



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hello there, my friend. Welcome back to the podcast. I am so glad you're here today. I'm actually super excited to be recording this podcast for you because I'm having one of those days where I had my things I had to do today, and then I had my wishlist, like if everything went perfectly, then I'd also love to get this podcast recorded. And I'm able to record this podcast. So, great.

Not necessarily because I did such a good job with my work, although I was very productive today and that was really awesome, but because my husband came home early. I didn't even realize that was going to happen, and he's going to be able to go pick my daughter up from school. So, that's awesome. So, here I am hanging with you and I get to share some awesome stuff with you today. I'm actually really excited about the topic that I'm going to talk to you about today.

I will also actually tell you about... I'm just thinking, I'm like, oh yeah, I'm also going to tell you about the Weight Loss for Doctors Only Coaching Program that will be starting up in September and it is going to be super awesome. Actually, me and my team, we've spent the last year actually refreshing, re-updating, refocusing the whole program and making it better than ever. I'm so excited about it. Since I first created the program, I mean, the original program works super great and so many people, I mean, literally over 1,000 doctors have lost so much weight on it, so obviously it works, but I wanted to make it better and better and bring in new things that I'd learned, new modalities that I've learned over the last several years and just really update it. So, it just gives you exactly what you need, no more, no less.

Because, I mean, let's be real. Doctors are busy. You don't have extra time for a bunch of froufrou stuff that isn't important. And so, I've updated all of that. And we also have continuing medical education credits for it now, for that new program. So, it's going to be super awesome. And if you're interested, I can tell you more about that. And if you're not, it's totally cool. When I get to that part, you can just hop off because you'll still get some really good information. Okay.

So, what I want to talk to you about today is what I'm calling emotional fasting. I have not heard people use this term, so I'm coining it, emotional fasting. And you may or may not know that I'm a decent fan of intermittent fasting. It's certainly not for everybody, it's definitely not a solution that everybody loves or likes or wants to utilize, but for busy doctors in particular, it can be really a godsend.

And what I have found is that when you feed your body in a way that it really loves, and it feels hormonally balanced, then it has no problem just accessing your fat for energy, if you can't eat for a meal. And so, I just want to be clear because a lot of people still get confused about the concept of intermittent fasting, thinking this is just basically like an eating disorder in disguise. You know, this seems really weird. And can it be for some people? Yes, it can be. The way that I talk about it though, or the way I think about it is, you're eating all the same amount of food that you would for the day, just over a shorter period of time.

So, you're not stuffing yourself. You're not depriving yourself. You are just allowing your body to extend the fast that it already has every night while you sleep, and allowing your body to access your fat stores, keep your insulin levels lower, which makes you more insulin sensitive. And it's just going to be a really convenient thing to be able to do. Even if you don't want the health benefits necessarily from it, every doctor knows what it's like for their day to just blow up and just not have time to eat.

I just remember one time early on in my career, I don't even remember what exactly happened. No, you know what it was? I think what happened was, I was still really quite new in the practice. And so, a lot of the old, not old, but the families that had been there for longer wanted to meet me. They heard, oh, there's a new doctor, and they hadn't had a new doctor in a long time. And so, they would come in for a checkup and one of the other doctors would say, "Oh, hey, you know what, come and meet this family. They'd like to get to know you."

That had been no big deal, a quick hi, whatever, a little chit-chat and then off we go. Well, I had been told that this one family, a very large family, so lots of children. Remember, I'm a pediatrician. And they were coming in for a checkup and they would like to see me. And so, what was happening, since I was the first female doctor that they'd had in 40 years of the practice being in existence, there were plenty of teenage girls who were definitely interested in moving away from seeing a male pediatrician. And so, they wanted to just get a sense, do we like her? Do we want to switch over to her? Because our practice did allow switching like that, or not. And so, I thought, "Oh, this will just be... They have a bunch of kids and they were probably just thinking of maybe transitioning their girls over to me." Which was happening on a regular basis. No big deal.

And I went in there and I won't get into all the details, but it was essentially like an intense interview with the father and that nothing came up. I was totally caught off guard. I didn't know really what was happening. I kept trying to wrap it up, I remember. And he just kept going on and telling me about his parenting philosophy and thought... I was really like, okay, trying to be respectful, and are you trying to tell me this because you want to ... ? I think, honestly, he just wanted me to know in case I was cross covering, what his opinions were. I don't know.

Anyway, the point is, he kept me in there for the entire lunch hour. So, I came out and whatever healthy food I had brought required chewing and time, and I didn't have that. And I remember literally tears burning in my eyeballs, feeling so sorry for myself that I wasn't going to be able to eat. And it wasn't even that I was so hungry that I felt like, oh my gosh, this is intolerable. It was just the idea that I might get so hungry, that I wasn't going to be able to have that time, that I was going to have to work straight through lunch. I just remember so...

And I remember, oh god, I remember one of the office assistants being back in the lunch room

and I think she could tell that I was upset, and she's like, "Well, there's hot dogs here in the fridge. You want me to just warm one up for you?" And I'm like, "No, it's fine." Totally was acting. So crazy. Oh my gosh. It's so funny to think about. But anyway, and I don't know what I did. Actually, I think I ended up with an hour later having a no-show or something and then I had time to eat my lunch anyway. So, you see, you would get so upset and it ends up working itself out.

