



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hello there, my friend. Welcome back to the podcast. I'm so glad you're here. And if you're new to the podcast, then you are in luck today because we have another episode in the back to basics series. This is going to be a great one. We're going to clear up a lot of questions. It's going to make a lot of sense to you, what the method is to my madness, why I ask my clients to do the things that I do. I'm so excited to share this with you today. We're going to talk about food journaling, which everyone loves to hate. You're going to learn to love it, and I'm going to show you how, okay?

All right, let's talk about food journaling today. Now, I want to start off by telling you that if there was ever a person who hated food journaling more, I haven't met them, okay? I always thought like, well, people who food journal, they just like to journal. They like to write stuff down. That's just not me. I had a lot of reluctance. I had a lot of objections to food journaling, and you might too, maybe not. You're probably not as bad as I was, but in case you are, I'm going to help you to see how I was convinced that this is actually not that big of a deal.

It's a way easier than you think it has to be and it actually is super, super useful. Not only for helping you with weight loss, but for helping you with learning to manage your mind as well. But first, before we get into all of that, I want to talk about these objections, this reluctance. I want to make sure that you realize that you're not the only one who is like, "I don't want to do that. I'm going to skip that part. She can't tell me what to do." That's where I start going. I start getting into like teenager, like, "Don't tell me what to do." That's where I start getting. So I want to help you to understand that I get it. And so common objections that I personally have had, and what I've heard from others is, I mean, first of all, we just don't want to feel bad about what we're eating, right?

If we decide to write everything down that we eat, then we think then I have to feel bad about what I ate and I don't want to feel bad so how about, I just pretend like it didn't happen. Sometimes that looks like food journaling, the things that we think we should be eating and then deciding not to actually journal the things that are off our plan. Kind of like, if I don't write it down, then it didn't happen. Another way that we go about this is sometimes we decide to just journal everything we ate at the end of the day. And during the middle of the day, when we were maybe eating something soft plan, we will literally not bring that into our conscious awareness enough so that by the time nighttime rolls around, we've actually forgotten and that we ate it. And this comes up all the time where clients will say, "Well, no, listen, I am following my plan a hundred percent."

"Okay. But when are you food journaling?" "Oh, at the end of the day." Hmm. I wonder if maybe there's some times that you are overeating or eating off plan and you're simply not even remembering when it's time for you to write it down. So we think that we're going to feel bad if we have to write down everything that we eat. Many times, we think it's too much work. That was one of my big objections. I'm like, who has time for that? Who's going to like carry a notebook around, write it all down, or enter it into their app on their phone or whatever. It just feels like too much. Now I will tell you that a lot of that came from me having had experience counting macros, or even calculating all the Weight Watchers points. It was kind of a lot of work and you needed the package and if you didn't have the package, then you needed to weigh and measure things. And it was just like a whole thing to figure it all out and it really did feel like a lot of work.

Sometimes we just think it's annoying. Like, I just don't want to do that, just straight up. I don't have an excuse. I just don't want to. I think it's annoying. And that comes up a lot too, right? We just are like, I don't want to do this thing that I think is annoying. Some of us really feel like it feels punitive and this comes up a lot. Like we think of it as, if I write down what I've eaten, then it will be judged. And I may not get the A that I want, I may not get the approval that I want. This comes up a lot.

Like back in the day, I used to ask my clients to submit their food journals to me. And I stopped doing that on purpose because the person you really need to learn to be accountable to is yourself. And if you're accountable to me or any other person, what happens when that person no longer is involved in this. Either they're no longer in your life, you're not paying them anymore or you just don't have that relationship anymore if it's someone that you is like a friend or family member. So assuming there's not someone in your life, who's going to be really interested in looking at your food journal and everything you've eaten for the rest of your life. We probably need to learn how to do this for ourselves, right? The point is not to get it right, so that we can get the approval of the person looking at it.

