



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Oh, hello there, my friend. I'm so glad you're here again with me today and if you're new, then welcome. I'm so glad that you're here. Welcome. This is a great episode. I hope this makes a lot of difference for you. Maybe somebody is recommended the podcast or this episode, specifically, and if they have, you are going to be in for a treat. It's going to be some good stuff for you. I am hoping that the workers who are paving over a hole in my road stop. You guys always say, "I can never hear it." I think I just have a really good podcast mic that just drowns out all the other noises, so hopefully, you're not hearing some crazy, crazy stuff going on out there.

Well, I am really excited to bring you part 3 today, of the series Why You Think You Can't Lose Weight. This is a good one, I hear about this one all the time and I have not really addressed it on the podcast before and in its entirety. So I'm excited to talk about that today.

So the number 3 reason of why you think you can't lose weight is family. Family comparisons. So this looks like thinking, believing everyone in my family is overweight so I'm genetically predisposed. This is just who we are. We can go back, many, many generations. Lots of people have tried lots of different things, have never been successful. Also, people will pull out like, "Well, when you start looking at the data on people like us, it's probably not really possible that we can lose weight." That's comparing yourself to your family and saying, "Well, I'm just like them, they haven't had success. Therefore, I won't be able to have success either." And then there's the second camp, which is, "I'm the only one who's overweight in my family," and then the next step to that is, "So clearly, something is wrong with me because I'm not like them." Like, "They don't struggle and I do, so something is the matter with me."

So the first thing that I want to talk about is Data. Data can be actual study results like data and the literature. It can also be anecdotal data. I think that as doctors, depending on what your specialty is, we can often start to see trends within our patient population and then decide that that's just true. So I, for sure, remember thinking in this slice of people that I see like, these are the truths. These are the things that I can count on and believe, but it's still anecdotal, right? It doesn't necessarily mean anything about us. The thing about studies and data is that they're partly factual, but they're still partly thoughts. And the reason why they're thoughts is because when you read a study, it's not just like a whole bunch of numbers. There are a bunch of numbers and then there are words that give meaning to those numbers. There's a synthesis of that data that helps us, those of us reading it to understand what the study authors think that data means.

And of course, we have ways that we agree on of how to interpret certain things and stuff like that. But even so, the final conclusion is someone's thought. And so we can allow data to help us but I want to propose that we only use data when it helps us. What we so often do is we use data against ourselves, we use study results against ourselves, even anecdotal data against ourselves. We're like, well, listen, I have all these patients who've tried all these things and they haven't had success and I'm just like them. And so chances are I'm not gonna have success either. What we don't realize is when we're saying things like that, we think we're saying the truth. We think we're just relaying facts, but that's actually a thought that we're having. So the true facts are maybe whether your family members are overweight or not, right? This person weighs this much and we could argue that more ideal weight for them would be this much. That's doesn't mean anything until we add some meaning to it on our brain. Start going, what does that mean?

Same thing with anecdotal data. Okay, there's X many patience and why have tried this type of weight loss and Z have gained it back or whatever, and not had success. It's just the facts. And then we have our thoughts that we don't think are thoughts. So the first thing you have to do is recognize that they are thoughts. So thoughts, these are thoughts, I'm predisposed to obesity and many people tell me that. And I know you think that's true, but that is a thought, okay? I'm predisposed to obesity, losing weight is harder for people like me and people in my family. And you can come up with all kinds of things because of your genetic background, wherever culturally or ethnically your people derive from that that could be a fact. It's a thought. No one else in my family has solved this so it's probably not possible for me. Also totally a thought, right?

We are just deciding what we think is true, it's not the actual truth. Or conversely for the person who's the only overweight person in their family. Something is off with me because I'm the only one of us who struggles, right? We start thinking, maybe something in utero messed me up. Like, something is particularly wrong. Or even if it wasn't that, it could be that you experienced some sort of trauma growing up or just for whatever reason, everybody else doesn't seem to struggle with food and you do. That doesn't have to mean anything. Except what it is, that they don't use food to solve for their emotions and you do. It doesn't have to project the future and what is possible for you.

So the reason why it's so important to understand that these are thoughts is because our thoughts create our feelings, and when we start thinking these thoughts, especially we think they're true and then we feel defeated, hopeless, sluggish, lethargic, right? Like, when I read those thoughts and I think those thoughts, I just feel like I have no energy, and there's no point in doing anything. I just feel like I want to give up. Completely hopeless and defeated. Then we wonder why we aren't having the results that we want, why we can't create what we want? Well, because we're feeling these feelings that don't drive positive action. So when you're feeling defeated and hopeless and lethargic and sluggish, what actions do you take? Because remember, your feelings are always driving your actions. Those actions are all the actions that prevent permanent weight loss. You're not taking action on doing things that would really help you. You're going to be doing the path of least resistance. The easiest thing that you can do to just status quo, continue doing what you're doing, and not make any changes.

And then, of course, the results that you get will prove your thought true. But you thought your thought was true in the first place. You believed it was true. So when you get those results it only further confirms your belief and strengthens that belief.

It only further makes you believe that that really is the truth about you. And so then that cycle continues. So you think because of the way your family is that you aren't going to be able to have the success you want. I mean, that's one way of thinking about it but that is a thought. That's not the truth about you. And you get to decide if you want to fall in line and create the same results that they've created or if you want to create something different.

Now behind this, there are some other issues at play often, like little complexities to it. So one in particular, when your whole family is overweight, sometimes we have a deep fear of being different if we lose weight, right? If a part of being with our family is the collective overeating, is everybody dieting together or try and lose weight together and then very often in those kinds of settings we support each other until we support each other to overeat. I had a bad day. You know what? Screw it, you deserve it. Let's all just go out for ice cream or something like that. So if you decide to lose weight and you decide to opt-out of those interactions, what might it mean?

