



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hello there my friend. How are you? I'm so glad to be here talking to you. I kind of feel like, yay, we finally get to talk. I was just thinking to myself, why do I feel that way? And I think it's because I've been thinking about this topic all morning long, all the things I wanna tell you, which I probably will not even get to all of them, but I have some really great stuff for you today and I'm so excited to tell you.

So that's really what it comes down to. I'm like, finally we get to have a conversation, you know, when you've been waiting to see a friend or talk to a friend and you've been just waiting and waiting and you have all these things you wanna tell her. That's kind of how I feel right now. I'm like, yes, we're gonna get to do it. So awesome. So as I'm recording this, spring is in full bloom here.

It's so amazing. I have several crab apple trees in my yard and this happens every single year where they're just like, just on the cusp of popping open all the flowers. So beautiful. And I was just finishing getting ready this morning looking out the window and I was like, oh my gosh, I think, I think it's gonna happen. It's like any minute it's gonna happen.

Of course, we're going away this weekend to see my parents for the first time in 18 months and I'm really excited about that. And I was thinking like, oh no, I hope we don't miss the best days because they really are only in their full glory for like a day or two. It's really not that long. I have a beautiful, beautiful hot pink one on the corner of my house and then on the other corner of the house is a beautiful white one. And then we have a nice one in the back that is actually a gift. It was a gift many years ago from some friends after my daughter died because she died in springtime. And so they thought, how about we get you a tree that flowers in spring every year? And so it's a special tree and everything we do in the back with any landscaping always is preserving that space in that tree.

So just a special time. And I think it's important when we talk about getting pleasure out of life in ways that don't involve food and alcohol. This is just one of those examples where you can get significant pleasure just by looking out of your window if you let yourself, every single time I see the tulips that are up outside, I'm like, oh, they're so pretty. Look how awesome they are. It just helps me to enjoy what's available to me. I, I can also just ignore it. I cannot look out the window, but why not take in that joy, that pleasure and really enjoy it?

So, so great. I also have some other exciting news for you, for those of you who've been with me for a long time, even if you haven't been with me that long, you know that I've been working on doing a bit of an office upgrade for myself by doing a renovation in my home and I'm super, super, super duper close to being ready to go with it. So we're definitely behind schedule, unfortunately as these things go. But there's gonna be some work done today that I think, I mean, unless I'm mistaken, I, I'm, I'm kind of at a point where I'm like, let's just see. We will see, but I, I think by next week I should be able to actually start working from up there. So I can't wait to start doing some live coaching calls from up there and just work. It's gonna be so great to be in a place where I can have some privacy because where I've been working up until this point for the last five years is essentially a closet right in the thick of everything in my house.

Like it's next to the bathroom on our first floor on one side next to our mud room where you come into the house on the other side and across the hall is our laundry room. So it's just real fun. Oh, and we also have a second laundry hookup in our basement because when we did a renovation several years ago in these old houses, the laundry's always just in the basement, just that's how they used to always do it. And I was like, no, I really kind of want laundry up on the first floor. So we kept the hookups in the basement and decided to have a second set of, of washer and dryer down there. So sometimes we've got both washers and dryers running and the, the basement washer and dryer are just right under my feet.

So it's literally like I'm encapsulated in loud and noisy kinds of things and just a lot of hubbub and I just, I cannot, I don't think adequately expressed to you how desperately and how, how excitedly I am looking forward to getting some space to myself where I can really just focus. Sometimes I really amaze myself. I'm like, look what I get done even considering everything that's going on around me. That's pretty amazing, pretty exciting.

So what I wanted to do today was to answer a listener question. So this is from Brittany. Brittany, I'm really excited to be able to answer your question. This is what she wrote. Dr. Ubell, I've been listening to your podcast and I've lost 20 pounds. I can't thank you enough. So great. Right. Congratulations Brittany. I've learned to manage my mind in a lot of ways and reduce emotional eating this, my team actually bolded this for me. They said these last 15 pounds are a struggle. I'm having a hard time coming to terms with the fact that I'm going to have to eat even less than I was before, just to maintain my weight loss. It's hard to believe I will need to curb my eating even more to make the scale budge. My body doesn't need the same amount of food as I did before and it's just weird. I've never eaten this little amount of food in my life, but my body isn't hungry and I feel energetic and nourished, which is good. I would appreciate if you could do a podcast on the last 15 pounds.

