Katrina Ubell: Well, hello there, my friend, welcome to the four year anniversary of this podcast. Can you believe it? In some ways it's like one of those things where it feels like I just started this thing and also I've been doing this for a million years. It's like that combination. I just couldn't believe it for a while there, I was counting and I was like, "Is it three years? No, that doesn't actually mathematically make sense." I'm like, "Oh my gosh, it's been four years." Can you believe it now?

If you are doing the math and you're like, "Hold on a second, that doesn't work out." That's because when I launched in the last week of January, four years ago, I started with three episodes. So typically what people do is they start with a few episodes. So there's more than just the first episode there for the very first listeners of the podcast, some of which might be listening today. So if you were an early adopter, early, early on, thanks for sticking with me for four years, we know each other well at this point, right? And if you're newer, new, newish or somewhere in the middle, then I'm so glad you're here as well.

So what kind of has become a bit of a tradition is that on this last week of January episode, I tend to do an episode talking about lessons that I've learned in the previous year. Now, I would say that the previous year has brought me innumerable lessons in all the ways. And I didn't think that I would dive into all of them. So I picked five that I thought were really, I would say eye openers or things that I maybe already knew, but took it to another level or I understand it so much more deeply now or something like that. And I thought I would share those.

So should we dig in, shall we? I feel like every time there's no one in my house, I have to tell you when I record a podcast, because I'm so excited. And that I have another one of those days today. It feels weird in the best way. And in an hour I have to leave to already start picking kids up. So it's limited here.

Okay. So number one, on the lessons learned in this four year anniversary is that mind management is so important all of the time, but it is all the more important during hard times, for sure. It's like we know this, but we don't really know this. Conceptually, logically, intellectually, it makes complete sense. And then we go through a hard time and we realize, "Oh no, this is where the rubber meets the road. This is where I'm actually tested to really see that my thoughts are creating my experience, that what's happening around me has no meaning until my brain assigns meaning to it.

And what happens so often in the last year was that I didn't want to think any differently that would relieve the pain or negative emotion or discomfort that I was experiencing, yet I also was tired of feeling bad. I think so many of you understand what I'm talking about. It's like when I think about child sex trafficking or genocide, I don't want to think that that's not a problem. I don't want to think something that makes me feel not negative. Right? Makes me feel a positive emotion. I want to have that experience when I think about it, and when there's a pandemic going on and I have beliefs about lots of things pertaining to the pandemic.

And of course I'm seeing what's happening to my clients and all of you, women physicians who I adore and admire and want to serve and want to help in every way I can. Man, oh man. Right? We are buying into those negative emotions. And I think for so many of us, we don't often have that experience. And we really are privileged in that sense that it's not to say our lives are always easy or we don't struggle, but just the day after day after day after day struggle is not something that we are used to experiencing on any kind of regular basis. I think probably for many of us, the times when we mostly have experienced that is around loss. Whether that's a death, whether that's a relationship that is dissolving or some plan that we had that fell through that we deeply deeply desired and we're working hard to create. It's not like people don't struggle all the time, but this just as a collective, everybody going through it at the same time, it was really an experience I hadn't had before.

And what also happened for me was, in 2019, I had been working with a coach, really doing some deep, deep work on myself, my thoughts, my beliefs, and it was amazing. And I was feeling super good. And I was in a super great place. And then the pandemic hit and I was what I call between coaches. I knew I was of course going to be coaching with somebody again soon, I just was waiting to sort of be guided or led to the right thing or to have a problem come up that required me to hire somebody. And so there was a short period of time there where I obviously know how to coach myself, but in really tough times, sometimes we really do have a hard time seeing that our thoughts are thoughts, we think it's just the truth and we need someone else to show us that.

