



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hello there, my friend, welcome to the podcast. I'm so glad you're here today. If you are a long-time listener, I'm so glad you're back. And if you're new to the podcast, then welcome, I'm so glad that you're here. I'm going to have a great conversation today.

I have to tell you that I have become one of those people, "those people," I'm still just laughing at myself for who I've become. So, I shared several months ago that I got a Peloton bike because now they have a treadmill too, so you have to distinguish. And I was kind of like, "Oh okay, I'll do this." I decided to get it back in the fall when it seemed like it was going to be forever before I could go back to Orangetheory. And I was like, "Okay, this is just... What I'm gonna do, I'm gonna give it a try. People love this thing so much."

Well, today I celebrated my 100th bike ride and that's like, okay, I did that. And it's cool, I'm glad I did that. But this is the crazy part so I knew, as of yesterday, yesterday I did my 99th ride. And so, I knew that 100 was coming up. And so I had thought, "You know what? Maybe I should go to one of those live classes." So, if you're not a Peloton person, you might not know what I'm talking about. You can just fast forward through this part, if it's too boring for you. But they do live classes. And then most of the classes are just on demand. You can play them whenever you want and work out alongside with the instructors.

But when you go to a live class, people who are celebrating their birthday, or have some sort of milestone for their workout ability, I don't know, it's not ability. It's like however many rides you've done and things like that. Sometimes the instructors will shout you out. And I had thought, "I mean, do I really care enough," but I'm like, "100 rides is a lot of rides, maybe I do care enough, I don't know." So, last night I went on there to see like, "Okay, well what are the live rides for tomorrow?" And the only one I was interested in was at 6:00 AM Eastern time, which it is what it is. But I live in Central time zone, so that was 5:00 AM my time. And I was like, "Okay, I'm not getting up at 4:30, so I can go to a live ride."

But then, I looked at what else is going on throughout the rest of the day. And I wasn't really that interested in most of them then I'm like, "Maybe I'll just do strength and I'll do a live one on Thursday," today's Wednesday as I'm recording this. And that didn't sit right either. And then I was like, "You know what? Maybe I should just go to bed early and I'll just get up and I'll just go to a 5:00 AM class." And so, that's what I did today. I'm literally like, "Who am I?" And I do have to say that it helps that the days are so long right now, because even when I got up at 4:30, it was already getting light out.

Because we live on the Eastern part of our time zone. So, it was just starting to get light really early in the, and it stays light really late. So, anyway, the point is I've become one of those people who gets up, and goes and does this.

So funny. Anyway, I was glad I did it like so often when we exercise after the fact. We're like, "That was good. I'm so glad I did that." So, anyway, the Peloton has really become a really nice part of my life. And those of you who are into it too, you know exactly what I'm talking about. Totally unexpected. I was like, "Eh, I hear this thing's pretty good." I really, really, really, really like it. A lot.

I have no affiliation with Peloton at all. It's just something that has really helped me, particularly from a stress relief, mental health standpoint, I should say. That is really the main thing. I've shared before that I am a big fan of music and then music in general is really good. And that was always an issue that I had in going to an Orangetheory classes, you just never knew what the deal was going to be. And some days it's like gangster rap. And you're totally into that, and that's exactly the mood you're in. And other days you're like, "No, this is not the vibe I was going for at all," but you're stuck because it's live class and you're in there and there's nothing else you can also, you can do about it.

So, it's just been a really nice opportunity to get in there, exercise, move my body, get all the positive effects of doing that. Yet, still listening to my body, listening to what would feel really awesome today? What would be a great way for me to support myself today? And then following along with that. And you're not able to do that when you go to a live class very often, live, in-person kind of a class.

Anyway, that's just my little thing to share with you today. I am one of those people. And if you're into it, you know what I'm talking about. And just for anybody who wants to follow me, because I think I mentioned once what my username is and I've got several hundred people, who wanted to follow me, which is awesome. It's just KatrinaU K-A-T-R-I-N-A-U.

Okay so, today, we're going to talk about weight loss competitions and bets. And so you might be like, "Are we talking about bikini competitions?" No, that's not what I'm talking about. Although that is a whole other thing that I could probably do another episode on if there's interest. But what I'm talking about is that kind of competition that's generally kind of friendly competition amongst friends, amongst coworkers, amongst family members, where there's some money on the line. Or if it's not money, it's some other thing of value that's on the line.

