



# WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hey there, my friend, how are you doing today? I'm so glad you're joining me today on the podcast. If you are a returning listener, then welcome. I'm so glad to have you back. If you're new, then also welcome. I'm so glad that you're here today. I have a great episode planned for you, and I'm excited to share with you some thoughts about different diet plans. It's going to be great. It's going to be great.

So I actually wanted to talk about this subject. I've been thinking about it for a while. The person who submitted this question submitted it in September of 2020, so this one has been mulling about in my head for a while, and for some reason, I just felt really compelled to answer it now. I don't know really what happened that made it come to the forefront, but that's creativity, I guess, for you. It just has to simmer along on the back burner and then all of a sudden it's ready to go. The sauce is complete.

So this is a question from Areni Mubarak, and she writes, "I think you have some wonderful tips that are very motivational. I'm wondering if you could do a podcast on fad diets and specifically the starch solution and maximum weight loss ideas promoted by Dr. McDougall and other doctors like Dr. Klaper. I've been listening to some of their lectures on YouTube and what they say seems to make a lot of sense, but the ideas they share are not mainstream or what you would commonly think of doing when trying to lose weight. I'm left feeling very confused and would love it if you could share your thoughts on these diets."

Absolutely. So here's the thing, though, I'm not going to get into the details about these specific diets or really any other or specific diets because the way that you approach these is the same, and there's literally a million of them, and it's not really my job to go and pick apart what other people recommend. There's Dr. Gundry who recommends not eating lectins. I mean, there's literally dozens and dozens and dozens of different recommendations. And I think it's more the fact that there are so many recommendations from legitimate doctors, like people who seem to know what they're talking about, that are confusing, that seem kind of on the extreme side, but they have a good argument for why you should do it that way. But then there's conflicting ones that argue that the other way is the best way. And it can get really, really confusing.

I just want to share that I fell victim to this. I don't know if the victim is the right word, but I have experience with this is what I want to say. If you've been listening for a while, you probably know that I have mentioned before that I was vegan for five years and this was when I was in practice.

What ended up actually happening is I was eating, whatever I was eating, probably low fat, like I was supposed to, I thought I was supposed to, or whatever.

And as many of you know, I had a baby that passed away when I was in labor. And so that was obviously devastating. And then six months later, I was pregnant again with my now second son. And so I was thinking, at that time, which is a very, very normal way of thinking after you've had a pregnancy loss, I just didn't want to really believe that he was going to be a take-home baby until I had a take-home baby. It was so painful for me to go through the experience of the loss that I definitely was putting up these barriers and walls between myself and the baby, just in case it didn't work out, just in case lightning struck twice and I had a similar experience or for whatever reason, I lost the pregnancy.

And so what had happened with the baby that I had lost was I had gained 45 pounds telling myself, no problem, I'm totally going to lose the weight. No problem once I have the baby because I'll be breastfeeding. I had done that before with my first child. I had gone back to Weight Watchers. And when you are nursing full time and you're following the Weight Watchers plan, you actually get to eat a pretty decent amount of food. And I thought, oh, I know how to do this. I'll be easy. So I was eating all the M&Ms and just like go into town, having a grand old time, eating tons of donuts, just like no problem. Well, then the baby dies.

And my babies are always small, and so it was always very disappointing how little weight I lost just from the baby and the placenta. I also never got very swollen. So I never had a big diuresis that I could rely on or count on. It was for sure fat. And I'm telling you what, that was so, so hard having a significantly overweight body and no baby to show for it. And so I did everything I could to lose that weight because it was just a constant reminder of the loss. And I did lose that weight but then I promptly got pregnant again. And I thought, no, this time I'm not going to gain so much weight because if this baby doesn't make it, I don't want to have to lose so much weight. So I thought something like 25 pounds or whatever is my recollection, kind of what was recommended is the right amount of weight to gain. So I thought, okay, I'm going to exercise through this and I'm going to try to eat better.

