



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hello there, my friend. How are you today? So glad you're with me. If you are new, then welcome to the podcast. If you are more seasoned, we're not going to call you old, if you've been with me for a while, then welcome back. I'm so glad you're here. I have a great episode for you today. I'm really excited to talk to you about it. But before we get started, I have started this, a little bit of a sporadic series, in featuring books that I have thoroughly enjoyed. As you may recall, if you have listened recently, I have a book coming out in September of 2022, and I'm just realizing and going through the process what it takes to make a book. And it's a lot, and every book should be super cherished. Just have this newfound respect for books in general. They're incredible. And yeah, and I just love sharing a good book because, you know what? Why do we feel like staying up late reading a book is not as much of a problem as staying up late watching Netflix? That's what I want to know.

But I do feel like it's different. I always personally feel differently when I've been reading a book than I do if I've been watching a show. Not that there's anything wrong with watching shows, it's just that books are great and they feed our minds and they help us to grow. And this book I'm going to tell you about today blew my mind. I absolutely loved it. I immediately gave it to my husband and said, "You have to read this." This for sure is a book that I'm going to read annually. And there's not a lot of books I would say that about. I'm not the kind of person who likes to reread things very often. I used to as a kid all the time, but now as an adult, I think probably just because there's so many other things that I want to read, I usually don't go back to books. But this one, for sure, especially for someone like me, and maybe someone like you, is really worth reading, for sure.

So it's actually a pretty new release. It's called 4,000 Weeks: Time Management for Mortals. It is written by Oliver Burkeman. So Oliver Burkeman is a journalist who had worked for The Guardian for a long time. It had a longstanding, I think it was a weekly... Let me look here, actually. I think it was a weekly column on psychology and it was titled This Column Will Change Your Life, which is really cool. But in the book, he writes about how he really is like a complete productivity nerd and spent years exploring every productivity hack out there, all the different ways of organizing yourself, all in this attempt to be more productive and get more done and manage your time better and all of these things. So as you can tell from the title, which I think this is actually a great title, 4,000 Weeks: Time Management for Mortals, it's kind of a full circle moment for him in recognizing, you know what? We are mortal.

We are not going to be able to become robots who reach this pinnacle of efficiency in getting things done. And I know for myself, I often end up having somewhat unrealistic expectations for myself, or a big thing that I do is I tend to underestimate how much work something will be. Like, I tend to be very, very optimistic, which is a great thing until you realize you're in it. And you're like, "What was I thinking? I had no idea what I was talking about. Like, this is not what I really kind of had hoped it would be, meaning easier, or less time consuming." So in any case, in this book, the reason it's called 4,000 Weeks is because if you live to be 80, then you'll live for just over 4,000 weeks. So that's what the point is of that title.

And so what he really does is he just looks at like, why are we so addicted to productivity? Why are we so addicted to time management and wanting to get ourselves organized? Now, listen, I am not against being organized. I think being organized is a really good thing. And if you're already organized, then that's amazing. If you are not organized, if you're disorganized, then we definitely want to get you to a place where you're organized and you're efficient. Okay? So that, for sure, we want to get to. But then there's this part of us that just wants to continually improve and improve and improve, at least for some of us. And so then we're like, maybe it's going to be this journal. Maybe it's going to be this app. You know, whatever it's going to be, that's going to be the thing that's going to make all the difference for me.

And it doesn't. And then we just are onto the next thing, or reading the next book about productivity or whatever it is. And so what he really hypothesizes is the main reason why we're working so hard and pushing ourselves so much is because we don't want to be faced with the fact that we're all going to die someday. Like, we just want to not think about that, and understandably, but we just are not really interested in contemplating or thinking about or considering the fact that we are human beings who are here for a limited amount of time. And so he gets into what different philosophers have said about different things. And I just found it fascinating. I loved it. I literally laughed out loud several times, which, I enjoy a book that's a little irreverent, little bit funny. I just loved it.