Changes you will need to expect to make in your food planning and maybe science behind changing metabolism and needs when you weigh less. Obviously I can't eat the same food I was eating when I was 20 pounds heavier and just starting this journey. Thank you so much. You're amazing. I'm telling all my friends about your podcast kindly Brittany. Okay, Brittany, thank you for sending this in. This is great. I have a lot of thoughts. In fact, as I've been thinking about this, I mean I could probably do a whole series of episodes on this. I was thinking about all the different things I wanted to say and I was like, okay, that's a bit much for one episode, but I'm just gonna today really focus in on a couple things that you mentioned and specifically what you were asking about.

So what I want to talk to you about with the last 10 to 15 pounds. So the first thing I just wanna mention is I don't care what you weigh, and this goes for everybody, not just Brittany. I think a lot of people think that if you help people lose weight, then that means that you think that being thinner is better and that you're not valuable or acceptable until you're thin. And that couldn't be farther from the truth. That's not at all what I believe. It's not what I teach, it's not what I stand for. The purpose of losing the last however many pounds you wanna lose is to actually solve your overeating problem. To stop emotional eating, to create freedom around food, to no longer have food and possibly alcohol be the way that you create a life that's tolerable for you.

You no longer use it kind of joke as like your emotional support animal, right? Like that's what we want to stop doing. So if you stop doing all of that and you are, you know, whatever, maybe at the top of the B M I range or something and you feel great and you're happy with that, amazing, I'm all in. It's just that what I find is when you stop emotional eating, truly stop emotional eating, you usually end up losing more weight than you kind of ever thought you could. That may or may not be what you want. I definitely have clients who lose weight and they're like, you know what? I think this is too thin. I don't wanna stay here.

I've definitely had times where I was like, I think I'm too thin sometimes. I look back at some of the videos that I've done in the last couple years. I'm like, I kind of looked a little, it was a little too much there and I felt good. I never felt bad, but I just personally think that I look better when I'm a little bit more filled out. That's just a personal preference. So we're not putting a value judgment on what you weigh and what's the right amount of pounds or kilograms or whatever that you should weigh. But here's what's really interesting about what Brittany wrote. She tells me that her body's in hungry. She feels energetic and nourished. It's amazing. That's so good. The issue here is that her brain is like danger, danger, danger, flashing red lights. You're not eating very much food. This is certainly bad, right? She says, I've never eaten this little amount of food in my life. My body doesn't need the same amount of food as it did. And it's just weird. Well, it's only weird because you think that eating more is normal. What if the whole time you're 20 pounds heavier and you were eating more food?

That was the abnormal part, right? You're getting the part now where you're actually recognizing, you know what? I actually don't need that much food. The reason why eating less food is a problem is only if you are still hinging too much of the pleasure you wanna get out of life and wanna experience in life onto your food. If you eat your food and then you feel disappointed because you wish you could eat more, there's still more mind work to do. There's still a part of you that's placing an over-emphasis on the importance of food.

Now I always say like, and I decided this many years ago for myself, I just do not eat food that I don't like. Like if it doesn't taste good to me, I do not eat it. I spend, oh my god, I spent decades of my life eating food that I didn't like because it was supposed to help me to get thin. It was supposed to be healthy for me. I just refuse. That's just like a personal boundary that I have. So if you're only eating food and it tastes good to you and you actually pay attention while you eat it and you enjoy it and it's the right amount of food for your body, where's the problem? You've gotten pleasure out of the food, you feel great. It's only a problem when you're like, this is weird. I've never eaten this little like, I'm not sure why it's relevant that you've never eaten this little, it's only relevant 'cause your brain has decided I think something's going wrong here. I think that this is a problem.

So she also wrote, I'm having a hard time coming to terms with the fact that I'm going to have to eat even less than I was before just to maintain my weight loss. This is a really common misconception that I hear from people all the time. We think that it's just kind of this like linear chart, right? When you weigh more, you get to eat more and then the less you weigh, the less you get to eat. I, I don't believe that it has to be that way for you. What you need to do is you need to eat as much food as your body needs, but when you believe that you're gonna have to eat even less, you're just totally in scarcity. You're like, oh my gosh, like I'm totally just not gonna be able to eat, you know, as much as I need. Like you're basically afraid you're not gonna get your needs met, right?

