



# WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Hey there, my friend, how are you today? I'm so glad you are joining me again today and if you're new, then I'm so glad you're here. Welcome., welcome, welcome, this is a great episode to start with for sure. How are you doing? Things seem to be opening up a little or changing, or is it like hope that we're feeling? I'm like, "What is this sense of renewal within my chest?" You may be feeling the same way. We don't know when things are going to change, but there's for sure a light at the end of the tunnel and the light is not an oncoming train. So, that is great news. I hope that you are starting to enjoy springtime, wherever you are in the world. I know it's been getting a lot nicer here in Wisconsin. It's actually been quite a treat for just how warm it's felt and it's been really sunny for a long time. It's made a really big difference for my mental health, that is for sure.

Okay. We're going to talk about experimentation today and we're going to talk about mostly why we're not willing to experiment. Now, experimentation is something that comes up a lot. I've talked about it plenty on this podcast, but I thought I'd dedicate a whole episode on the concept of experimentation and why it's so important. And, I thought we could discuss why you don't want to do it. Most likely, you don't want to do it. And, you may think you want to do it, but when push comes to shove, do you really? We're going to find it.

So, here's the deal with experimentation and why this comes up. So, I bring this up all the time. I don't actually know exactly what's going to work with your body. I don't know exactly how you should eat or what you should do to be able to support your body. But, for sure we can figure that out. That is something that most definitely we can figure out. And, the way we find it out is by trying things, seeing what works, keeping that, finding out what doesn't work, ditching that, and trying some other things. Also known as, experimentation, okay? And really when it comes down to it, this is what you have to do. You have to be willing to try some things, have them not work, especially the first try, to figure out what does work.

Now on a rational level, on a nondramatic, very logical level, of course this makes sense to us. Of course, we understand, yes, absolutely, you have to experiment. I mean, think about all of the medical illnesses and chronic conditions that we have to implement experimentation with, right? We make a very highly educated guess as to what we think would be a good treatment plan for somebody, then we try it, we see what happens, we get some feedback on what happens and what the results are, and then we adjust things. We make changes. We find out how it's going for the patient. And then, we keep optimizing. We keep working to make it better until we find the exact right protocol for that individual patient.

So, we're all on board with that, but when it comes to losing weight, we're like, "What? Oh my God." Right? You're freaking out, "It didn't work. I knew this wasn't going to work." There's so much more emotion and drama tied up in it, and we're so much more quick to quit. To just say, "Screw it all, forget it. I knew this wasn't going to work anyway. I'm just not going to do this."

So, I was thinking more about what is it with experimentation, and particularly weight loss? What is it with us, why we're so against doing it? Or we're resentful that we have to experiment and like, "Why do we have to be the ones to have to figure it out? And why can't we just know right away? It just shouldn't be like this." Right? We get really, really victimy about it. So, here's why we're not willing to experiment.

Number one, school. All of our schooling teaches us that there's a right way and everything else is wrong, right? And so, if you are a doctor and listening to this, you were a good student. I don't know anybody who became a doctor who, maybe you didn't study that much and you were able to scrape by or something, but you did well in school. That's pretty much a given. We know that that's the case. So, you figured out really easily and early on how to somewhat game the system of school, meaning you figured out how to play the game. You figured out, "Okay, there's a right way to do this, and if I pay attention, they're going to tell me what that right way is. And, if I do exactly what they tell me to do, then I will get good grades. Everyone will be happy. I can feel good about myself. Life is good." Right?

And, we figured out pretty quickly just by paying attention, when you don't do it the way they tell you to do it, that's considered wrong. You won't get as good of a grade, people will be concerned. Maybe you saw it in other kids and you didn't have that experience personally yourself. But, especially for someone who likes validation from others, likes for other people to give you accolades and to just make you feel good about yourself because of telling you nice things about yourself, then school was it, right there, right? So, we went in on the first day, we got the syllabus, we found out, "Okay, how am I going to be graded? What are all the points coming from? Is there a way to get extra credit?" We were like, "Tell me all the ways to do well in this class, and then I'm just going to go do those." There was not a lot of experimentation here, right? It was pretty much, "Do these things, do it the way we tell you to, and you will get the result you want," which is the good grade.

