that won't get me to my end point. So I'm going to choose not to eat that today." And just the word choice was important for my mind to believe that I wasn't restricting myself, I was choosing not to.

Katrina Ubell: Yes. Oh, my gosh, I've talked about this on the podcast before but it's still so good to talk about it again. Right? Diet programs are not restrictive. They're not full of deprivation. Those are emotions, those are experiences you create with the way that you're thinking about it. And this is the prime example, right? When you're telling yourself you can't have something, then immediately you're restricted—

Kathryn Ray: You want it even more.

Katrina Ubell: Right. You want it even more, exactly. We want to just rebel against that and be like, "Screw you, don't tell me what to do. I could have whatever I want."

Kathryn Ray: That was my biggest urge work was to get through, "That cookie looked so good in the cafeteria and I want to eat that." And I had a couple of times where I had urges for very specific things that I could label and say, "I know exactly where I'm going to go get this." And I sat with them for probably two or three months until it went away. And when it went away, then I allowed it to be my joy eat. And when I had it as my joy eat, I eat like a third of it. As opposed to, "It's my joy eat because I've had an urge for this for so long, I'm going to go have it," and then I was emotionally eating the whole thing because I was so afraid I wouldn't get to get it again.

Katrina Ubell: Right. And total scarcity around it. Yeah, totally. Totally. Totally. Oh, my gosh, it's so good.

Kathryn Ray: But your podcast, there was one in the podcast that you did around choosing something, and I think it had to do with the cookie in the lunch room. And you said, "If you really want a cookie, go get the good cookie from the bakery, not the one that's been in there for two days and choose to have it tomorrow." So I told myself that for weeks on end. "If I really want this, I'll have it tomorrow. If I really want this, I'll have it tomorrow," until I stopped remembering to say, "I'll have it tomorrow," because it didn't come up again.

Katrina Ubell: It didn't come up, exactly. Exactly. It's like, "Today I'm not going to have it, but tomorrow if I really want it I can have it." And then tomorrow never comes. It's a good little tool. Yeah, I talked about that one. I remember that. That's a tool that AA uses, Alcoholics Anonymous uses. It's like, "I'm not going to have a drink today, but I may have one tomorrow." And that is how people stay abstinent for a long time. I'm like, "There's no reason we can't use that same tool."

Kathryn Ray: Exactly.

Katrina Ubell: "I'm not having a cookie today but I could have it tomorrow." Yeah, that was so good. So good. So besides totally transforming your body and your relationship with food, talk to me about some of the other areas of your life that have been influenced by all this work.

Kathryn Ray: I've always had a stranger, imposter syndrome with regards to who I am at work versus who I am outside of my doctor identity. So a lot of it has been in strengthening who I am outside of my doctor identity so that the two of us are one in the same, instead of here I am wearing my lab coat or chairing a meeting and here I am at home not knowing how I'm going to go date somebody. And not wanting to necessarily wear the lab coat while I'm dating.

Katrina Ubell: Right. Figuring out who is the person who is both of those people, right?

Kathryn Ray: Correct. So a lot of my work has been putting those two pieces together so that I'm one identity instead of at work I'm this person and at home I'm another. But even at work, I've always migrated weirdly to, and I say weirdly because I avoid speaking in public so often, weirdly to being a leader, and I am the chair of my department and I've been on lots of committees and even felt funny chairing those meetings for a while, thinking, "Why am I the one leading this meeting? There are so many other people who could lead this meeting, but I am the one doing it because I am the one doing it." And it seems to be working or they wouldn't be voting me into the office anymore. So I'll keep doing it until I decide that I don't want to do it anymore, and then it'll be somebody else's turn.

Katrina Ubell: It'll be someone else, yeah. But I love that because, yeah, you're just going in there and you're like, "I have something to contribute and I'm just going to be me while I'm doing it," versus like, "It has to be perfect and I have to have all the," whatever your brain tells you you have to have to be a good leader.

Kathryn Ray: And there have been so many times during COVID that I didn't have the agenda figured out until the last minute. And now trying to learn to run a Zoom meeting that I've never had to do before. I'm like, "Whatever. It happens, it happens, it doesn't happen, it doesn't happen."