So that would be, say, there's a group of 20 people at work and everybody who signs up wants to lose weight. Everyone puts in 100 bucks and whoever loses the most amount of weight in a certain amount of time, maybe four weeks, eight weeks, whatever gets all of the money. And so, that person would make \$2,000 for their initial investment of \$100.

The diet bets are a little bit different. I mean, they're similar though, where you also put in a certain amount of money and there's different ways of doing it. But it's often that if you lose as much weight as you said you were going to at the beginning of the month, then you get your money back. And if you don't, you lose the money. And then it can be set up so that whoever's participating, then the person loses the most, gets all the money of the people who didn't lose what they were supposed to, or said they would, or whatever.

So, these are things that come up pretty frequently. I get asked about pretty frequently what my thoughts are about this. I do just want to start off by saying that if you have done weight loss competitions or bets and it's gone super well for you and you've absolutely loved it, then game on, go for it. I'm totally happy for you. I'm certainly not saying in this episode that nobody should ever do this. I just think that there's a lot of issues that can arise for a lot of people.

And so, I think it's important before you decide to do something like this to really think about it and understand what the consequences are, or the potential consequences before you make that decision. You just want to make sure that things are really going to be serving you and that it's really the right fit for you. So, I just wanted to give you a little bit of my take on that, just my experience and kind of seeing what comes up for people as they go through it. And then, you can consider that if that is something that you want to look into, or if you're like, "Yeah, I never felt like I should do one of those things," then maybe it will confirm that for you and you won't do it.

So, really what it comes down to is when you are putting money on the line, it's a motivator. And that's the whole point. Why do we even do this is to make it a little bit of a competition. And for some people who really love competition, and have that competitive drive and spirit, it can be pretty motivating for them. For a lot of people it can be a good way to just get going, just get started losing weight, start building up some momentum. They just think like, "If I just get going on this maybe I can lose a few pounds and that will just kind of get the ball rolling. And I'll start gaining some momentum and I can get this weight off and go from there."

Used in this way, I do not have a problem with it. I don't think it's for everybody. If you're not a person who really thrives in competition, then it probably is just not going to be that great for you. It might stress you out. It just might not be that great. But for some people they really think it's fun. And it's just kind of a nice little friendly competition, little thing to get some positive results up and running. Where I see it being more of a problem is that... Well, several things. First of all, it is for some people very much just a means to an end kind of a thing. I'm going to do this thing, so that I can lose weight and then life will be better. Then, everything will come together, I will feel like a different person, I will like myself more, I will respect myself more." And, of course, that's not at all what happens.

So, just to be clear, if you participate in one of these competitions or bets and you lose some weight, likely all that's going to happen, well, the best case of what's going to happen is you're going to be smaller at the end. And the reason I say best case is because I think there are actually are some negatives that can come from this as well. And so, what can happen is you might lose some weight, but you might also have gotten yourself totally into diet mentality behaviors. So, this is of the traps that I see, particularly with weight loss competitions, where there's a lot of money on the line, you really could win a lot of money, if you are the person who loses the most. And what we do then, is we get all like, "Well I didn't lose enough." Or, "Shoot the scale, didn't go down. And that person's ahead of me. And so, I need to do whatever I need to do to try to get that weight off faster."

So, maybe it's excessive exercise. Maybe it's starting to miss meals. Maybe it's even taking a laxative, or things like that. Starting to get into this disordered behavior, and patterning in order to try to win. And I should also mention, I didn't mention this, well, regardless, most of the ways that people do this is the way it's measured is by percent of body weight loss.

So, if you have of a man who's going to be losing weight much faster than a woman, then it goes by percentage. Or if the woman is much smaller to begin with, so it's not even amounts of weight necessarily.

So, going into that diet mentality behavior is not going to be a positive thing for you at all. So, again, you might be smaller, but now you might be into some diet mentality behavior. What also happens when we start getting really, really restrictive with our eating toward the end of the month or end of the competition, and trying to lose that weight faster is as soon as the competition is over, we go back into some compensatory behavior, which sometimes is binging, sometimes is just overeating, sometimes telling ourselves that we deserve a cheat or 17 because we've been so good for so long. And that, of course, is not ongoing behavior that we want to be taking part in either. When you think about it, what sustains weight loss, it's not going to be these extremes of losing a bunch. And then, gaining some back and overeating, and a lot of mental drama around it. It's going to feel very even keel. And the food's going to be the least important part of the whole thing. So, that is the issue there.