The point is to find out what the heck we're actually eating, it's information gathering, but we are high achievers here, most doctors. And so it can often feel like if I don't write down what I'm quote unquote, supposed to write down, like all the things that are on plan, or if I'm honest and actually put on there what I have eaten, then I'm going to sort of fail or flunk or someone will think negatively of me, my coach, whoever's looking at it might be disappointed in me. Depending on who you're working with, you might get a talking to and you just want to avoid that. And if you're thinking of food journaling as something that's punitive, then it totally makes sense that you'd be very reluctant to doing it. I mean, completely of course, right? And then also I often have thoughts of like, well, no naturally thin person is walking around, writing down what they ate.

I mean, really is this what has to be done? And what I would say is that in the short term, yes. And in the long term, maybe. So I never look at it like you need a food journal for the rest of your life, but it's a great tool, especially in the beginning when you're learning how to lose weight and keep it off permanently. And then it's a great tool that you can use any time you need to use it in the future. So do I food journal, every single thing that I've eaten, many, many years out now? No I don't, but I know that I have that tool available to me. If things start getting a little whackadoodle with me, then I know one of the first things I need to do is I need to get really honest with myself about what I'm actually doing in eating and gather information, find out what's going on.

So the first thing that I want to mention about this, right? As an objection, we say, it's too much work and it's annoying. I mean, I agree if you have to write down a whole bunch of things and it's like very complicated, there's all this math involved and stuff, it really can feel like too much, particularly too much to do ongoing relatively indefinitely. Like it's just not something you want to do forever more. Now, some people love doing that. They're probably not listening to this episode. Probably not listening to this podcast because if counting macros or calculating points or any of that, the other more complicated programs work for you ongoing, then you wouldn't be struggling and here where you are, right? So how do you get over this? You just make it less work. If it's too much work, you just make it less work.

And we make it really, really simple. And so what I have you do is I literally have you write down what you ate and that's it. So what I mean by that is writing down like, for instance, my dinner last night, would've just been grilled salmon, roasted potatoes salad. Now, I wouldn't even write down the dressing because we eat the same dressing pretty much every night. But if I got a wild hair and decided to have different dressing, then I maybe would write down the different dressing. But I just know that if I have salad, it's with our typical dressing that I make. And if I don't write the dressing, then it means it's that dressing. So how long does it take to write grilled salmon, roasted potatoes salad? I mean three seconds, maybe four, very, very fast and easy. So we are not weighing and measuring.

We're not comparing amounts to a deck of cards or your finger or your hand or any of stuff. We're just literally writing down what we ate and that is it, okay? So I don't think that's too much work. I don't think anyone could argue that that's too much work. It's very, very simple and easy to write it down. What we're doing is we're just moving into curiosity and information gathering, like there's a mindset that we have when we're gathering data versus when we're judging ourselves, right? So when we think, well, I don't want to feel bad about myself if I write down what I eat, well, the only way you'll feel bad about yourself is if you judge yourself for what you've eaten, right? Similar to standing on the scale, right? If you only get to feel good about yourself if the number has gone down and you have to feel bad about yourself as the number has gone up, of course, you're not going to want to stand on it.

Same thing here with food journaling. If you have to be perfect, whatever you deem perfect to be in order for you to feel good about yourself, of course, you're going to avoid food journaling because you don't want to have to feel bad about yourself when you actually are a human being and maybe things don't always go perfectly, whatever you think perfection is. So the point of this is to not judge and not to even look at it as like a good or bad thing, or even being any reflection of who we are as a human being, our value on the earth. Once we start tying this into our self worth and our self concept, it starts becoming very, very heavy. And we just want to forget all of it. What instead I want to suggest that you do is that you just move into curiosity and interest and truly a data gathering mindset.

You are just getting information. I always think about this as doctors. We're not going through a patient's chart, looking for various lab results and imaging results and judging them. We're like, let me just get some data. Like data is just data. It's just neutral until we interpret it. And so you gather that information by food journaling, and then when you're in the right mindset, you're not judging yourself, right? You're not punishing yourself. You're not telling yourself that you're bad or good or anything. You're just like, oh, interesting. This food was chewed up and swallowed.

These beverages were drunk. That is basically we are wanting to find out so we can get that information and then compare it to the results that we're getting on the scale or what our clothes are feeling like. And then we can make informed decisions from there.