Experimenting in school is not particularly promoted or encouraged. Even when you're doing an actual experiment in chemistry lab or something like that, right? You know what kind of result you're trying to create. There's a hypothesis, but you already know what the answer is. You're not actually hypothesizing like, "I have no idea what I'm going to find out." You're like, "No, this is a hypothesis to show that what we already know to be true is actually true. I can show that too." And then, they even tell us exactly how to write up the lab report and how to do all of the things so we get all the points so we can get that good grade.

So, the fact that we excelled in the modern day schooling environment makes us unwilling, or less willing, to experiment because it feels awkward. It feels unusual. We don't like the fact that we don't know what the right way is versus the wrong way, and we just reject that. We think, "No, but up until now, there's always been a right way. I need to go find what that is." And, I'll get more into that in a second.

The second reason we are not willing to experiment is because society at large teaches us, from so many places that I can't even begin to list them, that we, especially women, cannot trust ourselves or our bodies. They are not trustworthy, right? Because, if we trust ourselves, we think then we'll just eat all of the food and we'll just blow up and gain all the weight. These are messages that we've been sent. You can't trust yourself to know how to eat or how to support your body, and you can't trust your body to give you messages that you can trust, right? Whatever your body's telling you, with its cravings and urges and whatever, it's obviously broken and wrong and screwed up. So, therefore you cannot trust yourself or your body to know what you should do.

Therefore, if that is the case- which we are indoctrinated in, I just want to let you know, most likely this was not a decision that you made, this was just like the soup that you grew up swimming in, and this is just how it is and the messages that we were all sent and accepted from very early age.

So, if that is what we believe, that we can't trust ourselves and we can't trust our bodies, then course we have to search out the expert who does know the right way to do it, right? School teaches us that there's a right way, society teaches us that we don't know what the right way is, and so then we try to find an expert who will know the right way.

So, this is the weight loss and fitness industry right here. A whole bunch of experts who claim to know the right way. So, experts lay out what they believe to be the right way, and there's, I mean, countless numbers of people who will argue up and down, right, and left till they're blue in the face, that their way is the right way, that you have to do it this way, and if you don't do it that way, you'll never have success.

So, they're all telling you what you need to be doing. But, what happens when you do their quote unquote "right way", right? You do it the way they say, and you don't have the success that you want. You're not thinking like, "Oh, that expert isn't the right expert." You're thinking something's wrong with you. Because the expert said, "Hey, if you do this, you're going to get these results." And when you don't get the results, you're like, "Clearly I'm the one who's wrong." And then what we do, after we get over feeling bad about ourselves about it, is we go and find a new expert and we just repeat the cycle again, and again. I know I did this so often, except I kept going back to the same expert. I just kept going back to Weight Watchers time and again, "Maybe this time I'll get it through my thick skull." As though I were the problem, not their plan.

Now, I'm not saying that Weight Watchers doesn't work for people, because there's a small subset of people that it does work for and that's amazing. If that's you, I would be surprised because you probably wouldn't be listening to those podcasts. But, in case you're just absolutely loving it and you can't wait to count points for the rest of your life and it totally works for you and it's easy and amazing and it's just the joy and delight of your life, I'm all in. It's amazing. But, what I did was I said, "Hey, expert, Weight Watchers, tell me how to do this." I did it, and then I couldn't do it longterm, and then I just came back going, "Let me try it again. Let me keep trying again." Whereas other people will just skip from expert, to expert, to expert, to expert, which I did plenty of as well.

And we wonder why we're not successful, right? We're like, "Clearly something's wrong with me. I can't trust myself. I can't trust my body." And, we're building evidence for that because when we try to do what the experts tell us is the right way to do it, we don't have success, right? We're clearly failing, but we have this dissonance because we're like, "No, but I'm an A student, so how come I keep failing at this? Certainly something is wrong with me, really seriously wrong with me."