With the diet bets, those are often done every month. And what I find with those, is that people will sometimes use those against themselves. They'll decide to sign up for it, and then they will not do what they thought they were going to do, or they're not getting the results that they want for whatever reason. And then, they will use that against themselves. Like, "Look now I lost all this money." It's just another way of beating themselves up. It's another way of being like, "See, I can't do this. It's not possible for me. Even when money's on the line, I can't do this." And it just builds up that whole blanket of poop that we put over ourselves. I don't have a better description, sorry.

That's just like layering it on. It's that poor relationship with yourself, that lack of a positive opinion. It just is another reason to detest ourselves, to think that we're not good enough, that we don't get to have what we want, that other people have a better life than us because they're able to create the results that they want using that technique. And it just can bring on so much unnecessary drama, or thoughts and, ultimately, mind management, if you know how to work through those thoughts, it's just not particularly useful.

So, like I said, I'm not completely against these things, but I would definitely, if you're thinking about considering doing one, just asking yourself, "What am I really trying to get out of this? What is the point of me doing this? Why do I think that this is the solution right now? What do I think that this competition or bet is going to do for me that I can't do for myself otherwise? I think it's another good question to ask, "What are other ways that I could support myself similarly, that don't involve a competition, or something where money is on the line?" And just explore all of that, and then maybe you still will decide you want to do it, and you'll just make sure it's fun. And I mean for a competition, and you've spent \$100 on dumber things, you might just be like, "Hey, worst case scenario I'm out 100 bucks. Best case scenario, I lose some weight, amazing." That I don't have a problem with at all.

But, ultimately, this is the part that you need to really understand, if you do any of these things, is that there is a big component to permanent weight loss that is not addressed at all in these competitions or bets. And that is why you're overeating in the first place. It's your emotional life, and the emotional eating that you're doing that created the weight issue in the first place.

We know it's emotional eating because if you were only eating the amount of food that your body needed for fuels, only filling your body with food, then you would be at a healthy weight. So, when we're eating extra food, more food than our bodies need, that is for emotional reasons. And we need to understand what those are.

So, can you use the weight loss competition to kind of jumpstart things, and still do a lot of work on your mind, and understanding yourself and understanding what is going on in your life that food makes better, absolutely, you can do that. That's completely fine. But you just need to recognize that, I mean, as far as I'm aware, I don't know of anybody who lost all the weight they wanted to lose, and solve their weight problem, and never were able to maintain that weight loss ongoing, only participating in a weight loss competition of some sort. There's got to be other work that's done. So, can it be done concurrently? Yes.

You might also decide, "You know what? I don't really need to have kind of the pressure of being in a competition to get me to lose this weight. My body will release this weight as is appropriate. And I don't need to fall into any kind of extraordinary behaviors in an effort to try to get it to lose weight faster. I really can just allow things to go as they need to so that I can lose this weight and it can stay off forever."

And that's really what it comes down to. I mean, I just don't know anybody who's really interested in losing weight and then gaining it back again, except that is what we do again, and again, and again, and again. I mean, you just have to look around that's pretty much what ends up happening for most people. And what ends up solving the problem is actually working on your brain, understanding yourself enough that you arm yourself. You understand what is driving the action of your overeating in the first place, and then being willing to work through it with yourself to be able to understand that on a deeper level, and make a different decision.

Weight loss is a personal growth opportunity. It really, really is. And I know that sounds kind of cliché and maybe a little dorky, but it really, really is. The idea that you can just fix all of this without looking at anything further it just doesn't happen for most people, especially the people that I work with this. So, I'm talking to people who've been struggling with this for a while. Or who have really felt stuck and just unable to actually solve the problem. There's more there than a competition, or weight loss that is going to solve for you.

So, like I said, it could be a kind of a fun thing to do, maybe a little friendly competition. And I have no problem with that, if that's the way you approach it. But, otherwise, I've just seen it just take people who really mean well and want the best for themselves and take the wind out of their sails. Make it so much harder for themselves than it needs to be. Then, they have thoughts about how they didn't accomplish what they wanted to accomplish. And that only sets them up for more emotional eating because they're feeling bad about themselves. That's the part that we can just skip. Let's skip that part.

All right, my friend, thank you so much for joining me today. And I am so excited to talk to you next week as well. Have a great one. I'll talk to you soon. Take care.