You said it's hard to believe I'll need to curb my eating even more to make the scale budge. I'm not sure that's true. How do you know that it's true that you'll need to curb your eating even more to make the scale budge? Because what you're saying is you need to eat less and what I wanna offer to you is that maybe you need to just change up what you're eating. The point here is that there's this belief behind all of this, this that you're gonna have to suffer to get to maintenance and to continue to maintain. It's going to be really, really hard. It's gonna be really uncomfortable and painful. But also can you help me get there, right? Because we kind of are still like, but I still wanna get to that goal. What I want to make sure that you understand is that what you believe about the process of losing the last 10 to 15 pounds will be what you create as far as your experience. So let me explain this further.

What this means is that when you believe that it's going to be a struggle to lose the last 15 pounds, you will for sure create that experience of it for yourself. The experience of losing those pounds will be a struggle. And if you give up the struggle before you get there, then you will just make that mean. You will just believe that it's not possible for you to have what you want. You can't get to that goal weight, like something certainly is wrong with you. And often we'll then blame the metabolism and our age and it's just not possible. And our bodies are broken and we're weak and we're not disciplined and I wish I just didn't care about food, right? Like the this is, this is the drama that ends up coming into our minds.

What I want to offer to you, and this is really, really important, so everybody listen because it, it's not just if you have 10 pounds to lose or 15 pounds to lose, it's if you have more to lose as well, it is possible for weight loss to be easy. When you believe it will be a struggle, you will subconsciously create obstacles for yourself and create experiences for yourself that will make it a struggle. Because if you believe it has to be a struggle, then it has to be a struggle. You can't have the dissonance of believing it'll be a struggle and then letting it be easy. So your brain will create all kinds of issues for you.

One example of that is things are going really well and then you know you're at a party or you're somewhere and someone offers you some food where normally you wouldn't really care that much about it and all of a sudden you're like, I have to have that. This is my only chance, this is so special. Whatever your thoughts are about it. And then you eat it and then that's a setback for you and it creates more struggle and you start to think, you know what? Maybe I really am weak. Maybe I really can't do this. So you didn't set out consciously to create a struggle for yourself, but when you believe it has to be a struggle, you will subconsciously make it a struggle. That's just how it works. So I'm not saying it will necessarily be quick and easy and fast, but that is available to you. So if you get to choose what your experience is going to be, why not choose to think that it's not gonna be as hard as you think it's gonna be.

So if you can't believe that it's easy, if that just doesn't feel true to you, you might maybe go to some sort of belief that's in the middle that's kind of like, you know what? I don't think this has to be harder than it was to lose the other weight that I've lost. I think that this is just where the rubber meets the road and I really have to dig in 'cause that's really what it is.

Last 10 to 15 pounds is where you find out where you still have work to do like all the work that you've kind of been avoiding or you're basically able to gloss over it and still get results that's still waiting for you and all that the last 10 to 15 pounds do is reveal that to you. It's basically like an opportunity to learn more. Like if you think about losing weight as you know, getting a degree at Harvard, let's just say, right? Those last 10 to 15 pounds, you know it's an intense class possibly, right? In the sense that you're like, okay, I've been avoiding doing this part of the work, I guess I've gotta dig in and I didn't really want to, but I'm gonna do it now.

Yeah, of course it's gonna feel possibly more difficult when you do that, but it doesn't have to be a struggle. You could just be like, I am all in for all of it. It's gonna be hard and that's okay. I don't expect it to be any different and maybe it won't be that hard. And when it's easy, I'm gonna just revel in the fact that it's easy. When I am out and about and experiencing my life and food comes into my awareness or it's offered to me, I can think about it like, okay, what's the easy solution here? The easy solution is just not to eat it. It's definitely more work to eat it. You have to eat it, you've gotta journal it, you've gotta think about it. No, easiest thing is like, yeah, I don't eat that. I just follow my plan. I've already thought about all my food, I don't wanna think about it right now. It's all good. And if you struggle around food, you have to think, okay, do I feel free around food? Is there freedom? Is there peace when I'm around food? If not, that is the work that we have to do.