Katrina Ubell: Right. But don't you think that that's because you have so much more compassion for yourself?

Kathryn Ray: Yes, very much so.

Katrina Ubell: Because when you're so hard on yourself thinking that that's going to make you do better, it doesn't. It stresses you out so much that you're like, "Screw this, I can't even take this anymore." Having to do something new or deal with leading people during a pandemic, all of those things, and yeah, it's been so fun to see you really grow throughout this whole process. It's been so, so cool. Now, what I find with so many people who have 100 or more pounds to lose is that the identity shift that they have is related to this identity of being really an overweight person, obese person, and then trying to figure out who they are as someone who is of a normal weight. Can you speak to that some? Talk about your transition.

Kathryn Ray: I'm still figuring out my identity of who I am now, because the last time I even remotely weighed close to what I weigh now would have been over 25 years ago.

Katrina Ubell: So when you think about that, you're like, "I don't know who I am when I—"

Kathryn Ray: Yeah, my identity of who I am is 25 years ago, which is not who I am age-wise or career-wise today. So in fact, I was out with girlfriends this weekend on a girlfriend weekend and we were shopping around, window shopping and, "Oh, look at that, look at that." And one of my girlfriends said, "But that's not who you are anymore. That was who you were 25 years ago when you could fit into that. You couldn't fit into that now but you can fit into so many other things. Let's figure out who you are now and buy clothes that match who you are now." So, and it—

Katrina Ubell: So you really are creating a new version of yourself. And we talk about that anyway, but I think it's different when you're like, "Oh, I have 25 pounds to lose." It's noticeable to you on your body, but I think identity shift is definitely less of like, "No, but who am I?" Yeah, go ahead.

Kathryn Ray: The biggest challenge for me is that a lot of the clothing that I wore and wear is stretchable clothing. It fits different sizes. I still have clothes in my closet from when I joined the program, and I need to clean out my closet because some of them are now so big there's no way I can wear them in public because they don't fit and way too big. But there are still clothes that I have worn throughout this because now I think, "Wow, they must've really been tight on me then. And they're a little loose on me now," but so I'm going through all of these mindsets of, how do I work through this? So I've set on my plan, I'm off this week, what I'm actually going to do, and one of my projects is to clean out my closet, because I have no idea what in there fits and what doesn't anymore.

Katrina Ubell: Right, exactly. I think for some people that can be a big emotional thing.

Kathryn Ray: It's challenging.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. For some people it's really fun, but it's also letting go of what's almost like a security blanket.

Kathryn Ray: No, it's been a challenge. That's me.

Katrina Ubell: It's like, "But what if I gained?" Working on believing like this is the last time. You're not going to gain it all back. You don't have to keep those clothes just in case.

Kathryn Ray: And that's exactly it. That's probably why I haven't really cleaned it out, because I never fully believed that this was going to last, but it's been two years almost. January will be two years. I've never done anything this long before and it's worked this long before, and kept working. And although I have about 45 pounds left to go, they will come off at some point. I'm not sure I'll stay at that weight because I'm happy

Katrina Ubell: You're just going to decide. That's why I always say, I always I don't care what you weigh. I just want you to have done the work to get there so that you then are truly choosing your weight. Not going, "Well, I'd love to weigh less but it's not possible for me." You know what's possible for you, and then you go, "You know what? That is possible. And I don't want to be that thin. I want to be whatever weight." And what I love about that is that so many of us have this connection to our brains that thinner equals better. Right? "If I could just lose five more pounds," We go to our, "If I could just lose five more pounds, five more pounds, then it would be better."

Kathryn Ray: Then it would be better.

Katrina Ubell: "Then it's going to be better, then I'll find the man of my dreams, then I'll finally get that promotion. Then my kids will respect me." Whatever. I mean, we know logically it doesn't make sense, but this allows you to get to that place and then go, "You know what? It actually means nothing. There's no association there at all. And okay, so if that's the case, then what size do I want my body to be? What size do I feel best in?" And then you choose that and then that's that, and that's what you maintain.