And once I recognized that that was what was going on and I have to say a big thank you to a coaching friend of mine, who I was sharing with, who was like, "I think it might be time you hire somebody." And I was like, "Thank you for saying that to me. Thank you for saying that to me. You're right." But as soon as I got back into coaching, it was like, boom, my mind was set straight again, not to say that I was feeling positive emotion all the time, I wasn't, but I wasn't getting sucked into that vortex of misery and suffering and feeling like there was no light at the end of the tunnel. So my management, I'm telling you it is worth it every single day, no matter what is going on.

Okay. Second lesson learned, when times are hard and people are struggling, it really feels great to be able to help in some way. And I know that there are plenty of doctors who are going to be like, "Yeah, it didn't feel great when I had no PPE. And I felt like I was at risk and I was scared to death that I was going to get sick and die. And yes, I was helping people and they were struggling. It didn't feel great to help." And what I want to offer to you about that is that that is one perception, one way to perceive it. But the other way, or one other way to perceive it is, "Yeah, this is super, super hard.

And if I'm going to be here, I'm going to allow myself to feel good about the fact that I'm helping people, even if what I'm doing is for naught, even if they're dying alone, even if everything I'm trying isn't working, at least I'm here making a contribution and that feels great." And that's just one way to perceive what's going on, one way to look at it.

And what I felt like being the coach was, here was my whole group of people, all my people, everybody having such a hard time. And being able to come in with tools that really could help, and just knowing, you know what, I don't even know, all I need to do is serve. It just felt like I'm contributing positively in the world. And that always feels good. Always feels good to offer some help for somebody, even if they don't receive it, even if it doesn't go the way that we hope it would. I look back on the last year of going, "You know what? I didn't hold anything back. I was ready to serve, ready to help with literally no contract with myself that if I do this then will be the outcome." There was no give and take on that. It was just give, give, give, and selfless giving feels amazing. It really just does. So that's always good to remember. I think it's easy to forget that at times.

Okay. Lesson number three, racial bias and understanding of injustices. These were huge lessons learned for me this year. I would say that on a scale of... Well, I was going to say on a scale of one to 100, I was probably at a half. And now I feel like I'm at maybe a 65, maybe having a range is not useful, so we can just drop that. And that's just the first thing that kind of came to mind. But I feel like my understanding around bias and just what has been happening in the world all around me, that my eyeballs were not able to show me, because my brain didn't even know it was there to look for it.

It's been absolutely exponential. It was obviously very, very sad and horrifying and challenging to be woken up in the way that I was woken up. And so many others were as well. But you know what, that's how it has to go. There were lots of other opportunities that were smoother and nicer and kinder, and we weren't able to open up our eyes. So if this is what had happened, and this is how we have to do it, then let's do it.

I feel like I know so much more about myself. I understand why I respond to things so much better. And I feel like I'm just beginning to understand how people of color who are on the receiving end of these injustices experience their lives on a day-to-day basis. I couldn't ever begin to say that I understand, or that I get it, but I can start to see so many things that I didn't see before. And this topic is so much more top of mind to me, when I think of serving all the women physicians that I work with, especially thinking about those who are non-white and how their experiences may be different and no longer just making assumptions that I understand. And instead of asking questions, and really learning.

So huge lessons learned in the last year on that, for sure. And I know so many of you have had really similar experience. And I don't see this work as being don, I spent six months in a diversity equity inclusion program for small business owners, learned a ton, and I still feel like this is a constantly evolving process for me and I'm all in on it. I'm ready to go like, "Show me all the ways, I want to fix it. I want to do better. Absolutely."

Okay. Lesson number four, this year with politics has been unlike any other that I remember, not to say that I've been someone who has been particularly involved in politics, really that much in my life at all.

But what I learned is how easy it is to "other people," to create a cocoon of comfort around yourself, with your beliefs and your viewpoints and your opinions. And then I learned through The Social Dilemma on Netflix, how the way that we interact with technology reinforces that cocoon. It just shows us more of what we want to see. And it makes us be in our own version of The Truman Show, for those of you that remember that movie, where without even knowing it, we're just being shown things that are in alignment with what we believe. And so when others are acting outside of that, we can't even begin to comprehend why they would be thinking that way. And this goes both ways. This goes absolutely both ways.

