



# WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Welcome, my friend, I'm so glad you are here today. If you are a long time listener, then welcome back. I'm so glad that you're here today. If you're new to the podcast or new-ish, newer to the podcast, then I'm so glad you're here as well. I want to welcome you and just let you know that you're in the right place. I've got you covered. We're going to talk about some good stuff today when it comes to weight loss.

Okay. So what I want to talk about today is purposeful adversity and how that is an important thing when it comes to weight loss. So, I just want to preface this and start off by saying that this is a topic that is steeped in privilege. There are tons and tons of people. In fact, we could probably say the majority of the humans on earth don't need to put themselves into adverse circumstances on purpose, right? They've already experienced a lot of adversity day-to-day and that's just their reality. And so that is not who I'm talking about today. Who I'm talking about today are people who have a really nice life who, sure we have our ups and downs and we have our struggles, but for the most part, we've really got a great life. And how sometimes we end up allowing that great life to shrink and get smaller and more protective and we start to try to avoid any opportunity that creates adversity for us.

We don't like confrontation. We just want everyone to be happy. We just kind of stuff down our emotions. We just want everything to be even, and happy and good all the time. And that is such a noble and pure pursuit. It is something that comes very naturally for us. And of course, it makes sense, right? We are wired to want to avoid pain and pursue ease, right? Just have things be really pleasant and easy and nice for ourselves. And I am not saying that you shouldn't enjoy that. Of course, you should enjoy that. But I do think there's times when purposefully creating adversity in your life is exactly what you need. So, let me just mention where this came from. So, my oldest son is 15 years old and he has twice now participated in an Outward Bound course. If you're familiar with Outward Bound, it's been around for over 30 years. It's a program that is... Some people call it camp. It's really not camp because camp makes it sound like it's fun.

So they really call it a course. And there's actually courses for adults, many of them. And there are some really long courses that are like a month or longer. They even have done gap year programs. They do all kinds of different things, but I think you have to be... How old do you have to be to start? I think you have to be 12. And so, my son started first being interested in it when he was 11, and I remember we had to wait until he was 12.

So he did a course the summer he was 12, a course the summer he was 13. Then last summer when he was 14, he was signed up for a course. Obviously, it was canceled because of COVID. And then now he has signed up for another one for this summer of 2021.

And so what happened? So, basically what these are, is they're basically personal development programs using difficult nature environments. So, let's just say, so there's all kinds of different things that you can do. There's sailing, there's mountaineering, there's hiking, there's hiking the Appalachian Trail or Appalachian Trail, depending on where you live and how you pronounce it. I know they actually have many international options as well. They have whitewater rafting, all kinds of different things. And it's a really, really cool program. And one of the main points of it is putting people in this case, teens into an adverse situation. A situation filled with adversity in order to challenge them to grow.

One thing I love is they really work on leadership skills, but they also work on followership skills. I think sometimes we're so focused on leadership that we also have to know how to work in a team and not be in charge all the time. Some of us really do have issues with followership. We don't know how to do that. And so it's just been a really excellent experience for my son and not easy. I'm telling you, the last course that he did, he said during this one part of it, that was particularly challenging and chose it. He decided which one he wanted to do. He said that he was at a point where he was really starting to think like, "Oh my God, why? Why did I choose this? Why did I choose this course? It's so hard." But of course at the end, he's just so elated by what he's been able to do.

So, what came up is that the course that he chose is actually really, really close to where my brother lives. My brother has a son who is a year older. And we don't see them that often. Obviously, we haven't seen them now in quite some time. And so just kind of on a whim, I reached out to my brother and was like, "Hey, my son's doing this course, it's like right by you guys. Would your son be interested in maybe doing it?" And just no expectations and stuff, and he was like, "Oh, maybe let's talk about it." So, we were talking about it and I was saying to him like, "Listen, our kids really lead a really nice life. And so what we have to do is create adversity on purpose for them." Now, like I said, this is totally a privileged thing. There are so many teens that have so much adversity already that they do not need this.

And so, I just want to recognize that that's the case, but also just recognize that it's not the case for all kids. And so, living a life that's very easy that comes easily, that you can do whatever you want and your family has the money to support you. And you have all these opportunities and the door is open for you. That's great to a point. What ends up often happening for kids that have too easy of a childhood, is that they get into adulthood and they're extremely upset by what it's like to be an adult. They're like, "Why is this hard? Things have always come so easily for me." And then they can really struggle in adulthood.

So, my personal opinion, and you don't have to share it. That's totally fine, but my personal opinion for someone like my children, people like my children who really do have a really nice, easy life in general, not that they're not expected to help out at home and obviously they're expected to do their schoolwork and things like that, but there's still just not... It's a really nice life for them.

So, I just look at it like we have to put them into positions where there is adversity to help them to grow, to build resilience. Because that's what you really need when you get out into adulthood.

