



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well hello there my friend, how are you today? I'm so glad you're here. Welcome to the podcast. Today is a special day, the day that this podcast arrives into your listening app. Today is my baby's 16th birthday. It's actually my oldest child, he turns 16 on November 16th. How fun is that? Right? It's his golden birthday, which I didn't even know that was a thing until I became an adult. My birthday is on April 6th. I remember turning six and thinking, "Oh, how fun? I'm turning six on April 6th," but golden birthday, that was not a thing. No one talked about that.

Anyway, it's very, very exciting for him to be able to drive. Actually, it's very exciting for me, for him to be able to drive. I've been looking forward to this for a really long time. I am just super excited to be able to celebrate with him. Just an amazing, amazing experience it is. I know when you have little kids in the trenches, some times it's hard to... People would say this to me and it kind of drove me up a wall so I apologize if that's what's happening for you right now, but, but when they're little, it's just feels like it'll last forever. Then it just really doesn't and you start to realize, "This is actually a really special time." I just am also, it appears, to be someone who really enjoys parenting teenagers, which really shocks me. I was not expecting that, but I really, really enjoy having conversations with young people of this age. It's so great. Anyway, so exciting day around here. Okay.

I have another awesome book to tell you about, so how much are we loving featuring these books? I don't know about you, but I'm loving sharing my favorite books with you. If you are new or haven't listened to one of these before, I'm sharing some favorite books that I've read, because I have a book that I am currently writing that is going to be published September 20, 22. Going through this process has given me, not even a renewed respect, just drastically increased respect for what it takes to get any book out there. You go to the bookstore, you go to the library, there's so many books. I mean, just look on Amazon, right? There's so many books, so many people have put their blood, sweat, and tears into creating these books. We're just like, "Oh yeah, whatever this book." We don't often really, really appreciate them.

I've just been choosing some of my favorites to talk about on here, because don't we also love a great book recommendation. It's just like when someone watches some series on Netflix or something, they'll like, "Listen to me right now, you to watch this." Then you're like, "Oh my gosh, they were so right. I'm so glad they told me. What I'm doing, is I'm sharing books with you where I'm like, "You know what, it's going to be worth your time. I think you want to read this one." Another one for you today, this book is called *In Shock: How Nearly Dying Made Me a Better Intensive Care Doctor* by Dr. Rana Awdish.

Here's the backstory to this book. I've actually owned this book now for a few years. Early on, I'm not exactly sure, I don't know if we really have the email anymore, but I think it was at least several years ago, I made a comment on a podcast where I said something to the effect of a patient, quote, unquote, trying to die, when a patient is trying to die. I just used that as the little colloquialism that it is, just a way that doctors often speak.

I got an email from a lovely human being who, after that episode went live, to let me know that that's actually not a really very nice way to refer to patients. I thought to myself, "Is it really that bad?" I kind of went back and forth or whatever, but anyway, she recommended this book. Right away, I bought it. I was open to hearing what it had to say. I didn't read it for a long time, not for any reason other than I have lots of books that are waiting around for me to read them and I just never got around to this one. I got around to it, I think early in the summer this year, and I really enjoyed it. What's really cool about it, is it's mostly memoir, but also a lot of educational information about just the medical system.

Rana Awdish is just a super cool person. She's from the Detroit area, you can probably tell from the way I speak that I'm from that area as well. She's an intensive care doctor. She's the Director of the Pulmonary Hypertension program at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. Her thing after this whole experience that she went through, which was crazy town central, is she just really works on improving patient experiences and advocates for patients in healthcare settings all across the country. She's really a big deal now, when it comes to this kind of stuff, because of her experience of almost dying.

She goes through the whole story of everything that happened and what her recovery period was like. She's like in her own ICU, very close to death, and experience saying what it's like to be a patient in that setting. What a meta experience, right? This is your ICU, all your colleagues, all the doctors you work with, and then these people are taking care of you, and you're seeing what it's like to be on the other side, to be the actual patient in the bed. Luckily she makes it, thank goodness. This book is the whole story about it.