And I'm not even sure how I found out about this book. I think I might have seen an ad on Amazon. I'm not even totally sure, but I remember just kind of clicking and being like, "Oh, what's the deal with this?" And then I saw the little blurbs on the back and I saw the people who had written the blurbs and I'm like, "Oh, no, this is like legit. These are like people I have heard of and respect. And so I'm going to get this book." And so anyway, I really enjoyed it. 4,000 Weeks: Time Management for Mortals by Oliver Burkeman, highly recommend, great book. This is another one, I think I tell you this every time, I read it, I think, in two days. I think I read it over a Saturday and Sunday. Just sat outside and read and read. And honestly, what it really helped me with was actually own book writing process.

I felt so much clarity and peace and calm over the whole book writing, just the whole thing, the whole project itself. After reading this book, I just felt like it changed my whole perspective. It got me really focused and centered on what's actually important, so that I could put down the things that my brain wanted to really believe were very important, but are actually not the most important. So highly recommend this book. 4,000 Weeks: Time Management for Mortals.

Okay. Now let's talk about our topic of the day. So I often hear about people who have some success. I mean, this happens with my clients frequently, as well. That we have some success with weight loss. And honestly, this is really with any goal, but we'll talk about it today within the framework of weight loss. That we are moving forward, and then we feel like we get stuck and we just are not able to move forward at all. Or maybe at the clip we were initially. There's always that fun newness factor where it's like, going really well and really easily.

And we're seeing results. We're like, "This is going to be a piece of cake." And then things slow down. I mean, the proverbial piece of cake, you know what I'm saying? It's going to be so easy. And then, for whatever reason, some obstacles get in our way, and we just find that we are not moving forward in the way that we wanted to. And there's never a more important time to manage your mind than when this is happening. So there's kind of the two things. There's when you're stuck, which is when you feel like, "Okay, I'm not going backwards, but I'm not going forwards. I'm just kind of hanging here for a little while, kind of maintaining." Or there's backsliding, which is where you kind of start the pounds start to creep up a little bit more. You're like, "I know I was moving the right direction. Now it's starting to creep back on again."

Or maybe it's even backsliding. If you're not seeing the results on the scale, maybe it's even just backsliding in not doing the mindset work that you need to be doing, or not planning your food, or not really checking your hunger scale so much. Just starting to let go of the tools that have been really helping you. So, couple things that I want to discuss with this. If you feel like you're backsliding, then you're going sort of in reverse. You're starting to let go of the things that you know are helping you. What I really want to encourage you to do is to stabilize yourself. So to practice maintaining where you are, even if you believe that ideally you should be doing more or other things or something different in some way. You want to just halt. You want to stop the backsliding because it's inertia.

We have momentum, whichever direction that we go. And when you're backsliding, before you know it, you're letting go of all these things. And then before you know it, even after that, you start believing, "I knew this wasn't going to work. This isn't possible for me." You know, the whole narrative that you tell yourself about why there's something wrong with you and that's why you can't have success. Or maybe why there's something wrong with what you were doing, what you're trying to do. So what we want to do is we want to stop where we are. So even if you know, "But ideally I'd be doing all these other things," don't worry about those things right now. Let's just stabilize where we are. So we want to just hold tight, just stop, then with the back sliding. And practice maintaining where you're at. There is nothing wrong with sort of taking a break from weight loss and maintaining where you're at, even if you have more weight to lose.

So taking a break from weight loss does not mean gaining it all back. Okay? Or gaining some back. It means maintaining where you are. In fact, I often have clients who are like, "Well, I haven't lost weight in two months, but I've been doing some intense, really personal work on my work, or certain relationships," or whatever it is that they're working on. And I always look at it like, well, first of all, you're practicing, maintaining, which is really important because that's the thing that most people can't figure out. So now you know what's required of you to maintain at your current weight. And if you want to lose some more weight, then that's available to you when you're ready.

But rather than looking at it like it's wasted time, or nothing good has happened, or you're doing something quote unquote bad, or something, because you're not continuing to lose, staying there might be exactly what you need in order for you to do the personal work that's required to take the next steps and move forward.