And so, we were talking about it more and my brother was saying, the one thing that his son was a little bit nervous about was what they call the solo. And depending where you are, it depends on the group. It depends on the maturity of the group. It depends on a lot of different factors, but regardless of those factors, there's always a part of a course that's called the solo. And what that means is that the kids are basically put in a place where they're alone and for how long, it really depends. I think my son said his first one when he was 12, I think he said it was like four hours. And then when he was 13, it was like six or eight hours, something like that.

And so obviously they give them water and they give them food to eat. They don't give them too much to do. I think the last one he did, he had to write us a letter. I know he had some paper where he could sketch or he could write or journal, but the point is to be with yourself. And so it was interesting how my brother was saying that his son was concerned about that. Sometimes for some courses they'll even go overnight by themselves. Now, they're within like an emergency whistle length away from the people who are leading, the adults who are with them and they're checked on regularly. So, my son's like, "Listen, it is not a big deal." But I could see how someone would be concerned about that for sure. But I was saying like that solo is also part of the adversity, right? Like how many of us are constantly having some sort of input so that we can be saved from ourselves so that we can avoid the narrative that's in our heads all the time.

Taking away all the input and especially for teenagers, right? Like social media and just like all the other stuff that they have coming at them all the time. You take that all away, it's going to feel uncomfortable. And that's probably a really good thing. It's probably really great for them to spend some time thinking about, reflecting on their experience, thinking about their life, reflecting on what they have coming up for themselves. They probably haven't had that opportunity to just sit and be with themselves and think about what they think possibly ever. So that is that purposeful adversity, even that part of it.

And so, we had that conversation and so since that time, I've been thinking about purposeful adversity and how even just to sign to lose weight is purposeful adversity, because you really could just be like, "Screw it all. I'm just going to eat whatever I want." And to be honest, there'd be nothing wrong with that. What I don't want you to do if you do that though, is constantly tell yourself how the way you look and the way you're eating is bad, right? If you're just going to live your life and not worry about your weight, then please do the work to at least not be beating yourself up over it. To at least be just happy and content with yourself with the way that you are.

So, that's the work that has to be done, whether you're going to lose weight or not. Getting to that place where you can actually be with yourself and be happy with yourself and love yourself. That is adversity for us. The path of least resistance is just to do what you've always been doing, right? Which is just thinking negatively, beating yourself up, playing small, giving to others at your own expense, not taking good care of yourself, not prioritizing what you need, not even being aware of what you need. And then just being mad at people when you don't feel good. It's really something that is good to think about. Like how do I create purposeful adversity?

Having a difficult conversation instead of avoiding it is purposeful adversity. There might not be an actual confrontation, but it's a lot easier to just avoid the conversation or just let the other person have their way or not speak up for yourself. Right?

Purposeful adversity is deciding to start a business as a side gig or get some additional training or put your name in the hat for a leadership position, right? Purposeful adversity often means that you put yourself in a position to be rejected, to be told no, to be not chosen and then having to deal with the consequences of that, the aftermath of that, which is only just what your brain makes it mean about you and then working through those thoughts. So, I think that deciding to work on yourself and your experience of the world and your beliefs and your overall self-sufficiency, right? The belief that you are enough is purposeful adversity. And because the adversary there is yourself, right? You're like, "Okay, listen, I'm not okay with the way that this is. I need to dig in here and actually do the work to change this."

And it's not always going to be easy, right? It's not always going to be something that feels like rainbows and daisies. It's often going to feel like an uphill battle or maybe even like a downhill battle. Like you're backsliding, right? It's like two steps forward, three steps back. Sometimes it feels like that from time to time. We often think with weight loss like, "I just need to find like that magic pill. If someone could just tell me the way that I should eat, then I'll have this problem solved," except I promise you that will not solve the problem. If you try to go the easy way, you will not get the results that you're wanting. If you are willing to purposefully take on adversity, which means actually get to the root of the problem, actually figure out what the issue is for you. Then you're going to be able to make big strides for yourself.

So, when it comes to this Outward Bound course it's like I think of it as like I'm sending my son away on this trip as one version of himself, and he's going to come back a completely different version of himself because of the stress and strain and adversity that he's put in, in these environments. It's important for kids to understand what it's like to struggle. And if we are so lucky and privileged to be in a situation where they don't struggle on a regular basis, then sometimes what we need to do is put them into that. And I think we're in a very similar position, many of us. Now, what we don't often realize, you might be thinking like, "Listen, my job is so bad like there's adversity there every day. Trust me, Katrina. There's purposeful adversity every time I walk in the door."