And I don't know, most people when they're in their first trimester of their pregnancy, feel like they can't eat greasy food, they just want healthy stuff. I was the exact opposite. I'm like bring me the onion rings, the greasiest cheeseburger you have, all the ice cream. I don't know, healthy stuff, vegetables, all I wanted to do was puke, even when I just smelled them. It just was like bad food for me is all I wanted. So I was trying to do better and try trying to exercise more. And then I went and had my first ultrasound and I found out that I had placenta previa and I was put on whatever pelvic rest or whatever it was called, so no exercise at all. And I was like, oh crap. So first of all, I was already scared that there was going to be a concern or an issue with this pregnancy but besides that, I was like, well, shoot, now I can't do what I wanted to do as my means of controlling my weight while I'm pregnant.

So I did what anybody does and I went on Amazon and I started looking to see if there were any weight loss books for pregnant women, or not weight loss, I guess that's not really what I was looking for. What I was really looking for was just more weight maintenance or how can you control your weight when you're pregnant kind of a thing. That's really what I was looking for. Because I knew losing weight wasn't recommended when you're pregnant.

And so I was just searching kind of expecting to not really find anything. But then I found this book that's called *Skinny Bitch Bun in the Oven*, and I knew that there was kind of a series of books and some people had talked about *Skinny Bitch* and whatever, and they'd read that book. I didn't really know anything of it. I hadn't looked at it. I didn't know anything about it.

So I look at the description of this book and it basically just talks about how you don't need to gain a ton of weight when you're pregnant and we're going to tell you basically how to control your weight gain while you're pregnant. I was like, oh, my gosh, this is written for me. This is amazing. This is exactly what I need. So I ordered the book, it comes, and I will never forget this, so this was probably in, I don't know, it was in winter time for sure. It was January or February and my husband and I took my son out skiing, and I wasn't going to go skiing because I was pregnant and just extra fearful of everything. I didn't want to do anything that could possibly put the pregnancy at risk, which once you've gone through a loss, that seems very logical to yourself at the time.

And so anyway, so they left for the day and I just cozied up in the chair in the living room and I read that book cover to cover. It was a pretty quick read. And what I did not know about that book was that it was essentially trying to convert you to veganism. I had no idea. I literally had no idea. So I'm reading this book and I'm not going to actually tell you exactly what it said, because I don't want to negatively influence anyone who might be pregnant who's listening to this because it really changed me on a dime. But there was some information that was shared or relayed in that book about certain things that happen to animals, certain animals, especially when they're pregnant or right after they've had their babies, and it literally was just like I was done. I was like, I not eating meat ever again. I will give it all up. I don't care.

Everything they were saying, I think I was just in such a vulnerable state, and I just so desperately didn't want to have to lose all that weight again if the baby didn't make it, that I was like, I'll do whatever, whatever you want, I'll do whatever. So my husband comes home from skiing and I'm like, "So listen, I need to tell you something." I was like, "Listen, you can do whatever you want, but I'm not eating meat anymore." And he was like, "Okay." And so he was actually interested in it and he wanted to read some more information, so there was another book that was recommended. It was kind of an entry point book for veganism. And I read and he read it, and he was like, "Yeah. Okay. I mean, it sounds like it's a good thing to do." So I had had a freezer full of beef and pork. Friends of ours, we'd gone in together to get grass-fed and whatever, natural meat, I sold it all. I got rid of everything. It was just like, I was just absolutely done.

If there's something that I could do that would make the pregnancy healthier and do something better for the baby than I was going to do it. And I don't even know what I was thinking like, will I do this forever? I don't know what I was thinking. Maybe I did think I would do it forever. I don't know. But anyway, so it was just, everything changed. My son who was five, who was drinking milk, we're like, "You're not drinking milk anymore." We just it's changed everything. And yeah, it was really interesting. It's not like I didn't like meat before. I liked it just fine. It was never like my favorite, favorite thing, but I liked it just fine. But I just convinced myself, you didn't really like meat that much, and this is totally great, you get to eat all these vegetarian-vegan types of foods, which you love anyway. This will be awesome.

And so I did do it. I did it for five years. That baby was finished up the pregnancy vegan. I have another baby completely vegan. I figured out how to do it. I researched everything, all the information about how to raise vegan children, how to do it safely. Obviously, as a pediatrician, I was very, very interested in their physical health and their brain health and all of that stuff. So I think I did a good job in doing it, but it was a really interesting experience because the entry point vegan stuff is like, listen, you're just going to stop eating those things, but look, instead of using butter, there's vegan butter and instead of buying a chicken breast, there's actually fake chicken that you can use. So you don't really have to change what you eat that much because there's all these substitutes that you can have.