Now, another thing to remember is that success leaves clues, right? So when people are successful and when we ourselves are successful, we leave clues usually. But if you are just following whatever plan you want to be following, and you're getting results, and you're not writing down what you're doing, you will not remember what you did to create that success. You may think you're going to remember, but I promise you, you will not remember. It will not happen, okay? You will not remember. And so, then when you get to rough patch, when things get a little topsy turvy, when you're struggling, you have nothing to go back to, to even identify like what you used to do that was creating success for you. All you're doing is just laying out there. When I do this, it works, interesting. Good information to have in case in the future, we get stuck or we forgot about that way of eating.

What happens so often when we're trying to lose weight is we end up repeating the same meals again and again, and again, I've seen this so many times with clients who ask for a food journal review, and they're like, "I'm really stuck." And I look back over the last several weeks and they're eating the same things again and again, and again. Now, first of all, there's nothing wrong with doing that. And most of us do that anyway. I mean, if we eat breakfast, most of our breakfasts are relatively the same and lunches are often very similar as well. It's more dinner where we typically get our variety, but regardless when you're eating the same thing again and again, and you're not getting the results you want, we need to start mixing it up.

Now sometimes we're like, "Oh, I can't think of what else to have. I'm just kind of like in this rut of eating the same things again and again." But when you have a food journal that you can refer back to, you can go back, "Oh, you know what? I forgot about eating that. Oh, you know what, that would be a good idea. I haven't had that in a while." It's such just a treasure chest of information for you to access at some time in the future. But that means you have to keep track of it today, okay? Now you may be thinking, "Well, if I just write this down, how do I know if it's the right amount of food?" Well, this is when we build in the hunger scale. Now, if you're new to the hunger scale, there's a back to basics episode on that as well.

So make sure you go back and find that episode. It's not from that long ago and listen to the hunger scale because the hunger scale is the tool that you use to help you to determine when you should start eating and when you should stop eating. So when I'm talking about my salmon and potatoes and salad. I know that I started when I was at a minus four on the hunger scale. And I stopped when I was on a plus four. So how much that ended up actually being isn't actually relevant. I don't need to know how much that is. I don't need to know how many ounces it was. It's not relevant because I know that I ate as much as my body needed and no more and no less, okay? So the hunger scale is what ends up helping you to make the food journaling incredibly, incredibly easy. Very, very simple.

Now you want to allow the information that you gather to inform your decisions moving forward about your eating, right? You want to be making decisions from information and data and not from mind drama.

And I see this also again and again, someone's in a plateau and then they just start freaking out and making it mean that they knew that they weren't going to be able to lose weight and keep it off forever. And they knew that their body was broken and they knew that their genetics had set them up to really be struggling. And they knew it wasn't possible for with them. This was too good to be true. That's all the mind drama rather than looking at it and going, oh, interesting. I wonder if you just kind of switched things up a little bit here and there, what would happen?

That's just from a more logical place, looking at the information, like making decisions that are data based and not a not even anecdotally based like drama based, like fear based really is what the drama is about, right? Fear that it's not going to work, fear that you won't be able to get the result that you want. So when you take away that fear and you move into abundance and you go, you know what, I know I'm going to be able to create this. I just have to figure out what the next step is to get through this obstacle that I have of being in a plateau, you're able to logically and rationally figure out what the next best step is for you. So having those food journals is so important to help you to guide those decisions moving forward. Now, I want to give you another special trick that makes this even easier, okay? Did you think it could get easy? You probably didn't guess what it's going to get even easier.

So here we go. I recommend that you make decisions about what you're going to eat by using your prefrontal cortex. This is the part of your brain that can plan. It can think about the future and it can understand short term versus long term consequences. When you're making decisions based on what your primitive brain or that limbic part of your brain wants in the moment. That's like letting your toddler run wild, make all the decisions. They mean well, but they just want what they want and they want it now. And you know what that's like, right? You have planned this nice lunch. And then when it comes time to eat, you're like, "I don't feel like that." That's the toddler voice telling you. I don't feel like eating that, right?

