



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hello there, my friend. How are you today? Welcome to February. Can you believe it? I can't, except I can today because it's really, really cold here. You don't know, I live in Wisconsin and it is cold here. I have my space heater on. Actually have in my attic office, I have an electric fireplace, which I wasn't quite sure when I'd think of it, but I actually super duper love it because, even though you can tell it's not a real flame, it does what a real flame does. Like how it kind of, you know, just like you can't stop looking at it. It's very peace inducing and very calming. It still does that. And then the heat part is optional, which is really cool. So I can have the fireplace on when it's warm out and not make the room super hot. So I get to kind of decide if I want the heat on or not, but when it gets this cold, I really do need the extra heat.

So I've got that running. I've got super cozy socks on. I'm wrapped up in a blanket. I have a wool sweater on and I'm still a wee bit chilly. That's what we got. It's a beautiful whole sunny day and I love a cold sunny day in winter. If it's going to be cold in wintery, I want it to be a clear sunny day. So thank you universe for giving me this day today. I wanted to tell you about something that I've gotten into recently that you're going to laugh about. You probably have already come and gone on this, but it's new to me and that is Downton Abbey, have you watched this?

Okay, let me tell you my complicated history with Downton Abbey. So when this was a thing, everybody was talking about it's on PBS and it's part of Masterpiece Theater or whatever. And I'm like, I don't think that's going to be for me. I just right away was like, hmm, I don't think so. And so I never got into it, never watched it. And people were so excited about it. I have to say one problem that I have historically had when I watch films that are Irish or Scottish or English mostly speakers is I often am not sure what they've said. I can sometimes have a hard time understanding. So I now know that close captioning is my friend with this. And that is a really good thing for me to have.

But I think it was when we had one of our kids. I mean my oldest child, sorry, my youngest child is eight years old right now. Maybe it was when she was born. Anyway, it was many, many years ago. Someone in our family, when we had a new baby sent us the DVDs, that shows you how old it is, sent us the DVDs for it thinking, oh you have a new baby. This would be a good thing to get into.

Well, we turn on the first episode. I don't know if you've ever had this experience where you're playing it, whether it's like a DVD or even sometimes it just happens when you're streaming, where the sound is just slightly off from the actual video.

So as people are speaking, the sound is not coming out of their mouth, just the way it really should be. It's either a little delayed or a little bit ahead. And that was happening with these DVDs. And that is something that I just have zero patience for. I cannot tolerate that. So I'm like 20 minutes into this thing. I'm like, I hate it already. I don't know what they're saying. The sound is all off. I was like, nope, this is too slow. I'm not going to get into this. And so I just never did.

And I don't know what, I honestly don't know what it is that made me come back to it. But I think I just saw that it was on Netflix and I think I thought, oh, maybe I could just try with some closed captioning. I know people loved it so much. I don't know why. Maybe I just thought it would be kind of calming. I don't know. Maybe that's the vibe I need right now. I don't know. Anyway, I decided, well, let me just try it again because, I mean, the critical acclaim and just in general people loving this thing, it was just so much like, it's possible that maybe I could like this and I'm obsessed.

I think I'm halfway through season two and totally, totally loving it. It's just, yeah. I just love it. And it is kind of nice to have something to watch that is a little bit more, it's still like very exciting, but it's just a little bit a more chill vibe. Like I said, just a little bit calmer, very beautiful. And just a change of pace from what I typically do. I often will watch a series or watch a season of a show and then I'll tell myself, okay, well, before we start the next thing, let's read some books. So I kind of try to go back and forth and do some different things. But sometimes I also just need to know, like sometimes even reading feels like more effort than I'm willing to put in or more energy than I really have. And I need something that I can just very passively watch before it's time to settle down for bed.

So anyway, loving Downton Abbey and so maybe you had similar thoughts to me. Maybe you were just like, hmm, I'm not into it. I don't know. Maybe you'll try it based on this recommendation, who knows. And my husband watched it all, I mean, many years ago. And so I'm like, oh my gosh, this is good. He's like, oh, what part do you want? And he doesn't even really remember any of it. So I'm telling him all these parts again and he is like, oh wow. Yeah. And so anyway, I'm also learning a lot just from a historical standpoint. I mean, obviously it is fiction, so it's not like it's going to be a documentary, but it's still kind of interesting to learn a little bit more about those times. So anyway, that's what I got for you, Downton Abbey, it's on Netflix right now.