And what I was so grateful for this year was all of the work that I've done in previous years around unconditional love for myself and others and acceptance of myself and others. And I really honestly, truly and deeply believe that this work starts with our thoughts about ourselves. When we can accept ourselves, even when we mess up, even when we do the worst of things that we can even imagine, when we can still love ourselves, that is the foundation from which we can then offer grace to others.

Now, what I'm not saying is that you need to agree with them or think that what they're doing is right, or what they believe is right, or that's the direction the country should go, or the world should go, or that the way things have been done in the past, we're okay. We're not agreeing condoning or any of that necessarily, but we aren't continuing to wall ourselves off with this belief that we're right, because we are addicted to our rightness. We are addicted to believing that the way we think about it is the right way. And other people who disagree with us, right? There's something wrong with them. They're not educated. They don't understand, they are having the wool pulled over their eyes. Like this is really truly what we believe. And I feel like the more people are divided, the more I've been trying to bring myself into a centrist role, trying to understand both sides and then asking myself, "But what do I believe? What do I think is the right thing?" And also when I think that thought about X person, X political party, X event, how do I feel?

And anything that brings up hatred discussed for human being or the desire to reject them is something that I explore further, because that is me just going into that place of, if you're not with me, you're against me and me creating more enemies, then I'm becoming part of what's creating the division. What's creating these deeply ingrained, entrenched sides.

So I'm just sharing with you my personal experience. You may have a totally different experience. And if it's working for you, I think that's amazing. Go for it. I love it. If you're super deep on one side and you think that's amazing and you're loving every minute of it, go for it. I'm not saying you have to do it my way at all. But my work, just sharing my experiences and what I've been doing this last year has been to challenge myself, to see the perspective of the other side, to understand or try to understand why they may act, think, feel the way that they do. It's all the model, right? Things are happening that are neutral facts. I have certain thoughts, they have certain thoughts and their thoughts, just like my thoughts, create feelings, which drive actions and results.

And I can tell you that my experience of going through everything, our election in the US and everything that's happened since then, I believe has been less unpleasant. I was going to say more pleasant. I'm like, "It's really unpleasant." But less unpleasant than many others because of my willingness to see other people's opinions and viewpoints and honor them as valid because they get to perceive it however they want to.

Now, when I think they're wrong, right? I think that the way I'm thinking about it is the right way, I don't other them. I don't think like they're just stupid or they just don't get it. I just think they have thoughts and beliefs just like I do.

Another thing that I've thought of is, it's very easy for us in medicine to get on our high horse, right? Like this is what science shows, this is the right thing, except that we know that science is changing what the right thing is all the time. Right? We remember in medical school, them telling us, "The first year, half of what we teach you will no longer be valid by the time you retire." So it's interesting when we get really righteous about like, "No, this is what's right. And anybody who disagrees is wrong and a horrible person and should be outcast." Right? I don't know how much that serves us, rather than going, "Okay, this is the information that we have. This seems to be what's recommended right now. That's of course what we're going to recommend. That's of course what we're going to do." But I then try to think, and remember, it could be that we're wrong. And this helps me to take away or not allow myself to indulge in the anger, toward the people who disagree, who believe that science isn't real. And all the other things that people believe are misinformation and lies and conspiracy theories and things like that.

It reminds me of the man who... I'm sorry, I didn't look up his name before, I just thought of this right now. So I didn't look this up before recording this podcast, but the doctor who discovered the H. pylori bacteria and that it caused acid reflux problems and ulcers. And if I remember the story correctly, he was in, I believe Australia and was absolutely laughed out of the GI conferences. Like the whole field was just like, "You're wrong." And he was like, "I'm not though." And then he actually swallowed the H. pylori himself and showed on himself, the symptoms then treated himself and showed how he improved in order to prove it. That takes some serious guts, right? Some serious, not even really confidence, but just commitment to what you believe is right.