And so I'm like, okay, that's great. And so we kind of made the transition to some of those foods, figured out which brands we liked, and things like that. And then as I tend to do, I'm going down all these rabbit holes and I'm finding out, oh, some people say though, within the vegan community, you know what, that's actually a totally bad way of being vegan. What you really need to be doing is having less of the soy that's in there. The only soy that's okay is some tofu, and then, oh my gosh, I can't even remember what some of the other stuff was. But all these rules about how you're supposed to do it. So I'm trying those foods, trying to find ways that we like eating those foods.

What it comes down to is we don't like how they taste. They just aren't good. I tried preparing them lots of ways, don't like it. We just don't like it. Then people are like, oh, you need to be having tons of coconut products, all the coconut things. It's amazing. It's so good for you, so healthy. Okay. So here's the deal. I don't like coconut. I never have liked coconut. I always feel like I should like coconut because people like coconut, a lot of people love it.

You know those cakes that have the shredded coconut all on them, it looks so pretty, I always hate those. I think I should like it, and then I taste it, and I'm like, I do not like this. I just don't like it. I don't like the texture. I don't like the flavor. I don't like any of it. But guess what I did, I tried all the brands and all the preparations and all the different things, trying to figure out a way to like coconut before I finally was just like, this makes no sense. I do not like this. I think I'm not going to eat it.

Then come to find out that there's another faction of vegans who are like, "Listen, if you are having any kind of processed oil, you're doing it wrong." So the fats you should be getting should be from olives and avocado and naturally occurring places, whatever. So then I'm water sautéing everything. And it just felt like I was constantly doing something wrong. And for sure the message was, this will solve all of your problems, any health issues you have or your mood will be better, your hair will be shinier, whatever. It's just a lot of promises. But what I found was if you didn't find that it actually made much of a difference for you, the overall sentiment, and I'm not saying that this is from everybody by any stretch, but the overall sentiment, what I felt the message was if you're having success, it's because of the diet. If you're not having success, it's because you're doing it wrong. So here I am, totally, right, like I must be doing it wrong, I must have to research more. I must have to try other things I was constantly changing it up.

And you wonder why I overate, right? The stress of doing this, plus constantly having to try new things, and figure new things out, I mean, the amount of time and effort I spent, brain energy, I spent on figuring food out, it was just astronomical. It was really, really, really kind of crazy.

And so I ended up actually transitioning then to vegetarianism five years in. And I'm not even going to get into the details because again, everybody will have an opinion and a thought about it, but it just became apparent to me that from my physical health, it just wasn't the right fit for me anymore, so I started transitioning some other things back into my diet. And I would say that I eat just a pretty balanced diet now.

So here's what I want to say about all of this and all of these different ways of eating. I have several questions that I think that you should ask yourself if you're thinking about eating in any of these ways. Okay. And I'm not even just talking about these doctors that Aroni talked about that are more vegetarian-vegan, really high carb, low fat, that kind of stuff. There's other doctors who are the paleo primal way of eating is a hundred percent the way you should do it. All these reasons why vegan plant based is bad. They're very conflicting.

It's like with anything, right? We can look at a study and one person will interpret it one way and another person will interpret it another way. So it's like what is an eater supposed to do? A human like us, what are we supposed to do to figure out what we should be eating, and should we make a change? And we start watching these ... I'm like seriously, I just feel for you already. You watch these YouTube things, you read these books, and you're just totally like, oh my gosh, I'm doing it all wrong. Look what this person says, I have to change it.

Here's the thing. I do think that these work for people? There's a small set of people that all of these different ways of eating makes a massive difference for. There are people who were ill, in a bad state, and tried everything, and eating keto was the thing that really helped them to feel better. Right. But the vast majority of people aren't going to feel that way or aren't going to notice that big of a difference. That doesn't mean that people should never eat keto, it just means that it's probably not going to be the long-term solution for most people. And that's the way I address kind of all of these diets. I don't even necessarily call them fad diets.