And the prefrontal cortex is more like that supervising mother who's like, "No, listen, I understand that maybe this isn't your first choice, but it's what's available. It's on plan for us." Long term you're going to feel so much better. Your energy will be better. It's in our best interest to eat this now. And so what we want to be doing is planning our food, especially while we're losing weight. Again, this isn't necessarily something you have to do for the absolute rest of your life. But when we're first doing this, what we want to do is plan our food for the next day, the night before, that way you have all the decisions made. And then the next day, all you have to do is follow your plan. You don't need to think like, well, should I go through that drive through? Should I stop and get that treat for the kids?

What was the plan? All you have to do is follow the plan, just do what the plan says. And you know the plan won't lead you astray because you did it with your prefrontal cortex. And you know you did it with your prefrontal cortex because you planned it advance, okay? That primitive brain, it doesn't think about advance, it thinks about now. So when you're planning the night before you're using that part of your brain that makes you human, that is so special to humans that helps you to recognize, no, this is what's in my best interest, okay? So you plan your food the night before. And again, this does not have to be fancy.

You're just writing down what you're going to eat. For instance, I could have decided, okay, I'm going to have grilled salmon, roasted potatoes and salad, super easy, right? If you do any kind of meal planning, or if you don't shop every day at the grocery store, if you shop several days at a time or a week at a time, then you're basically already doing this anyway, for the most part, you're deciding what you're going to have for your meals.

So you plan out what going to have, and then the next day, if you just follow your plan, as it's written, you don't have to even journal anything. You can just put a little check mark after it. If you want to, you can add the numbers of where you were when you started eating on the hunger scale. And when you stopped, if you want to get fancy, you can do that. Or you could literally can just be like, "Yeah, I followed my plan, done." So easy. Right? And if something comes up, like say you had planned on using some of the spinach that you had in the fridge. And then when you got into the spinach, you were like, "Ew, this is gross." And not looking edible anymore. Then you would cross out the spinach and maybe use kale instead. And you write down kale, just an example, right?

So if something spoils, if someone eats your food by accident. Someone in your family ends up eating it or taking it for lunch and you didn't expect them to, you could tell that happens in our house a lot. I have it all in my head. What's going to happen. And somebody ate that. I'm like, "Oh, okay, well, what are we going to do now?" But anyway, the point is, if that happens, then you make a decision that's in accordance with your plan, your overall plan, like the overarching way that you're trying to eat, and you come up with something then of course you would make that adjustment on your plan, on your journal. But most of the time that doesn't happen. Most of the time you can get it all set up so that all you have to do is just eat what you said you were going to eat.

And then that's it. So, so, so, so easy. So ultimately we think we don't want to feel bad about ourselves. If we write down what we ate, if you approach yourself with love and kindness, regardless of how and what you ate, then you don't need to be afraid of that, right? Or afraid of being like found out we're afraid of being punished. And so many of us are overeating anyway, in secret, in hiding, we don't want people to know. And if we wrote it down, then it would be real. Then it wouldn't be a secret anymore. And I want you to know that one of the most important things is bringing it to your awareness, to the light of day. And of course, if you're being coached as well, it's so helpful to have someone else know, someone who can actually help you, someone who isn't just going to be like, "Yeah, it's no big deal that you're bingeing all the time, whatever, live a little." Right?

Someone who's going to be like, "Okay, interesting. What do you want to do? What are your goals? How can we move you forward?" This is exactly what my coach team and I do in the weight loss for doctors only program. You want to learn to change that inner dialogue from constantly looking for how you're screwing up and how you're a horrible person and how this food journal is just evidence of that. And instead move into, "Okay, I'm going to love myself and be kind to myself no matter what happened." But that doesn't mean that I'm just going to be like, oh, well you ate off plan. I love you anyway. I mean, you can do that. But sometimes the most loving thing is not just allowing everything to just go the way it goes. Like if you have ever been around children that have no boundaries and that are running the show in a home, you'll see that they actually aren't very happy.