So if you're stuck though, and you realize, you're like, "Okay, I'm not back sliding, but I'm also not moving forward." We want to start questioning why we're not moving forward. So what I find is that, for most people, one of their biggest issues is that they believe that there's a certain next step that they should be doing. There's the next thing that's ahead of them that they aren't doing for whatever reason. They feel like they can't do it. They feel like it's too hard. It's not available to them right now. If their life were different, then maybe they could do it. Any number of things, right? Like, it could be you think, "Well, the next step is I just need to have every single Sunday, I need to be meal prepping for the whole week, getting all the food in the house, all the things."

And then just feeling like you're not able to do that. I'm not against that if that's something you like to do and that works great for you and you can be really consistent with it. But what I find is that for a lot of people, that's not really how it works for them. It's not really possible. Especially for doctors, especially if you ever take call or have to work on the weekends or have any kind of unpredictability to your life, it can be very hard to be consistent with that. So when you believe, though, that you can't have success unless you do those things, and you aren't really able to work that into your lifestyle in a consistent manner, then you're going to find yourself stuck. You're not able to move forward. So what we want to do when we're in this place, is we want to question what we think the next step is.

Often, we just think it's a fact that the next thing we have to do is X, Y, Z. I see this all the time as people start to get down to the last five, 10, 15 pounds. They're like, "Well, in order for me to lose more weight, I'm just going to not be able to eat anything I like, and I'm going to be hungry all the time." And I'm like, "Well, that's a really curious belief. Why do you believe that? That sounds terrible." And they're like, "What do you mean? It's not a belief. It's a truth." I'm like, "It is not, it really isn't at all." So we need to get onto ourselves. That's where coaching can be so helpful, because when we're in it, we often cannot tell that this thing that we believe to be the truth is really just a thought that we decided to believe that doesn't serve us.

And we need someone to help point that out and help to point us in the right direction and move past it. What we want to be doing is recognizing: that doesn't have to be the truth. Sure, it can be the experience of some people. Maybe it's even been your experience in the past. But if you think about, if you're still trying to lose weight, then you obviously haven't lost weight for the last time, right? You still haven't experienced permanent weight loss, because it hasn't been permanent. And so maybe one of the reasons it hasn't been permanent is because you've done it in a way that's not sustainable, because you believe that you have to be restricted and deprived and really uncomfortable and hungry all the time in order for you to get to that weight. Right? So if that's what you think is required, then you'll create a scenario for yourself where that's your experience of it.

And then of course you won't want to do that long term. Of course the weight loss won't be permanent. If you're like me, I was like, "No, I'm willing to go through the quote unquote, short term pain of the restriction and feeling hungry all the time so I can get to goal. And then I'll just like, figure out maintenance after that." That's what I always told myself back in my Weight Watchers days. Of course, I never figured it out. By the time I got to goal, I was like, "Give me some food. I want to eat. I want to enjoy myself." Of course, I didn't have any mind management tools back then. So we'll just add that to the mix here. But anyway, you have to really question what you think is required of you to get to the next place that you're going.

Even if it's just the next five pounds, the next 10 pounds, the next one pound, what do you really think is required? What do you really think is the next step? And is that even true at all? Now, maybe what you think is your next step is something that you're like, "No, I've reevaluated it and questioned it, and I think it's actually pretty reasonable, but I still am just not doing it." Then what we want to maybe try doing is thinking about what other things can you do to still keep you moving forward, right? To keep, like I said, that inertia, that momentum just keep you moving forward, trying new things, and maybe by trying something else, you'll make whatever you think that next step is possible, right? Now that next step doesn't seem possible, but maybe you can kind of take a little bit of a detour and go around and get to that next step in a different way.

You just have to get into that solutions focused mindset. Like, for sure there's a way for me to do something that moves me forward from being stuck in my weight loss. And you don't have to have all these rules or restrictions for yourself in the sense that you have to be losing a certain amount of weight every week, or somehow it needs to be a certain way in order for you to feel like you're moving forward. Literally just even thinking about how you're going to lose weight, thinking about why you're stuck and struggling is moving forward, right? Because you're actually putting some effort into it. And now I have a dog barking, so I apologize. I'm just going to keep going through this one. Sometimes I pause. I don't know what his problem is, but we're just going to keep going today.