So, here's the other thing. Because of school, right, we do not like getting the F. We do not like finding out what our shortcomings are. We like to know how to get the A and how to get it right the first time, be the A student and get all the congratulations and accolades for being so skillful and so smart and so accomplished. With weight loss experimentation, you have to be willing to get it wrong, possibly again and again and again.

And, what I mean by that is, even if you figure out how to lose the weight pretty quickly, there's going to be other things you'll probably get wrong. You'll probably try to maintain in a certain way, and you'll be like, "This worked for a while and now it's not anymore, so now I've got to make a change again." I think what so many of us want is just to figure it out on the first try and have that work until we die. For decades and decades after, we never want to think about it ever again because we're so against having to sort ourselves out, having to get it wrong, having to experiment and try new things. We just think that it's such an uncomfortable experience, it has to be all or nothing. Either we figure it all out completely and never have a thought about food ever again, or, "Screw all of it, I'm a hopeless cause, and it's just never going to work for me, and I might as well just go dive right into the ice cream right now head first, swim around in the tub."

So, I would like to invite you to reconsider the way you approach the idea of experimentation with weight loss. Because, so much of our resistance to experimentation is because of the drama that we have around it. The victim mentality that we have, possibly even that martyr attitude, like, "Oh, okay. I'll just have to be the one who has to experiment. It's all very sad." Right? And, it makes the whole experience so much worse, so much slower, so much more uncomfortable. When we take the drama out of it, and we actually question the idea that we can't trust ourselves in our bodies, we start to create a new relationship with our bodies, or actually, I would say, uncover the relationship that we've always had because PS, we were born with that relationship, we just destroy the relationship at some point along the line between birth and now. So, your body always knew how to do it. You just have to reconnect to how to do it.

So, you have to change these thoughts that you have about yourself, that you can't trust yourself, that you can't trust your body. You take the drama out of it, and you learn to trust that you can figure it out. And, maybe right now with your hormones jacked up and you're eating a bunch of stuff that totally makes your body go crazy, maybe you can't really trust the messages that it's sending you right now. But, you can figure out how to adjust things so that your body becomes a body that you can trust. It's totally possible, I do that with my clients all of the time. You have to be willing to try things, have them not work, and try again.

I find so interesting about the reluctance to do this is, when you think of anything, do you think that they just created the first iPhone just on the first shot? Or the microchip, or the light bulb, or any invention generally isn't... I would venture to say that there was no meaningful big invention that really changed life for people that was just figured out on the first try.

So, we know that this is how this works. We are trying things and constantly optimizing, making it better, making it better, finding things that don't work, and then experimenting with something else until we figure out the specific combination of things that work for us individually. We know this makes sense, the way you get to be open to actually doing it is by taking away the drama. Noticing how your brain makes it a very sad experience, or feels very sorry about it, or it tells you that you won't be able to do it, that that's totally possible for other people, but it's not possible for you because, well look at all the times that you've tried to lose weight and you haven't been successful, right?

That whole narrative, that whole story, if you were to just hit the mute button on that, then you'd just be like, "You know what? Hmm. If I really just think clearly about what's going on, maybe it would be good to actually eat lunch instead of just scrounging whatever's available. Maybe I could actually plan a decent lunch, see how I feel with that. I could try that, could be something I could do." And then go and do it, right? It's going to be way more obvious to you than you think once you hit the mute button on the drama in your brain, for sure.

Now I will say, if you want to figure it out faster, it can totally be helpful to work with a guide who's an expert in helping people figure it out. That's the way I look at myself. I'm the expert in helping you to figure it out. I don't know what you should do. I have no idea what's going to work for you, and neither does anyone else, in case you were wondering. But, I can assist you in helping you to figure it out for sure.

So, if you want some help doing that, that's amazing, that's what I personally would do, because I'd be like, "Let's just get the show on the road." But, you still have to be willing to be an active participant. You cannot just expect to be handed a plan or handed a way of working out and then just have that work for you without needing to put any more effort into it, right?