I think Dr. McDougall's been around a really long time. I think a lot of these doctors and a lot of these different ways of eating have been around for a really long time. I do think that they work if you follow them, but there's other questions to ask. It's not just, does this work if I follow it, there's other things that we need to examine. So the first thing that I want to suggest you ask yourself when you start getting the idea of following a different way of eating is, do I have a health problem that this way of eating may help solve? I think this is important because if things are going great with what you're doing right now, if you're feeling healthy, if your labs are good, if your doctor's happy with everything, do you need to make a change? If you have a health problem or say you have risk factors for heart disease or certain things that are really a concern for you, then you might want to consider changing the way that you eat.

So what I think it can be helpful to understand is, am I thinking about changing this because I have a health problem or a potential for a health problem that I'm really trying to mitigate that risk, and I'm really trying to maybe not rely on medication so much, and I want to try this way of eating to see if it will work? Because if that makes sense, then yeah, it's probably a good idea to give it a try. I have no problem with that whatsoever. But if it's like, well, I don't know, they had a really convincing argument and now I'm afraid that I'm doing something wrong, even though I have no evidence that there's any problem right now, I just don't like making decisions from a place of fear. And that's really what it comes down to.

I remember this like, oh my gosh, I've been doing it all wrong. It's this fear that there's going to be something bad that's happened because of me. And when you're in charge of other people's eating as well, I feel like the pressure is more like, it's not even just my eating, but it's like, oh, my kids, and are my kids going to be okay? And when you start reading about all the things that are in food, I mean, it can get so overwhelming. It can create a lot of anxiety for us in the way that we think about it. So the first question, do I have a health problem that this way of eating may help solve?

The second question is, why am I interested in this way of eating? So if it's one of those things where all of a sudden YouTube happened to show you this one thing, and all of a sudden you're like, "Oh my gosh, I need to do it," do you really feel like you were guided toward that? Was there a problem you were trying to solve? Why are you thinking about wanting to do it that way? It's just really good to get clear on what your thoughts are around this way of eating and why you think this is a good way of doing it. It might be interesting to look at how much research you've done. Have you looked at any downsides of this?

I will tell you when I went down this vegan rabbit hole, I did not go and look to see what are other people that I trust and respect saying about a vegan diet. What are the real possible consequences? Because the vegan literature would say, you know what, they're going to say these things, they're going to say you're not going to get enough iron. And they're going to say all these things, but that's not true, and here's why. So they basically just handled those objections internally. And so I didn't go out and look and see. I have no problem with the vegan diet. I think it's amazing, or plant-based whole food. I just think that it's not going to be for everyone, just like no one way of eating is going to be for everyone. And I didn't really properly educate myself. So why are you interested in this way of eating?

Then, I think the next question should be, how do I feel, like what is my emotion when I think about this plan? If you feel really overwhelmed, if you feel fear, if you feel any kind of negative emotion around it, I would really look at that. That might be something to address. Are you trying to take action from fear, from sort of a pressured panicky, anxious kind of a place, or is this just logical and it makes complete sense and it's something that you want to try where you're feeling much more grounded.

Sometimes I like to think of it as a good way of understanding if something is a good idea or not is to tap into intuition, or you can call it your gut feeling, or your inner knowing, or your inner voice, or whatever you want to call it. But just getting out of your head, so it's not thought-based and just being in your body, how does it feel when it entertains the idea of this way of eating? Are you all-in, you feel expansive, you feel like you want to move toward it, it feels like the right thing to do? Are you being nudged in that direction, or are you recoiling a little bit, are you contracting inside a little bit? Are you feeling like it's uh-uh in some way shape or form? It might be very, very quiet.

This is something that I work with my clients on to tap into and learn to trust and access a little bit more easily. So some people are more tapped into this than others, but it's a great way of checking in. Is it a good idea for me to just change everything and eat this way, or is it not, you can tap into that. So we want to know why are you interested in this way of eating and how do you feel when you think about this plan?

And I think another great question is what will be the impact on my life if I decide to follow this plan? Because that's one thing Aroni said, she says this is not mainstream. And many times these things are not. Like with Dr. Gundry and taking out the lectins, I think that probably there are people who are in a physically very bad place and they remove lectins from their diet and it solves a problem for them. And I think that's amazing. And I think that it's completely worth it to basically not eat out anymore for the most part and really manipulate and control your food intake in order to avoid lectins so that you can continue to feel so good. I just think that for most people, that's just not the case. And if it's not making that big of a difference for you, it's going to be very challenging for you to keep that up long-term.