Kathryn Ray: Yeah. And I think the biggest issue for me was just loving myself enough to know that I can do this. And that was probably the hardest thing for me to learn was to learn that the choices that I was making when I did not eat on my plan or when I used something else to buffer what was going on were all choices that were being made to protect me, but weren't necessarily being made in my best interest. That primitive brain was really hanging on tight to a lot of habits that I'm trying to break free of.

Katrina Ubell: Right. I mean, what I love is also your level of commitment to just continuing on. And I think when you have 100 or more pounds to lose, it's not something that you're going to solve probably in six months. Right? Unless you go in and learn everything you can. But as you said, then you lose more weight, then there's new layers of work to be done. And so just being willing to go all in on yourself on this process of like, "I'm getting results, I'm going to keep going." It doesn't have to be this end point of like, "If I don't have it done by this time, then screw it."

Kathryn Ray: I don't think there is an end point. And I think there's something to be said, before I started this program I don't know that I really understood what a coach was and what life coaching did. But there's something to be said for, you can self coach yourself to a certain point, but you're not as able, I don't feel that I'm as able to be objective about what I'm saying and what I'm writing down, and someone else hearing it can give you an insight that sends your thoughts into another path to say, "Well, what if I did this? Well, what if I did this?"

I mean, part of my issue with talking like this is I've never liked the sound of my own voice. So to listen back to a recording of myself never happens. But somebody else, when I voiced it on our WhatsApp group said, "Oh, my gosh, I've never thought that about you." And I thought, "Wow, somebody has a completely different thought about me than I did. I could adopt a new thought. I wonder what that new thought would be."

Katrina Ubell: Yes. And it's like we think it's a fact that our voice sounds a certain way. And I completely agree with you. I mean, still to this day, I'll have someone, a coach of mine, whoever, someone point out that something's a thought. And I'm like, "I had no idea. Oh, my gosh." Sometimes you're so in it you can't even see it. It's like someone I know was saying, it's like you can't read the label from inside the bottle. You need someone to just be like, "This is what's actually going on in there." You're like, "Oh, my gosh, thank you for telling me. I didn't know." That's so good.

Kathryn Ray: And I think the most recent thing that I have changed is coaching calls. I used to make the ones I could make and listen to the rest, and with the onset of our new EMR, I had to change my schedule around. This program has gotten me through losing a partner who decided to move out of state, hiring a doctor, losing a doctor through COVID, being the only one doing deliveries in my practice and trying to figure out how I was going to make that work without killing me, and realizing that I was the one choosing how hard I had to work, and I was the one deciding what was going on with that. So I actually went to my head people who were making my schedule and said, "Here's the list of coaching calls I would like to be listening to. Please block my schedule so that I'm not seeing patients during this time so I can now make my coaching calls."

Because I had probably before that made maybe 40% of the coaching calls live, just because most of them are in the middle of my day. And unless I take a lunch break or stop patients at that time, or I'm off, it's not going to happen. So the nighttime ones were a lot easier to make, but the daytime ones were not. So that was big for me, to make that decision and say, "I'm owning this, and if I want this, then I need to make a decision. I can stay an hour later and see patients, but is it-"

Katrina Ubell: Is it prioritizing yourself enough to do that? And what we offer in the program, the reason we do it during the day, we're always striving like, "Well, we'll offer some here, offer some here, and some here, and some here, and hopefully people can find something," but I will tell you that over the years, what I've noticed is the people who really just decide, like you said, like they're just like, "Oh, this isn't just like, 'Oh, I hope I can get to some of these.'" They're like, "Okay, I'm going to look at my... We're making this happen. I'm going to make adjustments."

It's sending a message to yourself that this is important. This work for you is important. This isn't just this thing that you're doing on the side. That like if you get some time that opens up, you're going to focus on it. You were like, "No, this is really, really important to me." And being on a live call is always way better than listening to a recording. Recordings are great too. They're totally good, but there's an energy about being on there live which is—

Kathryn Ray: And then you think you tend to, when you're listening to a recording, you will oftentimes do something else in the process because it's the music, it's going on in the background rather than it being the thing you're focusing on. Or at least for me, that's the hard part is, I need to focus on this, I can't be doing something else at the same time to get the most out of it.

Katrina Ubell: So I usually suggest to take notes, because then you are doing something. Like here's what active listening—

Kathryn Ray: Exactly.