And so I sometimes think to myself, like everybody thought that he was full of it and that he was totally wrong and he turned out to be right. It could be, it is possible that I'm wrong about some things. I don't believe that I am. I've looked at my beliefs and I think I'm still behind them right now. But I like to remind myself, it could be that I'm totally wrong and they're right. And history will tell. The less we make other people, the less we dehumanize them the better. We know this in burnout amongst physicians, once we start dehumanizing our patients, it's a problem, right? We're really getting there, where we're getting some help. And I think that the same thing happens in this political environment. And when we dehumanize them, then we want to run toward the people who seem just like us, who believe the same things that we do. And those are the people we live around, those are the people we talk to. Anybody else who has a differing opinion, we cannot stand to be around them.

So this is just the lesson learned for me, has been, it's really, really great to spend that time, really focusing on accepting yourself so that you can accept others, even when you disagree with them. And that there's lots of different ways to perceive all the events that are happening in the world now and in the future. And what's happened in the past. And I suggest that you rethink what your story is about that, if you don't like how it makes you feel. You can tell by the emotion that you're feeling, if you're filled with rage and you maybe don't want to be filled with rage, there could be another way of telling yourself that story that is still true and believable, but creates a different experience for you, a different emotion.

Okay. And lesson number five, this is in response to a conversation that I had actually with a client. And it is actually something that has come up a few times this year, this last year, personally, for me and for other women that I know and admire. And you know what is interesting is how we, just as humans, we'll put people up on pedestals, maybe that we admire, maybe we like their work, maybe the things that they do have really helped us, maybe we're behind the cause that they do, that they argue for, or that they raise money for or help to fix.

So it's really easy for us to put people up on a pedestal. And what I find is that so many of us talk about supporting women and women's rights and being behind women and all of that. But what I've seen and what I've experienced is that we put people up on a pedestal because nobody's walking around on a pedestal, right? The pedestal is made up in our heads with our thoughts about the person, that when that person bubbles, when they make a misstep, we can be so quick to yank her down by her hair, instead of reaching up to study her, to help her.

It truly is the definition of schadenfreude. If you know that word in German, there's no English word for it, which is why we say the German word for it. And I have been a part of this as well, where you get that little inkling of like, "See, she's not as great as I thought she was." This idea that... And not even saying like, "Oh, look, she's human. I love her even more." This idea where it's just like, "I knew she sucked. She couldn't be that great." And I've had those thoughts about others in the past, and I've experienced those. And I'm not saying that I can't handle it because a 100% I can. And I know how to handle myself with other people's thoughts and emotions. This is more of musings around like, this is more conceptually, how we support and not support each other as women.

And I've been on the receiving end of so many women who did reach up to steady me, to say, "Hey, listen, I'm seeing something here and you need to know about it." Or, "I really appreciate what you did. I totally think what you're doing is amazing. Keep on keeping on. It's amazing." But it really is interesting, the people that come out of the woodwork, they're the equivalent of like the traffic accident gawkers, they're like, "Ooh, someone did something. I'm going to insert myself and add to the discomfort of what's going on. I'm going to let everybody know what I think." Sometimes in the most unkind way.

And I just think about what is it that drives people to do that? And just in exploring it in myself, the times that, and not necessarily that I've contributed verbally or actually written something, but maybe had those thoughts in my head, what it for sure comes down to is what your thoughts are about yourself. Because when you deeply madly love yourself, all the parts of you, parts that are amazing, and you're proud of, and the parts that you wish nobody knew about or hope nobody knows about, when you love and accept every part of yourself, you can see the humanness in others. When you reject any kind of humanity in yourself, right? Making a mistake, doing the thing that you didn't want to do, not supporting yourself, saying you're going to do something and then not doing it, letting yourself down, disappointing yourself. When you cannot tolerate that in yourself, you cannot tolerate it in anybody else either.