Now after I read it, I had my husband read it. That's how you know it's good when I'm like, "Matt, you have to read this," so he read it. I was like, "Every doctor should read this book." It's actually really, really good and really helpful to think about. I looked on her website and I saw that she had been featured on an episode of This American Life as well. Now if you are an NPR junkie or you like just, I mean, This American Life's been around forever and it's so good. I love it so much. It's just a great podcast. Before that, it was a radio show. Anyway, there was a whole episode where she was featured in This American Life. That was actually really interesting to listen to as well. If you want to go extra deep dive after you read the book, you can go listen to episode on This American Life.

But anyway, it's a great book. It's called In Shock: How Nearly Dying Made Me a Better Intensive Care Doctor by Dr. Rana Awdish, A-W-D-I-S-H. It's a great book. Highly recommend it. Man, oh man, oh man, did she go through something. I tell you what, then her family and everything, it was wow. She is a strong lady. That's what I have to say about that. Definitely worth it for you to read that one.

Okay, today we're going to talk about weight loss as a way of exploring your growth edge. Now the growth edge, is this kind of newish term that I just hear more and more people kind of throwing around. I wanted to talk about that concept and what it means, which is also... There's no real definition. I went to the interwebs and looked around and lots of people talk about it in different ways, but I wanted to let you know what I think it means and talk to you about how weight loss can really factor into exploring that growth edge and helping you to grow as a human. What is a growth edge? Like I said, I looked all around, I read lots of different things, and here's really what it kind of comes down to. A growth edge, if you just think about any... I have this visual and I don't know really how to describe it. I kept being like, "Is it like a wave hitting the sand?" No, it is not. What is it really like? I'm not sure what it's really like. I don't know how to describe it exactly. I don't think that's good either. I was like, "Maybe it's like a crystal that's growing." I don't think that's probably good either. Okay.

Really what it comes down to, is there's your level of comfort, right? You've got the things that you're comfortable doing, just your area that when you are living your life in this way, you feel comfortable. Then there's the edge of that, okay? We get to that point where we bump up against it. I'm totally happy going over a bridge and I don't have any issues with anxiety about heights, until the bridge reaches a certain height, right? I don't know what that exact level is, but there's some point where the bridge is high enough, where now I'm starting to feel anxious, right? That's like that edge right there.

At that edge, what we find is a variety of different things. Sometimes we find something that we're afraid of, like I was saying with heights. Sometimes we find something there that we have always wanted to try, but we haven't yet. You might call it like sort of bucket list items that require something of you. At the growth edge, you might find something that you're really procrastinating, but you would really the result of having done it, but you keep procrastinating and you're just kind of right on that edge of like, "Am I going to do it or am I not."

At that edge, you might find that there's a risk that could really help you to improve, but it is risky. There is a possible downside. It may not work out, and so you're right there. "Should I take the risk or I not take the risk?" It might be an area where you frequently find yourself getting annoyed or afraid, or maybe enraged. Maybe it's more than just annoyance or frustration or something like that, where you just keep bumping up against it and you notice those emotions are there, but you just keep coming back to it, keep coming back to it.

That growth edge is the edge of real meaningful change for you, okay? That area of comfort, when you think of that circle within which most of us live most the time where we're comfortable, we can expand that or we can contract it. We can make it bigger. We can expand the things we feel comfortable with by growing, or if we do nothing, that edge will actually gradually and slowly contract. This often happens with people as they age, particularly once they become more elderly.

If you think about anybody you know who might live a life like that, you just notice that they stop doing things that they used to be doing. Maybe they're less social. They're not taking part in activities like they used to. They're just doing the things that are very comfortable, very predictable, and in doing so, it starts to make their world very small. They don't do a lot and they don't expose themselves to a lot.

What they live in, is this very small comfort zone. That small zone, makes doing so many other things, very scary and uncomfortable. That area of comfort really can contract over the course of time, if we are not actively working on expanding that edge by trying new things.

Now, when you expand the edge, right, if you go right to that growth edge and you want to grow into it, by definition, you will be moving away from what's comfortable and into something that is less comfortable or uncomfortable. Then you do that for a while, until you figure it out or you get the result that you want, or it just becomes your new normal and it does become comfortable. In doing so, that area of comfort has now expanded. What's the point in growing? You might be like, "Why do I, I have to grow? Haven't I done enough in my life. I mean, seriously Katrina, you're asking a lot of me here." If you'd be thinking that, I mean, listen, you're not wrong if you decide you don't want to do this, because here's the deal, you get to live your life however you want. You don't have to do anything, but I do want to offer you my thoughts on why it's worth it to continue growing.