Especially, when it comes to the family of origin types of relationships. It's important to recognize that it may be very important to you that you feel included and have a sense of belonging when it comes to that family. And so that fear will drive self-sabotaging behavior because ultimately, deep down on a subconscious level, you won't want to do what it takes to lose the weight because if you lose the weight, then you're going to lose something. You're going to lose these relationships potentially, that is very important to you or you might be seen as different or maybe they'll tease you or give you a hard time or any number of different things. Even if they're very, very supportive of you, doing whatever you're doing, you still may decide or have thoughts about how you'll be different or you won't be able to enjoy being around them the way you used to do or things like that.

And so that's just something to take into consideration and recognize and understand and work through. It doesn't mean that that's a good reason to not lose weight and not tackle the overeating issue. It just means that you more deeply understand why you've struggled. But what's really going on when you think you can't lose weight. It's easy to be like, well, they're all overweight so genetically, I'm predisposed. So then now, I don't have to really try anything. When the reality is you're afraid that you actually would have success. And then it would change that whole relationship. On the flip side, for the person who's the only overweight person in their family, or the only one who struggles with food, sometimes we really desperately want to lose weight because we think we can finally be loved or accepted or part of the group if we can lose weight. Ultimately, it can be very isolating to feel like you're the only one.

So again, the family of origin can be very, very powerful, especially if any messaging towards you was the shape of your body or your relationship with food makes it so that something is wrong with you or you're not okay or there was any embarrassment around you or anything like that. It can be really motivating to try to solve that problem and lose that weight. Except for the fact that often the way that we cope and deal with the shame and embarrassment and the lack of belonging is by numbing out with food or soothing ourselves with food. So you can see how that ends up being a cycle that you can get trapped in where you desperately want to lose weight more than anything so you can be accepted or feel like you're like the other people that you want to be like, but in doing so, you end up not being able to use the thing that is helping you get through your life and your day, in the first place.

And so, that's really important to understand too. Because this is where things like coaching factor in. This is why going to wherever weight loss place or whatever program that just focuses on food, I'm telling you, you can lose weight in the short term but it will not solve the problem long-term. You have to address what these underlying issues are first. Because you can use willpower for a little while and you can force yourself to do different things. But even people who are very disciplined with their food, many of them have a deep fear of what would happen if they gain weight. Given that they're very, very controlling around their food to maintain their weight loss and maintain the body shape and size that they want, there are often other issues that they have, that they're so afraid that if they release the control then they'll eat all the things and then they won't be acceptable and then no one will love them.

So, I just want to point that out there because I know I've had thoughts in the past. Like, why can't I be like some of those people who have no problem counting macros for the rest of their life and think it's the best thing ever? And I'm sure there's going to be somebody out there who's like, "Listen, I count macros and I love it, and I never had them. I don't have any of those issues." And I'm not saying that there aren't people like that out there who exist, but they're probably not listening to this podcast. So I just want to point it out right, we will often make our lack of desire or inability to be very structured and rigid around our food mean that something's wrong with us, but often, people who are very structured and rigid around their food have their own set of issues. And we, maybe, are eating to make ourselves feel better and they are restricting and controlling to make themselves feel better, potentially. Okay, so you just have to understand that.

So the family of origin, comparisons, and our sense of belonging and understanding what we think our family wants for us, or what they used to want for us is very, very important when we're looking at weight loss. And sometimes it just requires a little exploration so that we can understand why we do what we do, why we think the way we think and sometimes for some people, it's more work to be done in a sense that there's more of some healing. Maybe there is some actual trauma that went on there or some more like minor, small "t" trauma types of things that we have to actually spend some time in and process the emotions that are still there, waiting for us as we're moving through that so we can get the results that we want.

Ultimately, regardless, when we are using our family and what they look like and their relationship with food to determine what we can create for ourselves, it's like cheating. It's a little bit of a cop-out in the sense that you're just going like, "I don't know, can I lose weight? Let me look around me and see." And what other people do like, their results with their body looks, their relationship is with food has everything to do with the way they think, the way they feel, the actions that you take, okay? That's what creates their results. So you're looking to them going like, "Can I do that too?" Or, "Will am I not able to do that?" but you don't know what they're thinking and feeling to take those actions, to create those results and even if you did know, you can decide to take different actions, which would be fueled by different feelings, which would be created by different thoughts.

So this requires you to put some effort into it. It's not just like follow this diet plan. Very often, people will ask me, "Do you give us a way of eating?" I'm like, I can give you some suggestions, but ultimately, it has to come down to you. You have to decide what you're going to eat, and I don't know what you like to eat, what tastes good to you, and what feels good in your body and all of that. Of course, I can give you lots of assistance, but that's just one small piece of this puzzle. To

permanent weight loss, we have to look at the other parts, the parts that we've been ignoring all of these years, the parts that we just thought like, If I could just forget about it, then it would go away. If I could just not think about it, if I can just stuff it down with enough distractions, with enough food, and maybe alcohol, and maybe shopping and maybe social media and just distracting yourself from your life, maybe you'll forget that thing happened. And your body is going to remember. It doesn't work that way.

Listen, I'm all about the quick solution and hack, if there was another way, I would tell you all about it. I would be the first one all promoting that, except it just doesn't work that way. So we have to dig into those things so that we can create what we want and still have the relationship we want with our families and let them live their lives and be who they are and let ourselves be who we are, and let ourselves have what we truly desire in our lives. So important.

Alright, have a great rest of your day and your week. I love you so much and I'll talk to you soon.

Take care. Bye-bye.