Katrina Ubell: Write down what you're getting out of it so that your brain is... Because before we know it, we're like, "I need to send that quick email," and then we're not even really paying attention anymore. Like, "Let me clean up these dishes," or something like that, which is also okay to do I think at times if you need to do that. But yeah, I agree. I think that that makes a huge, huge difference.

So just to finish up our time here together, a lot of people who have 100 or more pounds to lose really just feel like it's over for them. They're too far gone, it's helpless. They've already tried so many things, it didn't work. And many people, I think they resign themselves to just like, "This is who I am or what I'm going to have to deal with my whole life," rather than looking at it like, "I do actually have a choice in the matter." So I would love to hear what message you would have for people who are just thinking like, "It's gotten too bad. I don't even know if this is... Why would this work for me?"

Kathryn Ray: Well, I had given up by the time I heard your podcast, I was just resigned to say, "This is who I'm going to be because it just keeps getting worse and worse and worse," and had injuries that added to the weight loss that compounded everything. Listen for something that resonates. If anything in what I'm saying or what you're saying, or your podcast resonates, then just give it a try. For me, it was learning that I didn't have to put a time limit on it, that even if this takes me four years to get to the other 45 pounds, I'm still growing myself and changing myself.

And I think one of the biggest things for me to learn was to love myself at whatever weight that I am. That was huge, And accept that, okay, I made the choices that got me here, forgive myself for the choice of that I might be judging weren't good, realize that I can do differently. And by forgiving myself for them, give me an opportunity to do something different instead of constantly judging myself for making that choice and feeling like, "Well, I can never get it right, so why even try?" I mean, so one pound at a time, and one meal at a time, and one choice of food at a time.

And even if I chose a food or decided, there are times when it's not completely filling my urge and not completely filling the feelings, the pressure is so great that I will say, "You know what? I'm going to have a handful of almonds right now." That's my one go-to when this gets to be too much. It's the pop-off valve that allows me to pop that steam out just enough to be able to say, "Okay, close the lid again. Now you need to figure out what was really going on," because it was so bad that I couldn't even quiet my mind enough to figure it out at the time. And then I realize that that doesn't happen that often, but there are times it does.

And for a while I judged myself for eating at that point and said, "You're not supposed to do that." So you follow the rules. "You can't possibly do that." Then, "Well, wait a minute." If this is all about what I need and who I am and how my journey goes, then my journey says that right now I needed this. So, and as long as I put the right limits on it so that I'm not bingeing the entire day or saying, "Well, screw that. I just messed up the whole day. I might as well just keep eating," which is what I used to do, then that's the control part that I've taken back. That's the freedom around food that I figured out.

Katrina Ubell: And that's because you offer self-love and compassion, right?

Kathryn Ray: Yeah, but that took time to figure out. And that's what you learn in your program is that these are all your thoughts that give you that love and compassion.

Katrina Ubell: Right, exactly. So how do you love yourself? You think loving thoughts. I know that sounds like, how do I love myself?" I'm like, "Well, you've got to think of who do you love that you have loving thoughts about? You could actually offer that to yourself." I think for so many of us we have been just in this state of self-loathing and beating ourselves up and just thinking that that somehow is going to make us do better. We've been doing that for so long that it just feels like a foreign language practically to learn how to—

Kathryn Ray: And it took me a long time to be able to put the word love on it. I think for a long time, for me, it was not so much loving myself. It was, "I'm important enough to do this now." And then that importance turned into, "I love myself too much to do this anymore." So that was

Katrina Ubell: The importance is like prioritizing yourself, right? You're saying like, "I factor into this equation here."

Kathryn Ray: Correct. Instead of work or this person or this person, and it's now, "I am important enough that I can put myself first to figure this out."

Katrina Ubell: Yeah. Oh, my gosh. That's so good. It's so good. And I just want to tell you that what you've accomplished is amazing and most people don't do it. I just think it's really, really great. I just want to publicly tell you that I'm really proud of you for—

Kathryn Ray: Thank you.