Because again, all of these things will be like, oh, and you'll lose weight. Well, great, but are you willing to eat this way for the rest of your life? Because if you're not, now what? If you don't see yourself doing this forever, okay, then that might be a problem. So I just think it's really important to be open with yourself. What is the impact on my life if I decide to follow this plan? Not that you can't work through that impact, right? There might be people in the family who have a hard time transitioning with this. You might be eating different than the rest of the people that you know, or live with, or it might really be you have to prepare food just for yourself and everyone else is eating something else. You might not be able to eat at restaurants. You might need to bring your food everywhere you go.

This is totally something that's worth it if the benefits are so huge that you're willing to put that effort into it. And like I said, I think for some people, the benefits are that huge. But I would say that for the vast majority of people, they're not going to be willing to do that. So I think even if you try it, just understand what is the impact on my life before I decide to do this, right?

Then the next question is, by saying yes to this eating plan, what am I saying no to? Because this is something that I struggle with a lot. I'm just like, "Yeah, this will be fine. It won't be a problem," like a very optimistic outlook on it, which is great. It's great to have a positive outlook on things. But what I tend to then do is completely just disregard that for every yes I give, it's a no to something else, and so what am I saying no to? In this case, it might be saying no to eating out at beautiful restaurants that you love to go to. It might be saying no to certain family meal occasions that you like to partake in. You just need to know and recognize that that could be what happens and then ask yourself, am I all-in on saying no to that? Because you might be.

If you're like, listen, I am in such a bad state that yeah, I am willing to do that, great. Then totally that makes tons of sense. But I think a lot of us are just like, yeah, well, whatever, I'll figure that out later. And then we wonder why we have a hard time sticking with it or why we're diet hopping all the time, trying all these different ways of eating.

And then the final question is how will I know if this plan isn't working for me anymore? How will I give myself permission to stop? And I think this is so important because the messages you get are, you have to do this the rest of your life. This is the only way, this is the way to be healthy, this is the way to not have disease and live a long life. And they're not going to give you that permission to leave. With veganism, right, they're not going to give you permission to eat meat, or dairy, or eggs. They're just not going to do that.

So I think it's helpful going into it recognizing, okay, I maybe I'll try this for three months, six months, a year, whatever, but this is what I want to see as improvement. This is the kind of life that I want to have. This is the kind of relationship with food that I want to have. This is how I want to be experiencing my life. And if it's not like that, then I give myself permission to stop and do something different, so you know when you can leave. You don't have to force yourself to do anything. Anytime we feel forced to do something, then we like to rebel against it. We go into a victim mentality where we're very disempowered and we feel like we are helpless and hopeless. It's not good and it creates so much more overeating.

I mean, here's the thing. Guess what, Oreos are vegan. True story. They always have been. So just because you're vegan doesn't mean you're healthy. Just because you're vegan, there are plenty of vegans who are overweight and struggle with their health. So it's not like, oh, for sure, if you do this one thing, you will be healthy. Me, I can figure out how to game the system. I did tons of vegan baking and I made granola and all these things. The funny thing is that a lot of them, a lot of the stuff I made was good, but not great. Because you know what would have made it great, was having some eggs in there or some dairy or whatever in there. But I would still have it and I'd overeat it thinking like, no, but this is healthy. This is good for me. It's so fascinating.

So the final point that I want to make about all of this is no matter how you decide to eat, no matter what your food is or just any of it, you have got to do work on your brain, okay? Because the actions of following this plan or not following this plan comes from your thoughts and your feelings. If you want to follow this plan, you need to work on your brain. If you want freedom around food, you need to work on your brain. If you want to just stop caring about food so much, you need to work on your brain. So any of these diets may help your body to function in a healthier way for you, but they do not address the most important part, I think, which is your brain, your thoughts, and your feelings. This is the most important part. You cannot skip this part if you want to lose weight and keep it off forever. I guarantee you there are people in the search solution and all the different things that are overeating and still struggling with their weight, right?