So that weight loss comes as a result of you doing that work to create freedom around food. The amount of food you get to eat has nothing to do with that. So what I'm offering here is just the permission to just let go of that struggle to just go, you know what? I get to eat as much food as my body needs and I don't have to qualify it with, it's not enough. Or I used to eat more or like, it's gonna be such a little amount of food. What's a little amount of food? I don't even know what that means. It's only relative. It's just in comparison to the amount of food that made your body overweight. So this isn't a little amount of food, this is a normal amount of food it sounds like. And before you were eating so much food you weren't eating before when you were 20 pounds heavier, you weren't like, oh my god, I so much food every day all the time. I can't believe how much food I'm eating. Like you just normalize that. So now in comparison, this seems like a small amount and it really, it's just the right amount and it's not a problem if you make sure to taste your food, get all the pleasure out of it and really enjoy it.

So you asked, Brittany asked changes you'll need to make to your food planning. I don't think you need to make any changes to your food planning except for, you know, if you've gone two to three weeks of following your plan a hundred percent and it's not resulting in weight loss, then you can start looking at, okay, maybe I wanna switch things up. You know, our bodies just wanna go to homeostasis all the time. They're like just trying to figure it out. You know, a lot of people when they lose weight, just keep eating the same things again and again and again. I see this all the time with my clients and they're like, now I'm not losing any weight, but you're eating like basically like the same meal four to seven times a week.

You know, like, okay, well there's nothing wrong with that meal, but it's just not helping your body lose weight anymore. So let's mix it up. Let's try something different. Maybe your body doesn't like, you know, so much dairy anymore, so much yogurt, maybe body doesn't like so many starchy veggies anymore. Let's just mix it up. Let's try some different things. Let's create some variety. But you have to manage your mind because if you're in this panic of like, oh my god, it's gonna be so hard and what am I gonna do? And now I've gotta figure new things out and like, oh, we right, then it's gonna be much less likely to be successful for you.

If instead you're just like, Hey, well you know, this is what I like to think. What's in season right now? What are some other foods that I could bring in to create some variety? Where am I eating things I don't need to be eating? Maybe you need to recalibrate your hunger skill. Maybe you, you know, what got you two plus four before on the hunger scale now is actually more like a plus four and a half and sometimes a plus five because your body is smaller. Like maybe you do need to reduce how much you need to eat, but it's not too little if your body's message is clearly that you've had enough food. So you don't need to qualify it with it's too much or too little or whatever. It's the perfect amount of food for your body.

The other thing I just wanna mention is as Brittany asked, you know, talking about science behind changing metabolism and needs, when you weigh less, I mean it does make sense, right? When you lose weight you have fewer cells that need energy. And so you know that just your metabolic needs can change, but not necessarily like you can increase your metabolism by adding in, by doing some exercise that increases your muscle mass. Like there's lots of different things that you can do to, to improve your metabolism. But here's what I wanna offer to you about metabolism. I think we've been conditioned really honestly, like there, there's this, I mean I can't even, I mean for decades I've heard people talking about their metabolism. I think we've been conditioned to believe that this is this thing that's like outside of us and it's in control of what our weight is gonna be.

And you know, when you get older your metabolism slows and that's why you're gonna gain weight. And it's kind of this thing that's sort of like outside of us that feels like it's out of our control. And I'm not actually totally convinced that thinking about the science around metabolism and you know, bodies is really all that useful for us when we're trying to lose weight, when it comes to science, when it comes to data, we do not want to use that against ourselves. I see this all the time with doctors in particular, but studies show this one study shows this one thing that is a result that they don't want. And I'm just like, why would you even look at that study? We all know that studies can be interpreted tons of different ways. And even the study authors are taking their human brains and doing an analysis, creating a conclusion based on their own experiences. And so many studies are like, more research is needed, right? So our brains will just look for any opportunity to basically ba make us believe that we can't have what we want. And when it comes to metabolism, I just suggest that you just stop thinking about it.

Honestly, like I'm not sure how giving that a lot of airtime is going to be useful for you if you believe that nothing's wrong with your metabolism and that you're able to eat as much food as your body needs and it's the perfect amount for you and you will feel totally satisfied and get all the pleasure you want out of food. And by that I mean a normal amount of pleasure.