Katrina Ubell: ... sticking with it because it seriously, losing weight, I don't care, even if you want to lose three pounds, doing this work is hard. This is not easy, but this is the work for people who really want to be done. If you want to fool around and lose some weight and gain it back again 12 times, this is not the program for you. But if you really want to get to the bottom of what's going on for you, then this is it. And I just love it when we have clients who just keep coming back who were like, "This is hard and I'm struggling, I'm going to keep on going because I know it's better on the other side." And that's what you're describing here, is really dealing with the reasons why you were overeating in the first place that resulted in a body that was 150 pounds overweight. Not going like, "What snack tips do you have for me?" You know what I mean? That's not going to solve this problem.

Kathryn Ray: "And if I eat these foods, it will work." It's not that. It's all about what... And I don't think long-term works in a program where you say, "These are the only foods you can eat." I've changed up my protocol as far as the foods that I'm allowing in it a couple of times. The plans stay pretty much the same, but the foods that I've allowed into it have changed up a couple of times.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, exactly. And that skill of knowing how to change it up as you go along, based on a million different things. Maybe you just burn out on eating a certain food and you just don't want it anymore. Right? Any of that, knowing how to change that will allow you to keep this up long-term. That's the key.

Kathryn Ray: And I'm still a probably self-proclaimed foodie.

Katrina Ubell: Yeah, you can still like your food. It's okay.

Kathryn Ray: I can still like my food, I can still go to dinners with my girlfriends and still have dinner parties. Some of my joy eats have been when I reached certain points in the program, I decided that I'm going to do a cooking class. So I signed up for an online Zoom cooking class and made something that I really, really, really wanted to eat. And I still like to do those things. So I'm like, "Well, as long as I'm not using them to buffer some other feeling, and as long as I can understand that when I'm done eating, I'm done eating, doesn't matter." The first one I did, I threw it away because I made gnocchi. And I wasn't going to have gnocchi in my house after I was done eating it so it all went in the garbage, and that was a lesson learned on how to throw something away.

Katrina Ubell: Yes, which is a really good lesson. That's so hard for so many of us. I'm telling you, I've worked years on that because of the patterning, the messages that I got growing up about how bad it was to throw away food. I mean, it really took me

And then even like with my children when they were little in the high chair and having all those little bits and I'd be like, "Oh, my gosh, this is so much food." I remember my husband saying, "If you gathered that all up, that would be like a quarter cup of food. It's not that much." I'm like, "Is this too slobbery to keep?" He's like, "Throw it away." And even to this day, my kids will be like, they won't finish something and they'll be like, "What should I do with this?" And it still goes slightly against the grain for me. I'm like, "Oh, just throw it away." I totally pretend, I'm like, Oh, just throw it away. This is just what we do. This is normal." Inside I can still feel that like a little. But no, I am someone who can throw food away. Yes, I am. I can throw that out.

Kathryn Ray: But I actually still put some of it in leftover containers that goes back in my refrigerator. But if I don't eat it the next day then it goes in the garbage.

Katrina Ubell: Then it goes, yeah. Some things we keep, but yes.

Kathryn Ray: That's my workaround. Sometimes it goes directly in the garbage and sometimes it has to go here because I can't mentally make myself throw it away yet.

Katrina Ubell: It's got to have a 24 hour break in the fridge and then it can be thrown. And you know what? Great.

Kathryn Ray: Whatever works.

Katrina Ubell: And if it's something that you want to eat, then you have it and you can eat it later. It's totally fine to do that. Yes. Yes. Oh, my gosh. It is just interesting. You think, who cares? It's like throwing food out, but we were raised with this idea that doing that speaks of your moral character.

Kathryn Ray: Was wasteful.

Katrina Ubell: Are you a good person or a bad person? That's why it feels so difficult to do that. I mean, I think I've talked about this before, but a good friend of mine who was a total foodie who never has had a weight issue a day in her life. And she's like, "I love throwing out food." I'm like, "Okay, that's my new thought. I love throwing out food." Apparently, this is a thought you can have, a belief you can have about throwing out food. Amazing. I wonder why she doesn't have any issues with overeating." So good. Well, Kathryn, this has been delightful. Thank you so much for coming on and sharing your story and all your thoughts about this work. I know it's going to help so many people.

Kathryn Ray: Thank you so much. Just the opportunity to be a part of this program has been so life-changing for me, so thank you. I really appreciate it.