I do understand, especially for doctors, right, you put so much into your life so early on, so many years of our training is just discomfort after discomfort after discomfort. Some of it's really painful and some of it's less painful, but not very much of it is comfortable. I think sometimes we look at it like, "Listen, I did all of that on the front end, in order to enjoy a comfortable life on the back end." To an extent, that can be the case without any problems. I think that's great if that's how you want to live your life. But I do think that the point of growing, is to experience life ultimately, the fullness of what life has to offer us. Overall, this time that we have here, is not that long. We can do the same thing again and again, or we can experience new things, knowing that there will be discomfort that comes with it and also many amazing things.

I think the reason to grow, is because growing keeps your life interesting and it keeps it meaningful. It also helps you to fill your life with purpose and fulfillment. It gives you a reason to keep doing something. It also can provide the novelty that so many of us are so frequently craving, especially in our current world of apps and things, right at our attention. I was reading actually a novel last night. I don't read a lot of novels, but I'm trying to get into more of them. This is actually a great book that I'm reading, I love it so far. There's words in there and I don't know what they are. Well, I don't even own a dictionary to go look it up. Of course, I just Google what it is. There's nothing wrong with that. It's just that we're so used to getting the answer, comfort of knowing what the definition is of that book, while I'm cozied up in my bed and super comfy. I don't even have to get out of bed to go figure out what it is, right.

We want to make sure that we have other things to move forward toward. It gives us a reason to be here, to show up. It makes our lives interesting. Why are we waking up every day? Because we have an opportunity to do something new and different. How does weight loss factor into this, right? You've got this growth edge. You may or may not be totally aware of where it is, but like I mentioned before, right, it can be something that you keep having negative emotions about or something that you just keep circling. You're like, "I want to do it," and then you keep circling back into that comfort zone and you keep crossing that edge, but not really pushing yourself. It's like that edge of real change. You know that there's some change that could be made there, but you're living in that comfortable area right now.

How does weight loss play in? Well, when it comes to our weight and our overeating, when we're overeating, when we are using food to neutralize our emotions, we are living in that comfort zone. We're nowhere near the growth edge. We're just like, "Listen, I just want comfort all the time. I want to hit the easy button and I don't want to have to deal with any discomfort." I'm not saying that that's even wrong or bad. I'm just saying that it's important to understand that that's what we're doing when we're gaining weight or when we're not taking the actions that are required to actually take good care of ourselves when it comes to food and our bodies.

If you think about weight loss, it will require you to bump up against that growth edge and potentially move past it or expand it, in the sense that you have to recognize, "You know what? I want something different for myself. I want to create a change. It's going to require me to move outside of this comfort zone." Many of us though, are so firmly planted inside that comfortable area, that we don't even know where the edge is of growth. We don't even know what we're capable of, because we aren't even bothering to look at all.

Weight loss is such a great way for you to figure out what that is. Many parts of the weight loss process might be very simple and easy for you, and then there might be some other component where you're like, "Ooh, this is requiring something of me. Wow. I really got to double down on this. I see now how this is helping me to grow as a human being." I see this all the time. Literally, I mean innumerable. There's no way I could even count how many clients have said, "I came for the weight loss, but really what I got was, my relationships being better. I finally have the life that I enjoy, finally have the relationships that I wanted to have. My whole life is better. The weight loss is not even in the best part."

The reason that is, is because when you are losing weight in the fashion that I teach, where you are really exploring your brain so that the weight loss can be permanent, you're first of all, solving that problem that's been holding you back. Of course, you're no longer avoiding your emotions by eating them. Instead, you're so much more aware of what's going on in your mind and how you're thinking about things and the experiences that you're creating for yourself in the world. You understand how to change them, how to be with yourself, how to process emotion. You're solving that problem, which is amazing, but that's just the first part.