It's not good for anybody when that's the case. So that primitive brain in new needs some structure, it needs to know that someone else is in charge and has its best interest at heart. And when you are approaching yourself with love and kindness, you're not just going like, well, it's okay that you ate whatever again, you're instead going, huh? That's interesting that I did that. And that wasn't on my plan and it doesn't move me forward toward my goals. I wonder what's going on for me with that. What's that all about? Let me see if I can figure it out, right? That's being loving and kind to yourself rather than, you're such a whatever, horrible thing that you say about yourself, right? You're a disgusting mess. You're so undisciplined, you're never going to be able to figure this out.

All of that kind of language, it's not going to move you forward. If anything, it's going to make you hide more. It's going to make you try to forget what's going on. Many people end up going into binging behaviors where they're just eating as much as they can, as fast as they can, because they feel like this is their chance before they start having that stream of thinking that beats them up so badly and breaks them. So like the answer to all of this is love, kindness, acceptance, and then having our own best interest at heart, right? Deciding, you know what, this is really what I want for myself. I really want to learn how to be okay with not feeling super awesome in the moment so that I can feel better later. I'm understanding that my lack of ability to delay my gratification is creating a lot of problems for me.

And that's really what I want to work on. And I'm willing to fail and screw up as many times as it takes until I learn how to do it. And I will not beat myself up while I'm in that phase of learning. Can you imagine if you were learning something new and then just every single time you made the most minor mistake you just got completely lambasted. I will say that some of you might be like, "Yes, in fact, I do know what that's like." Depending on what your training environment was like and the quote unquote toxicity of your program, maybe that was your experience. And maybe you're like, "Yeah, I actually know what that's like." But regardless, can we all agree that that's not the best way for anybody to learn? And what we're trying to do is learn how to feel our emotion and lose weight and keep it off forever.

And it's probably going to be a lot easier and faster to do that when we approach ourselves with love and compassion and kindness and acceptance, while still holding ourselves accountable rather than beating ourselves up to smithereens and hoping that we get a different result, just a doesn't work. And if you really think about it, you probably already know that. You probably already have a lot of evidence that shows you that that is what ends up happening again and again for you when you're not being kind and loving to yourself.

So that's food journaling, it's so easy and I promise you it's so, so important. It's such a nice way of showing yourself of who you are and what's going on for you. Either way, either it's like a love letter to yourself or you see, you know what? Like how well I'm taking care of myself or it's an opportunity for you to understand that you're struggling in some way and you need to figure out what it is. Like, huh? Interesting. I totally am eating off plan there or I went back for seconds when I really didn't need it. I wonder what that's all about. Maybe I want to try to figure that out.

There's no room in there for yelling at yourself, being mean to yourself, getting frustrated with yourself, giving up on yourself. It's all in the name of moving you forward toward having freedom around food and just complete peace over your weight.

Just maintaining the weight you want to be at and no longer having all that mind drama. So with that, I encourage you to start doing some food journaling and you know, people often ask like, can I use an app? I really suggest that if you use an app, you just use like a notes app rather than something just literally where you can just type in what you ate rather than use saying any kind of app that requires you to put in any kind of measurement or requires you to see numbers of calories or macronutrients or anything like that.

We don't want to be looking at that stuff. We really want our brains to just be focusing on what's important and we don't need to see any of them. So if you want to keep track of your weight in an app like that, that's totally fine. Just so you can see the graph, the curve but in terms of your food, let's just skip that part and just use the app on your phone. But if you're a paper girl, a lot of us are then totally fine for you to use a notebook and a pen. Just keep something on hand and there you go. And you've got it. All right. Let's give it a try. Food journaling. I'm telling you, it makes a big difference. We keep this so simple. Weight loss does not have to be as complicated as everyone makes it out to be. Okay?

Super, super simple. Just write down what you ate, that's it, but make sure you write down everything you ate, even a little lick, little tastes, little nibbles, all those things need

to be put on there. We need to know what we're consuming. All right. Thank you so much for joining me and I hope you have a great rest of your day and your week.

Now, I'll catch you next time. Take care, bye-bye.