All right, today, we're going to talk about whether permanent weight loss is possible without working on your thoughts. And if you look at the mainstream weight loss industry, you would believe that yes, it is possible because they don't even talk about working on your thoughts or really not in any kind of meaningful way. And so it would be easy to think this thought work piece or this part about like emotions and stuff, do you really have to do this? Is this really required? And I think it's actually a really good question. I really thought about it long in heart. Is it possible without thought work? And you know, my answer is yes and no. So let's dig into both parts.

Yes. Is it possible? I say yes, because first of all, I believe that anything is possible, of course. I would say, though, that if somebody really insisted that they completely permanently lost weight, no longer struggle with food or their weight anymore, and they didn't devote any time or effort or energy into any kind of mindset work or anything like that, and it doesn't even necessarily have to be for or more organized, it could just be on their own.

Then I would venture to guess that probably what ended up happening is that they've now just substituted something else to overdo instead of using food.

So they were using food in order to manage their emotions or to deal with stress or anxiety or whatever they had going on. And they decided to no longer do that, but now they're probably doing something else that has some sort of detrimental effect over the long run. So maybe they're drinking more than they believe they should. Maybe they're spending more money than they should. Maybe they are having trouble in their relationships, really struggling and reacting, acting out on people in their lives. Maybe they're gambling. There's lots of things that we can do. I mean, even just spending too much time on the internet, more than we'd like to, playing video games. So lots of different things that we can do that can distract us from what our emotional true life is. And so I would say that probably they're just doing something else if they haven't actually solved that problem. So is it possible? Yes. But I always look at it like, why would we want to swap one issue for another issue? Why don't we just solve the issue?

So, because of that, I say, is permanent weight loss possible without thought work? You know, no. Because anyone who loses weight permanently changes their mindset. Whether they realize it or not. And this is something that I find interesting is I actually know a few weight loss coaches who have done this, but one in particular that I'm thinking of, she lost weight on her own and really made some shifts for herself in terms of, she just decided like, I'm going to change this, I'm going to change the way I think about this and really did a lot of work on her own, lost the weight. But then people were coming to her and saying, "Hey, can you help me to have the same results as you?" And what she found is she didn't know how to help them, because she barely even really knew how she did it herself.

So she had made changes, but she didn't really have the full insight into how she had done it. And so then she became a coach so that she could learn the actual tools to be able to help others get the results that she had gotten. So somewhat unknowingly to herself, she made those changes, or maybe it was knowingly in the sense that she just kind realized like, okay, when I think about things in this way, I'm overeating, I need to change that.

And so of course learning coaching tools and developing her knowledge has helped her to take it to an even deeper level. But she's just an example of someone who didn't go through any kind of formal program, created permanent weight loss for herself yet she still did thought work. She still shifted her mindset. So I do think that if you want that result, if you want to no longer overdo something or overuse something in order to avoid feeling the way you feel, to deal with the negative emotions that you're experiencing as a human, that changes have to be made. That's just really what it comes down to. Ultimately personal work is going to be required. And so the important part to understand here is that when it comes to losing weight and really solving the problem forever, it really is not just about what you eat and how you move.

And I think that this is something that just, it was drilled into us for so long, to focus on the food and vilify certain food groups and macronutrients and ways of eating and to focus on essentially blaming us or the problem, right? Like we're not eating the right things or we're too lazy or undisciplined, we're not exercising enough. We need to be exercising more intensely. But we have believed for so long and been told for so long that that is the problem. And of course changing those things is the solution. It makes us think that I think the thought work part is like superfluous.

So that's just extra or that's for people who really, really struggle. That's not for everybody. And what I would say though, is all you have to do is look around and look at the trend with which people struggle with their food to understand that that just can't be the case.

I mean, how come people can be totally managing their food and moving their bodies and still struggling? It's not the only issue. And so I've said this so many times before and I always come back to it because it is just the truth, the food, the weight, the overeating is just the symptom. It is not the actual problem. Okay? So when you think it's the problem, you go to try to solve the problem. You change the food, you do portion control to help you with overeating, right? You put food into boxes or you compare it to parts of your body or you weigh it and measure it or whatever way you try to control it from an outside source, like someone else, knowing how much you should eat, that will give you some results in the short term. But almost always, it will not give you the results in the long term because it's not really what the problem is, it is the symptom.