You ultimately have to do that work however you want to do it. So that's why I don't have a specific diet plan. I'm not like, "Listen, you have to eat this way." I'm like, "Listen, you want to eat paleo, great. You want to eat meat, okay. You want to eat vegetarian or vegan, awesome. You have a certain cultural diet or a way that your family historically has eaten, okay, we'll work with that. We'll work with whatever you want to do." But what I feel like we work with is the way a human body just functions. A body functions best in certain ways, and then from there we can add stuff back, and we can see what happens, and how does your body respond? But your body is uniquely you, and you can figure it out for yourself by paying attention to it how you feel best.

I sometimes think about eating high carb and low fat, and that might be great for someone. Well, yeah, because if you try a low-carb diet, you might feel awful. I do not feel good, and I've mentioned this before, when I eat really low carb. It's just, my body does not like that. And I've tried to force it to like it and it just doesn't. So it could just be that had I paid attention to what my body was telling me and its signals, then I would know, hey, guess what, this isn't a great way for me to eat. I do not feel good. Maybe when I have more healthy carbs, I will feel better and I'll have more energy, and lo and behold, I do. And I feel warmer, I'm not freezing cold all the time, and all these other side effects that I had.



So one other way, I just want to offer it to you, one way of figuring out the best way to eat is by kind of common sense, but also really listening to your body and seeing how your body responds to eating certain ways. For instance, cured meats, like salami and stuff like that, I think they taste pretty good. And for a long time, I'm like, oh, I shouldn't eat these. They have a good amount of fat in them, whatever, I should have this.

Then I finally realized, and those of you who listened to the episode where I talked about getting off my acid reflux medicine that I was on for 20 plus years, I finally realized my stomach does not feel good when I eat this kind of stuff. It tastes good, but I don't physically feel good when I eat it. So, you know what, I think I'm just not going to have that anymore. And here's the deal. If I want to have some sometime, I can. I'm not telling myself I can't have it. But when I think about do I want to have that repeating on me for the next several hours? No, I don't think I really do, so I'm not going to eat it.

But I didn't need someone to tell me, hey, listen, that's bad for you because of all these different things, I could just listen to my body and what it's telling me. The same thing with nuts. I mean, people love nuts. Did you know this? So many people love nuts. People are into nuts big time. I've never been a huge fan of nuts. I don't know why anybody would ever put nuts in ice cream. Literally, that just ruins it, like no gross, terrible. Or brownies, why would you put nuts in brownies? It's just wrong. Absolutely not. Peanuts are okay. Peanut butter, sure, I like that. But when it comes to nuts, just never been a huge fan. I mean, if they're candied, sure. Honey roasted peanuts, sure. Then I'm into it. But otherwise, just plain, just never been a huge fan.

But then the whole thing is, everyone's eating nuts, I should be. Maybe I can learn to like nuts. I should be eating more nuts. I finally, after years of trying to like nuts, realized you know what, I don't think my stomach actually feels good. I don't think I actually digest nuts very well. Maybe that's why I don't like nuts because my body doesn't digest them well maybe. I don't have to eat something just because other people are, or because of the nutritional qualities, or whatever people say, the walnuts are good for your brain or whatever. If I don't want to eat walnuts, then I'm just not going to eat walnuts. It's totally okay. I can eat plenty of other things that nourish my body and don't make me feel bad.

So you can craft your own way of eating, that's bespoke, custom for you and your body, and then you don't get pulled down these YouTube rabbit holes, where this person says this, and this person says this. And you're like, you know what, maybe I'll take that into consideration and I'll think about how I feel in my body when I'm eating this way and if I eat those things. And maybe I'll experiment, but I'm not going to do it out of this panic or fear or anxiety that I'm doing something wrong. That message is that you cannot trust your body, that you don't know what's best for you, and someone else knows better than you how you should be eating, and I just argue that that's not the case. That message is the message we've been getting basically our whole lives and is the reason why we struggle with our weight. Why we do not know how much food to eat, when to stop, how to choose what to eat, it's because of those messages.

So I just want to offer to you that you really can just let those go and know that you can figure it out for yourself. Okay. This is what we do in my program, Weight Loss for Doctors Only.

You can also do it on your own by really tapping in and paying attention to your body's signals. Super-duper good. I didn't realize I'd go on this long about these diets, but apparently, I had a lot to say. I've been thinking about this for a while.

All right, my friend, thank you so much for your attention and your listenership. I love you so much. Appreciate you. And I'll talk to you next week.

Take care.