But my point is that when it comes to fasting, when something like that happens expected or unexpected, it can be so convenient to be like, "Oh, I thought I was going to eat lunch, but it turns out I can't for whatever reason. So, that's cool. I'm just going to fast." And your body is totally happy to do that. So, fasting is not something that we do to punish ourselves. It's not something that we feel physically ill. In fact, I've had many experiences where I was fasting and I actually felt like I had better creative energy.

I was not lethargic. Often you eat lunch and then you feel tired after. That wasn't there at all. And if I did eat lunch, I'd be like, "Oh, darn it. Now I'm sleepy. Normally I don't feel this way if I fast." So, I just want to point it out that once your body adapts to this, if your body is happy with fasting, you feel amazing and it's actually really, really nice. It's just a nice tool for you to have, like your... I mean, I could give you a million examples, but there's so many specialties in medicine where you don't know what your... the two hour case turns into a seven hour case, or I've had many anesthesiologists who are like, "Listen, I can't even have water with myself. I don't know when I'm going to go to the bathroom." Being able to eat is such a problem.

And so, because of that, they were overeating before work, overeating after work. But once they could get their bodies to happily fast, they were like, "This is like an absolute dream come true. Not only do I feel great, I just literally don't even have to think about making food. It's so easy." They're just like, "I don't even have to think about lunch. It's like it's just something else to think about." Then, I just want to point out again that when you eat, you eat a lovely nourishing, satisfying filling meal full of variety. Right?

So, someone who has an eating disorder and is restricting might eat a very small, tiny meal after they've fasted. And that is not what I am talking about here. I'm talking about you're eating all the macronutrients and your body is so happy and the food's tasting really good to you and it's really nourishing for your body. So, like I said, for some people, this isn't something they're interested in. I've had some people, and not too often, but occasionally I get people who are like, they have really given it a solid effort and they just don't feel great. And my answer to that is, "Awesome. Then don't fast." Even when you are trying to fast, if you feel bad, the answer is, you eat something. So, it's really not something that we have to pressure ourselves into.

But I want to talk about emotional fasting because that is different than intermittent fasting, with the purpose of allowing your body to dine in on one of the many extra meals that you have stored on your body, in the form of your body fat. It is going into diet mentality, essentially. So, I think of emotional fasting as using fasting to try to compensate for something that you've done, that you aren't maybe proud of in terms of your eating, or what you plan to do in the future.

So, the same way that people will exercise, thinking that they're going to work off the ice cream they just had, or they know they're going to have cake later so they'll do extra exercise now. And

we even know that that doesn't really work that way. We'll do that sometimes with fasting. I've seen this for years now, where what people will do is, they'll be like, "Well, you know what? I'm just going to have all this stuff. And it's not a big deal because tomorrow I'll just fast more." And they are using fasting as this way to kind of excuse their emotional eating. They're using it as a way to not do the real work that they need to do, which is, "Why am I eating that anyway? Why am I finding it so hard to control myself around this food? Why do I still have over desire for that?"

Rather than reducing the desire and getting the desire for that food to an appropriate level, they just bull fast. I've also seen many people who use fasting, especially people who have a history of binge-eating, who will fast and with the rules of fasting, like you can't eat, they can totally do that, no problem. Sometimes even multi-day long fasts. And they'll lose a bunch of weight and they'll feel like, "Oh my gosh, this is so amazing." But the minute they start eating, it's like totally right into binges, or they'll eat a normal meal and then they'll feel even hungrier, which is what happens when you have intense urges to binge.

So, we want to make sure that we're not using fasting in this emotional manner. We want to make sure that when we're fasting, we know why we're doing it and that it makes a lot of sense. I think that there's a lot of fear around food for so many people, thinking, "If I eat that, it'll go straight to my hips. I'm definitely going to gain weight. I overate that." And so, they feel this... like a fear, really like this anxiety, like, "I need to compensate for that and take care of it, and the way I'm going to do that is by doing this extra fasting."

That's not fasting for the right reasons. So, I just have a few questions that I want to suggest you think about anytime you are starting to fast, learning how to fast, or deciding to fast, especially if it wasn't planned in advance, meaning you were like, "Oh, I was planning on eating, but then now I'm just going to fast." What was that all about? And so, the first question is, "Why do I want to fast?" And it'd be really good to know that. "What is my reason for doing this?" Because if the reason is, "Because I totally don't feel hungry and it would actually be way more convenient for me to not eat right now, because I could get this other stuff done, then I'd be able to get home earlier with my family and to be able to have so much of a nicer rest of my day, and my body's not even asking for food." Then it may be a good idea. It sounds reasonable.

But if you're like, "Well, I'm going to fast because I totally overate last night and I drank too much and I saw the scale go up and now I'm freaking out and I really need the scale to go back down." That is not what we want to be doing. So, the way to be able to tell, because our brains are so sneaky, we're like, "Well, no, it makes complete sense that I... and if I overate, then maybe I don't need to eat food."