And that may be the case because I don't know your specific scenario, but I will say that often, what we think is the adversity in our lives is created through our brains. Meaning, we're thinking thoughts that create adversaries out of the people that we work with, right? They're the villain, they're the people that are the problem. "If they could just be different or I could just work somewhere else, if they weren't so annoying, if they could actually run my patients more quickly, then I wouldn't have to be in such a negative state or experiencing this in such a negative way." That is not the adversity that I'm talking about here. That is self-created through the way that you're thinking, through your belief system, through the way that you interpret what other people are doing, right?

When you think everyone you work with is like stupid or dumb, or idiots or any of that kind of stuff, that is created by your mind. I'm talking about the adversity that when you go through, it actually grows you as a human being.

You evolve and become a larger, more fully developed, authentic version of yourself. And by larger, I mean your influence, don't necessarily mean your size although, if that's what needs to happen, that could happen too.

Well, what I mean is that you are coming out of this more connected with who you are as a person, the purpose of you being here on earth, understanding that what you do really matters and makes a difference in the world. That's complete different adversity than, "Every day I go to work where I'm punished and I dread it and it's a slog every day and I should get an award for having to deal with all this nonsense." That's not the adversity that I'm talking about. But the adversity that I am talking about is being willing to see that maybe your work environment is not exactly what you think it is. I don't know, maybe it is really toxic. Maybe it is really, really difficult, but I promise you that most likely the way you're thinking about it is making it even worse for you.

So when you take on the adversity of figuring out what your belief systems are, that are so negative, that are making it so difficult, then you can actually see like, what is this job? And you grow as a person going, "You know what? I'm going to take responsibility for my emotions here. I'm going to take responsibility for my experience of this job. And then from that place, I'm going to decide, do I want to go somewhere else? Is this a good fit for me?" Often, I will tell you, not always, but often what my clients find is that they're like, "You know what? This is actually a great place to work. I had no idea because my brain was just really on fire on all of that."

So, I just want to offer to you that purposeful adversity is really important. We totally did it when we signed up for the medical training, when we went through all of the training. School training, all of it. Purposeful adversity, right and left all day long. When you're past that is very easy to get to a place where all you want is comfort. You just want to feel good and you don't want to put yourself into any kind of purposeful adversity anymore. This is very often what happens as people age. They just don't stretch themselves. They don't challenge themselves. They just want to coast, right? They're like, "I did all of that. I want to have this nice life," except the problem is that most of the time, they're not actually enjoying that life.

There's usually a lot of complaining. There's usually a lot of time spent doing things that aren't actually purposeful or meaningful or making a lasting impression on the world. And that is what actually makes us feel really good about being alive and really good in our own lives. So, personal adversity, that might be you just sitting down to try to do a meditation for 10 minutes, because you're like, "Listen, I don't really like it. I think it's really hard." You're not going to battle with your brain as an adversary, but you are looking at it like, "You know what? I got to work with this thing. Maybe exactly what I need as meditation, so I can learn how to be with myself. I can learn to observe my thinking instead of reacting to it all at the time."

And I'll tell you, purposeful adversity is deciding, "You know what? I'm going to lose this weight. I'm going to join a coaching program. I'm going to do something else in order to figure this out. I'm going to do what it takes to grow myself even when it's a situation that involves adversity, even when I don't understand it immediately, even when I doubt that it's even going to work. That's what I need to double down on myself and continuing to keep going. Because it's through that adversity that I get to grow to be the person who does get the weight off and keeps it off forever. Who becomes someone who can stop emotionally overeating all of the time even when there's a lot of stress and other things going on." That is what I want to offer to you as the solution.

I know it can be a hard sell, but I do also know that when you hear this, there's going to be that little part of you that's going to be like, "Yeah, she's right. Yeah, I know." Right? There's going to be that part of you that's like, "Yeah. All right. I know what you're talking about. That's right. I have been avoiding that." Or, "I've been thinking that I have enough of that. Weight loss shouldn't be difficult as well." And I promise you that when you learn to manage your mind, all of that other stuff becomes so much easier. Okay?

All right, my friend, what are you going to do to create some purposeful adversity? Maybe it's even just like overcoming the resistance that you have to go get out in nature and take a walk or exercise in some way, move your body in some way. You know what that's like, that first time back where you're just like, "Ooh, I don't want to do it." Right? So, the first time back is the hardest time. So, it could be something as simple as that. It could be actually doing that thing that you know you needed to do. Having that conversation, putting in that resignation letter, whatever it is that you know you need to do, just know that adversity is a good thing. The more you do hard things, the easier it becomes to do hard things. You solve your weight problem and then you are like, "Wait, listen, if I could do that, what else can I do?" The sky's the limit. It opens up the possibilities for you. You really truly start to understand how limitless you are, which you are completely limitless.

You can create whatever you want. So let's prove that to yourself by stopping emotional eating, losing the weight and keeping it off forever. Once you know that you have that problem solved, you're like, "Game on. Let's do it."

All right, my friend, have a wonderful rest of your week and I'll talk to you next time.

Take care. Bye-bye.