So that's what we really want to think about. We just want to get creative and think about, what are the next things that we could be doing? What are the additional steps that we could you taking? My brain wants to tell me that this is the right way, or my friend told me that, or in the past, this is what's worked, and I'm just not doing it. Okay, then maybe that's not the right next step for you. Maybe there's an infinite number of ways to get to where you're going, and that was just one of them. And you don't even have to find the other right one. You just have to find any other one to try, of infinite numbers, so many different options. That's what you want to be trying. You want to just keep moving forward with, "Okay, if I'm not willing to do that thing, then what am I willing to do?"

Right? Maybe I'm not willing to change my food right now, but you know what I am willing to do? I'm willing to double down on some journaling and really getting to the heart of what's going on for me in my brain, in my mind, when it comes to my overeating and how I use food to not feel my feelings. Right? We could spend some time on that. We can think about what we want to be doing that will move us forward in that way. That is also important. Oh, hi. Now my doggie is up here with me. Yes, you lay down.

Okay. So when you're stuck, you can take a moment, take a beat and just let yourself be there for a minute, but don't get too comfy. We don't want to get mossy, meaning we don't want to let moss grow on ourselves because we're just sitting there like a rock, not moving, stuck for a long time.

We want to just take a pause, take a moment, reassess, look at everything, kind of taking the drama out of it, get your brain into a clear space where you can see what's really going on for you, and then you move yourself forward with anything, with any next step forward. What I find is that often, because we believe that other people know better than us how to lose weight, someone else is the expert in my body and I can't possibly be trusted to know what to do to lose weight or take good care of my body or myself. If we are stuck, we're like, "Oh, it's someone else's problem. Someone else needs to solve this for me. Someone needs to tell me what to do."

And I think that having a guide, having people weigh in on what they think, I think I'm not against gathering information, learning more. I think that's amazing. But what you have to remember is that you are the expert in your body always. No one has to live your life in your body but you, and no one has to live your schedule just the way your life is. So when someone comes to you is like, "You know what you should try is, changing up your eating in this way." And then you look at that and you're like, "That will never work with my work schedule." Then that's just not a great option for you. I mean, sure. You could try it if you wanted to, but you just know it's not going to work based on what's required of you and expected, right?

Like, if you need to eat every couple hours and you do consistently long OR cases, that's not going to be a good one for you. So instead of just thinking, "See? Poor me, and if I wasn't surgeon, then I wouldn't... If I didn't do these big cases, then I wouldn't have to suffer as someone who's overweight." Or whatever, instead of just being like, "Oh yeah, that's not even for people like me. That's not for people like me. That solves a problem that other people have. I have a different situation. I just have to figure how it's going to work for me." I love looking at... When I first started doing coaching, I remember just thinking, "I wonder if I can get this to work for all kinds of different doctors." And it was so fun to be able to be like, "Oh my gosh," after a certain while, several years, just being like, "I have literally not found one doctor where we couldn't come up with a plan, where we couldn't get this to work."

Like, it works. And the main reason why is because we custom tailor your plan to your life, your taste buds, your body, everything that is individual and unique about you, and then we help you to move forward on it. So you keep showing up for yourself, but because you've created it yourself, it's not a hardship, right? It's something that you're more than happy to follow, which is not my experience in counting points, or macros, or I even had a little foray into Keto for a while. Or even the rules when I was vegan for many years. There was not the peace and freedom around food that is created by this process. So if you're stuck, you just need to keep moving forward with something. Find something to do.

Even if it's journaling three minutes. What's going on in your head? What are your thoughts about the fact that you're not losing weight? What are you making that mean about yourself? How do you want to think about it? It's literally simple things like that. It's easy to think that that's not going to make a difference. It makes all the difference. It's literally everything. Okay?

So when you're stuck or you're back sliding, don't let that be like an omen. You knew it wasn't going to work. You know, start creating this very sad story about how this just reconfirms for you how you knew that you shouldn't have gotten your hopes up because you can't lose weight. You knew it wasn't possible. Instead, just take a second, gather yourself up. What's the next step that you're willing to do? Move forward with anything. Okay? And keep yourself going. Keep that momentum going, meaning just moving forward with something. Don't slow down. Don't get mossy. Okay? That's what we got today.

Have a lovely rest of your week, and I'll talk to you very soon.

Take care. Bye bye.