So if the overeating and the weight and the food and the obsession with food and the brain chatter about food is the symptom, then we need to look deeper to figure out what the actual problem is. And this is where the thought work comes in because the actual problem comes down to the way that we think about things, our interpretation, the filter through which our brain sees the world and also our ability, or lack of ability, to deal with our emotions. And I think the emotional component is one of the absolute most important parts. That's what emotional eating is. How you've been conditioned to emotionally eat. How were you conditioned to do that? You were conditioned to emotionally eat when you were raised in a situation, whether it was your family of origin or society in general, or some other part of your life, to dampen your emotions, to not have a vocabulary around your emotions, to not know that it's not only normal to have emotions, but safe and healthy. And there's a way to allow those emotions to be a part of your life without it being a bad thing, right?

Those are the things that we never were taught. And so when you have emotions, because you're a normal human being, yet the messaging is don't have those emotions. You will figure out a way to tuck them away or shove them away. Jam them down so you never have to think about them ever again. And the way that so many of us have done that is through eating, right? We figure out that food distracts us food makes us feel better. Food dulls the sensation of the emotions that we're feeling. And we don't know how to feel them. No one has taught us how to work through that. We don't like it. And so therefore we eat.

So it doesn't matter if you're counting points or calorie or macros or whatever that is not going to be the solution. The solution comes down to working on yourself, personally. Working on your thinking, understanding that your thoughts are what create your emotions and then working on learning to actually feel your emotions. I feel like whenever I say that, that sounds like so basic or someone might just be like, what do you mean feel your emotions? I mean, that's how I felt like what does that even mean? Like, do I really have to do that? It felt like such a black hole unknown that it wasn't even something I was afraid of because I just literally had no idea what it was. Just no idea. And so what we have to do is learn to become in touch with what our feelings are.

Now I've shared on this podcast before, besides just eating to avoid feeling my emotions. I also, from a relatively early age, expressed physical complaints as well. So I actually had physical symptoms like pain and other physical physiological problems that were also related to emotions.

And this has been just like the most incredible thing to actually understand and connect the dots on. Even just last night, this was coming up, I was having a conversation with somebody. It was about something that was kind of, well, not even kind of stressful for me without a real obvious solution. And it wasn't long and all of a sudden, both of my wrists had pain in them. And I was like, oh, isn't that interesting? And I even just verbalized it like, well, both of my wrists are hurting. So I think that this is like letting me know that even the emotions I'm feeling right now, it's not all of the stress that I'm, that I'm experiencing from having this conversation.

What I've now learned to be able to do is recognize like it's not like something is wrong with my wrists all of a sudden. It's like, no, I'm experiencing this physical pain because there are emotions that are not being dealt with. Or sometimes I like to think of it as this is just another way that emotions are being expressed. Rather than making it mean that I'm doing something wrong like I'm not processing them properly, I look at it more like this is just something for me to notice and be aware of. This is something that is emotionally difficult for me, and so I want to be aware of that and stay with myself and not avoid it in other ways.

So when you get behind the idea that the overeating and the weight and the food and possibly alcohol for you is really just the symptom and not the problem, then you come back to understanding that, for weight loss to be permanent, thought work and personal work is required. This doesn't necessarily mean you have to dig up your entire childhood and that you're digging into the past and whatever. And some people are like, I don't know, this starts to sound pretty woo to me. I don't know. It's a little bit out there. And I always think of myself as I'm interested in the woo. I'm a little woo adjacent. I'm not against it. I'm not totally dive into the whole thing, but I'm interested in hearing more. I always think of it as it's totally available to people if they're interested in it and it's not required either. And what I know is that you don't need any of that in order to lose weight and keep it off permanently.

What you need to recognize is the thinking cycle, which is cognitive behavioral therapy, which is that your thoughts create your feelings and your feelings drive your actions. So if your actions are overeating, we need to look at what is the feeling and what are the thoughts, right? That's really what we have to look at. And that is thought work. So my answer to the question of whether permanent weight loss is possible without thought work, I think the answer is no. I think that work really is required. And I've seen it time and time again with clients of mine who are like, yeah, I don't know that I'm going to really do that part. I just want to lose the weight and they do, they lose weight fast. And then they realize, you know what? I'm right back to where I was struggling again. I do think now I have to address what's really going on for me.

So if you be in struggling with your food, weight, overeating, I just want to encourage you to try a different approach and that approach is going to involve looking within. Have a great week and I'll talk to you very soon. Take care. Bye bye.