Then all those tools that you have learned, you then can apply to any other area of your life. It's literally the same thing. When you're thinking about, "I really do want to grow as a human being," weight loss can be the entry point there for you. It can be the way to help you to find that growth edge and move past it, expanding that comfort zone and then going, "You know what? This other thing that always terrified me, you know what, now that I've done all this other work, it's actually totally doable and I'm going to go do that too." Then before you know it, you're just expanding and expanding and expanding that growth edge to other areas. What's interesting is, when we think about weight loss, we're like, "It's going to be so hard. I'm going to be so uncomfortable. I'm going to be deprived," or, I hear often, "Well I would do it, but not if I'm going to be deprived or restricted or if I can't overeat all the time," or something like that, right?

What we don't understand, is that it's exactly that statement of what you don't want to do, that you need to go and do. The Stoics, back thousands of years, had a saying that the obstacle is the way. There's even a whole book about it. In this way you can think about it like your growth edge is the way.

What kind of life do you want to experience? What kind of body do you want to experience it in? How do you want your life to be? Your growth edge is the way to achieving that. Finding out where you're bumping up against that growth edge, where there's some room to grow, and then moving beyond it.

That book I was telling you about, *In Shock*, even when I got that email from that lovely listener who so carefully let me know that what I said was not acceptable anymore. It would've been very easy to get very defensive and just say, "She doesn't know what she's talking about. People are so sensitive these days. This is just ridiculous. Everyone knows what I'm talking about anyway," and just shut down. Instead, I moved to that growth edge. Yeah, it's uncomfortable to have someone call you out, but also maybe she's right and maybe there's something for me to learn and I just didn't know. I'm happy to learn something new.

You know what, if all I have to do is read a book so I can understand it better, then maybe that's the least that I could do. That helps me with expanding that growth edge. It helps me that the next time someone tells me I did something wrong, which I'm sure they will and has happened plenty of times since I got that initial email, than I am even more open to hearing what they have to say, more open to learning about how maybe I could do better in the future. Maybe even deciding, "Do I agree with them, that I've done something wrong or not," but being open to it rather than just shutting down and closing that door and refusing to pay any attention to it.

The growth edge itself, is something that is, of course it's made up. If you really think about it, there's certain limits of what you're willing to do, right? Maybe your growth edge is that you would really love to be tapped for a leadership position within your department, but you won't tell anybody that you want it or stick your neck out there for fear that they would pass over you and then you'd have to be disappointed or you might be embarrassed or humiliated or whatever, right? Your growth edge is even admitting to yourself that you really do want this thing, and then maybe telling a couple other people too. Starting to get used to the idea that maybe you could be someone who could have that and that wouldn't be so outlandish. Then if you didn't get it, maybe that wouldn't mean anything negative about you. Maybe that would mean that there's actually something better and another way that you can contribute your gifts and skills, that is even better than what you thought you were going to have or what you thought you wanted.

That's the growth edge, and weight loss is such a great way of exploring what that growth edge is. Going through weight loss through coaching perspective, helps you to really uncover where you've been holding yourself back or certain things that have happened to you that require some more healing or whatever you have that's been going on, that maybe you're not so happy about with your life, right? Maybe you are wishing things were different. Often we're blaming other people or blaming the past, blaming outside circumstance for what we've created. In this case, what we recognize, is that we actually have so much more control and power over what our experiences of these things are. Once we recognize that, I mean, it just explodes your whole life. I don't really know how else to describe it, except for the fact that you really can move forward and start to create whatever it is that you want. Then having your body just be the same weight every day and your clothes always fitting and being comfortable in your skin, is just the fun little side bonus.

I know when you struggle with your weight, literally every single day I'd be like, "Oh my God, I am so happy that I'm in this body." I'm not saying you can't be or shouldn't be like that, but what you find is that it becomes a new normal too, but those tools are still available to you. Weight loss can be such a great way to just move yourself forward in your life. If you're just sitting there thinking, "I should be further ahead. Shouldn't still be struggling with these things," whether it's weight loss or something else, just do yourself the favor, give yourself the gift of learning what you need to learn, so that you can just decide on purpose what you want to create instead of just holding yourself back because you don't think it's possible for you or it'll be too uncomfortable.

All right, we're going to have a great party tonight. Enjoy my oldest baby's 16th birthday. I can't believe it, so fun. All right. Have a great rest of your day and week.

I'll talk to you next time. Take care.