When we go into the thinking, sometimes we can get real crafty in convincing ourselves of things. But what I want you to think about is, why do you want to fast? That's your thoughts about why you want to fast. Then you ask yourself, "When I think that way, how do I feel?" And your emotion is going to be the canary in the coal mine. That's what's really going to let you know whether you're doing emotional fasting or if this is a good idea for you to fast.

Because if it's feeling neutral or positive, or you feel really grounded and settled in your decision, then yeah, that probably is a good thing to do. But if you're feeling anxious, if you're feeling

scared, if you're feeling upset, if you're feeling down, if you are beating yourself up, if you're feeling frustrated with yourself, I don't think that that's a reason to do it. I really don't.

Now, the next question is, "When I think about not fasting, how do I feel?" Asking yourself, or thinking about, considering whether you should fast in that moment, and you ask yourself, "If I don't fast, what if I don't fast right now? What if I were to eat?" How do you feel? And if you feel, again, like you don't deserve food, right? If you are feeling like something bad is going to happen, like sensing impending doom, fear, you're upset with yourself, anger with yourself, you're feeling really down or blue, you should probably not fast then. Okay?

Because if you are fasting for a reason that makes complete sense, and then you're like, "When I think about not fasting..." You're probably just going to be thinking, "I mean, sure. Okay. I mean, I guess I could eat, but I guess it really matter either way, it'd just be more convenient." The feeling you get from thinking that way is not negative emotion. It's more like acceptance. It's more contentment with whatever. So, those emotions are going to be really crucial in helping you to figure out if you're fasting for the right reasons.

And then, the final question to ask yourself is, "What is the most loving way I can nourish my body right now?" And the reason why I think that's such a great question is because nourishing your body is really important. And sometimes the best way to nourish your body is by not eating more food. Sometimes it really doesn't need more food. And the best thing you can do is not eat anything. You know, so often I hear this with clients who have irritable bowel syndrome, they'll be like, "Well, then I had... I totally was in the bathroom. And then I knew I just needed to have some toast." And I'm like, "Isn't it interesting that that is what we think? It's like our body's just had dumping syndrome, like get it all out, and then we eat some more."

It would be interesting to just consider maybe that's a message. The body is telling you, you don't need to eat more food. Right? So, I think about sometimes, like say I had a beautiful meal the night before, and then the next day I really am just like, "You know what? I don't know. I just haven't really been that hungry." Then maybe I will fast, or maybe I'll just eat a smaller amount in honor of my body using up that food from the night before. But I'm not doing it to punish myself or to try to offset any "damage" I've created. I'm not trying to right a "wrong," so to speak. There was no wrong. Food was eaten. Food was put in the mouth, chewed up and swallowed. Okay, now what?

Even what the scale reads is neutral. So, what's the most loving thing I can nourish my body with right now? So, generally the most loving thing isn't going to be a brownie, right? When you think about, what do your cells really need? They need nutrients. Sometimes those nutrients can come from within, but they always need water. So, even if you're fasting, you can be like, "You know what? I actually think I just really need to hydrate myself well, and I feel really good otherwise. I think I'm going to be fine. I think fasting is a great idea." Then, awesome. Then we go ahead and do it.

But the most loving way that you can nourish your body might be to be like, "You know what? I am going to have lunch and I'm going to go actually eat a high-quality protein. I'm going to have some vegetables. I'm going to have a quality starch and some fat, and I'm going to eat an appropriate

amount and listen to my hunger signals and get back on track rather than trying to offset some..." I was just thinking about how people will say, "I was naughty and I ate this." Like some naughtiness that you did, like you somehow got in trouble or did something wrong. It's just food. There's no wrong in that.

So, I just want you to really think about, if you are somebody who fasts, how you use this as a tool, if you are inadvertently or maybe on purpose using it as a way to manipulate things, that's really not consistent with having peace around food and consistency in supporting yourself, your relationship with yourself, right? It's so easy for us to backside into that, and that's why I really wanted to bring this topic to you today. It's something that comes up again and again and again, especially as people start to get closer to their goal weight, they're like, "You know, I can just not eat for a week and I could probably get to goal." Yeah, that's probably true, but is that the most loving way that you can nourish your body right now? Probably the answer is no.

And so, this where again, the thought work comes in. You have to be working on your brain. You have to understand what your motivations are. You need to understand what you think and what your feelings are. And when you're aware of those, you can use those as a way to guide you to making the best decisions for your body, to guide your body to the weight that you want it to weigh, and then stay there forever, because that's the most important part. You don't want to be 85 and going, "Oh, I'm not allowed to eat because I had cake yesterday," or whatever. I mean, I'm assuming. That's just more of the same. If you're using fasting in that way, you might as well just exercise. I mean, it's basically a form of purging. It's just another way that we deal with that.

So, I just want to encourage you to think about this and allow yourself to know what the right thing is to do for yourself and not just only the right thing, but the right and most loving thing, because that's the part that we're usually missing, the love for ourselves and letting that be a guiding principle in helping us to decide what to do.

Awesome. Have a wonderful rest of your week and I'll talk to you next time. Take care.