The other thing I want to point out is that you don't need to lose weight. I just want to let you know that. I think so often we shame ourselves into thinking we're not acceptable overweight, and the only way we can become acceptable human beings is to lose weight, but we don't really want to lose weight. And so then, we have a lot of shenanigans, a lot of self sabotage, and we ended up not gaining weight, which is what we want in the first place. We didn't actually want to lose weight. So, just get really honest with yourself. Do you really want to lose weight? Because, if it's important to you to lose weight, then you won't quit at this process. You'll decide, "You know what? I'm going to keep going, because this is important to me, and I want to sort this out. I really want to figure this out."

If it's not important to you, then that is okay. Maybe it will be important to you at some point in your life, maybe it won't, and it's completely fine for you to never lose weight. If you don't want to, it's not the right fit for you. You don't have to do anything, but it's available to you, if you decide that you want to. And, when you decide that you want to, instead of looking at it like this horrible looming task, you can just look at it like, "I'm just going to try something and see what happens, and I'm not going to quit after a day and a half, when things just get hard a little bit, I'm going to keep going for as long as I said." I suggest at least two to three weeks of trying something before you decide to change your mind about something. I mean, of course, unless it's really a disaster and just really not working, then of course, you're going to think about that and recalibrate a little bit, experiment with something else. But, what you need to do is just take away the drama.

Now, how do you do that? How do you hit the mute button on the drama? So, you have to recognize that it's drama, is the first thing. That it's not the truth. That, that very sad story that you tell yourself is just that, it's just a story. It's literally imaginary, it's just made up. And if that's the case, could you maybe allow yourself to hit the delete button on that one and just go, "Okay, well, if I'm being logical about this, what do I think the next step is going to be? When I think about this next step, how do I feel in my body?" Is my body like, "Yeah, that seems good." Is my body like, "Uh, no. You know that's not going to work." Now, this is a skill that you have to learn to develop. Some people are very intuitive and they're very connected to their bodies right away and always, but a lot of us are not, I certainly was not. This was something that I had to learn. Again, something I can totally help you with.

But, you have to be a willing participant to try things out and work with yourself and with your body to sort out what is the right way. Experimentation is the only way. Anyone who has accomplished longterm weight loss will tell you it wasn't just one thing. There is always going to be some other things, some little tweaks, some a little accommodation, some something, maybe huge accommodations, maybe big tweaks, maybe big, big changes, as you go about finding out what works perfectly for you. I think it's easier for us to think, "Well we all have human bodies and we all have human body physiology." But, we all also know that our bodies respond to things differently. We're not the same, we just aren't. And, the way that our bodies experience different ways of losing weight are different.

Some people, they feel amazing when they're eating low carb. I have tried it, it is not for me. My body is just like, "This is a no." I've actually tried it several times. It's like, "No, I said. No. You didn't listen the first time or the first several times, I'm telling you it's a no." It just doesn't feel good to me, for other people it's amazing. Our bodies are not all the same. We have to figure that out. And like I said, if you would like some assistance in taking the drama out of it, sometimes it's nice to have somebody to be able to talk to about it, run ideas by, what can we do, and then of course, getting coaching on the drama that keeps trying to come up and your relationship with yourself, which of course is just paramount in figuring out how to lose weight and keep it off. Of course, it can make sense to work with a coach like me or someone else to be able to do that.

But ultimately, regardless if you're doing it on your own or with a coach, you have to be willing to experiment. You just do. So, if you still are feeling reluctant, I would just encourage you to spend some time thinking about maybe writing out what your thoughts are about experimenting. Why do you not want to experiment? I would just start with, "The reason I don't want to experiment as I go through the process of losing weight is because..." And then, just write and write and write. What are all the reasons? Just get a sense of what that resistance is coming from. What are the actual objections that your brain has to it, so that you can look at them. I promise you probably half of them won't even really make sense when you look at them. That's our brains. We got to love them. And then, other is you can look at it and be like, "Yeah, okay. I see what you're saying, but how can I experiment and still work with that? Still find a solution for that?" This is how we move forward. We can't just keep holding ourselves back by thinking that it has to be this one certain way, or it's not possible for us. The way to make it possible is to keep going, keep experimenting, not quit, until you figure out what the solution is for you, okay? This is how we do it, friends.

All right, my friend, thank you so much for joining me. Have a wonderful rest of your week and I'll catch you next time. Take care.