That means you're getting pleasure from other things in your life. Then why? I don't know how it's relevant really to think about metabolism that much. I just see it messing with people's heads so much. I, I just don't know how it's useful to even think about that. So what I instead like to believe is that my body has significant innate wisdom. I mean, hopefully all of us listening, everyone listening here can, can get behind that. I mean, it's kind of like, you know, our, a friend of mine just got bees, you know, like honeybees and she was telling me how they create the comb and stuff and I was just like, oh my gosh, that's so fascinating. And I watched this video of how these little worker bees, all these amazing little women, because they're all females, like all these things that they do to, you know, keep the hive healthy and get food for everybody. And it's, it's really, really amazing. And when you look at humans discovering what bees are doing or how they're signaling it, I think somebody even won a Nobel Prize for discovering like the different dances that the bees do to communicate to the other workers in the hive about where food is. Like where's, you know, like if it's this many, you know, miles away or whatever, it's like this kind of a dance and there's other dances and stuff. I mean it's really incredible.

But here's what I like, I like to remember is the bees have been doing this the whole time way before humans knew what they were doing and understood it, it was happening, right? There's just this kind of innate wisdom to nature and our bodies are included in that. Your body knows what it's doing. It doesn't always have to be a problem that you need to solve for. Like you eat the right amount of food and then you just see, maybe you're like, you know what? I don't think I have kind of that much muscle on my body. I think I would like to add some more muscle on for any number of different reasons. And then maybe you'll find, yeah, you know what, I do need to eat more, but you're gonna be more conscious about it and you're gonna offer what your body needs based on its signals. It's gonna tell you what it needs. We don't have to manipulate it all of the time. So I know that that's counterintuitive to a lot what a lot of people say a lot. I mean there's like a million diet books about how to increase your metabolism and eat this way so you can increase your metabolism.

And you know, I'm not saying those don't work, they probably do. My question is, can you follow that for the rest of your life? How much peace around food do you have when you're following that and thinking about that? Is that creating the experience around food that you want? If the answer is yes, amazing, go for it. I'm all in. I completely support you. If not, then maybe thinking about that is not useful for you and I give you permission to just let that not be an issue. It really can be simpler than you think. When you are experiencing weight loss as a struggle, you have to look at what your brain is focusing on. Weight loss itself is a neutral fact that is not creating a struggle.

The struggle is your experience of it, which is created by the way that you think. Okay, super, super, super important. So what I would suggest that you do, Brittany and anybody else who's in a similar position is just say, if I knew that these 15 pounds were off and it was easy, so get yourself to that place in the future. I lost the 15 pounds, I'm at goal and it was totally not as hard as I thought it was. How did I do it? Like literally, just know that you already have the answers. It's totally already happened. How did I do it? To stay in that for a few minutes? I bet you you will get amazing ideas and you'll know exactly what to do from here on out.

So, so much of this work is coming back to that innate wisdom that you already have that you've been conditioned to block out and not listen to. The visual in my head I have right now is, you know when kids like plug their ears and are like, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, I can't hear you. That's kind of what we're doing to our own bodies and our, you know, our own inner wisdom.

We're like, I can't hear you. There's a research study out there that knows better than you. I don't know that that's true. I don't know that that's true. So my invitation to you is to allow your weight loss to be easier than you think that it has to be. Release the struggle, let go of it.

Sometimes I think about it like we're, we're clenching our hands. We're like clinging so tightly to the struggle. Like, just open your fingers, just open it up. Just let it go. This doesn't have to be so hard. And the final thing I'm just gonna say, because this is getting long, is, as you could tell, I could talk about this a long time.

Final thing I'm just gonna say is that if it's really feeling like a struggle, it's because you're in a rush and you're feeling impatient because you think that life is gonna be better. Once you're finally at goal, all that will happen is your body will be 15 pounds or 10 pounds smaller. All that's gonna happen, okay? So this is the last time and you're actually solving for the problem. This time I wanna encourage you to slow yourself down and let it take as long as it needs to take so that you can solve the problem and not just be putting a quick bandaids over it or just solving that problem.

Alright my friend, thank you Brittany, so much for sending in this question. Super, super helpful. I'm sure for so many people you are totally gonna lose those last 15 pounds. I know it. Make sure you let me know when it happens. That's what I have for you today. I am so glad you joined me. Thank you so much for your time, your effort, your energy in listening to this podcast, and I will catch you next week. Take care. Ready to start making progress on your weight loss goals.