So the minute you feel some disappointment about how somebody acted or what they said or what they didn't say or what they did or what they didn't do, you treat them exactly the same way you treat yourself, which is in an incredibly unkind and unsupportive way.

So what I have to report on this is that I've had a lot of eye opening experiences with this. Just seeing how people respond, noticing at times how it's easy to want to kind of join the mob and attack. I think it's always important to come back to yourself, "What do I actually about this? What do I actually believe?" Not, "What does everybody else say and think, and can I agree with them?" Or just going ahead, blindly and agreeing with them, but also thinking about how we support each other as women and how we don't. And how, what we believe about ourselves, how we're great supporters of women, how we sometimes are not actually acting in ways that are a full expression of that belief or that value for ourselves.

And so I think it's great to think about any bosses that you have maybe, or somebody who's in a leadership role around you, or maybe you're involved in some sort of other organization and there's other people who are in some sort of leadership position or other women that you just look up to. The whole cancel culture is like you make one bubble on your pedestal. And not only are we going to rip you down off of that, but we're going to trample you to death. And do we want to be the kind of people that treat people in that way? There are so many amazing people, women in particular, who have so much to offer the world and are deathly afraid of putting themselves out there because of the raff they fear they will get if they make a misstep. And their fear hinges on witnessing other people, putting themselves out there, and then having that experience. I cannot even imagine going through it without having done all of the personal work that I've done over the last many years.

And so I think the more that we do this work for ourselves, the more we're able to put ourselves out there and really be able to contribute and to deal with any kind of backlash or controversy that may come up. But then we can also identify in others. "Hey, you've really got a gift there. You've really got something to offer. You should get out there and do it. And I am behind you all the way." And by saying, "I'm behind you all the way," that doesn't mean I'm a yes person. That doesn't mean I'm going to say yes, and agree with you. And every single thing you do, if you do something that I don't think is right, I'm going to let you know, I'm going to think about it. I'm going to use my brain, but at the same time, I'm not going to pull you down or wish a lack of success or wish failure on you, the way some other people might.

I think it's a really interesting thing to think about. I've been thinking a lot for several months about how women support one another, how women inadvertently and advertently, like on purpose, don't support one another. Why we go to that? I think so much of it is socialization. It's just what we've seen. That's what we think is normal. It's what we see in the media core sound, social media, we see it so much. And so I think we have to actively swim against the stream here, against the flow of the current, which is pulling us in that direction of continuing to tear down people who we think made some sort of mistake.

So how's that for lessons learned? Oh my gosh, I could go on and on. I could tell you so many more. There's so many things that I learned this year, but these seemed like the ones that were the deepest and the biggest, and the ones that might give you something to chew on, something to think about, something to reflect on and something for you to just continue to think about as you go about your day, your week, your month, your year, and thinking about maybe how, what you've learned today and what you've reflected on and thought about, could maybe change the way that you think about yourself, treat yourself, the way you show up in the world and also in the ways that you treat others.

So on that note, we're heading into February already. Can you believe it? We're doing it. We're doing it. We're doing it well. All right my friend, thank you for listening. Thank you for listening to all of my thoughts and what's rattling around in my brain. I tell you, I think for years and years, we're going to be talking about 2020 and all the lessons, everything that came forth. And I know that so much of it was hard earned, but deeply understood. And I think sometimes those are those lessons that really stick with us. The ones where man, it was hard, we really, really struggled, but when we persevered and we came out on the other side, the result was that much sweeter. And there was no way that we were ever going to forget that lesson. And I think that's really true. And I think those are some amazing takeaways from the year that we've just recently completed.

So on that note, I wish you a great rest of your day, rest of your week. And I will talk to you next time.

Take care. Bye-bye.