



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hello they're my friend. How are you today? I'm so glad you're here. Welcome to another back to basics series episode. I'm really, really excited about this one, because we're going to be talking about one of my favorite subjects. And really, really, arguably the most cornerstone principle, foundational kind of thing that you need to understand in order to lose weight permanently. I can't wait to talk to you about emotional eating today, it is going to be so good and I'm so glad that you're here.

And even if you've been listening to me for a while, and even if you've worked with me, and you've lost weight and you've had great results, I still want you to listen to this one. The basics are the basics for a reason. They're so important. We need to understand them deeply. I feel like every time I teach this concept, I actually learn it on an even deeper level.

So please, make sure you don't gloss over this or start thinking, you know what? I don't need this. I'm ahead of the basics. Always good to come back and review those foundational prints of bowls that help you to create the results that you want. I do just want to also share with you that we just had such a great Master's Live Event. It was really just a few days ago and we, it was such a good one.

I mean, they're all good, but I just loved it. Lee, who's one of my clients who's been around with us for a while, and she's been going through it lately. So Lee, sending you a lot of love. And I know all of your master sisters are sending you love too. She said, "It's always a great day at Masters Live." I was like, "Yes, it is. It's so, so good."

I also wanted to share a quote that one of our members, Petra, put in the chat, that I thought was so good. And I don't know who said it, so I'm just going to give attribution to Petra for being the person who brought it to my attention. But she said that she reminds herself all the time, old keys don't unlock new doors, right? Those old keys, they opened the doors that got you to where you are right now.

But to create new experiences, to have just something new in your life, you need those new keys. And those new keys are what we're really going to be talking about today on this podcast. It's what we do in coaching. I just love that perspective, right? We don't need to be upset about anything that's happened in the past because it's got us to where we are today. And now, based on today, what are we going to do moving forward?

We can create new keys for those new doors with the new information we're going to learn. And who knows, this episode could be one of those new key moments where you're like, yes, I could open the store. I've been stuck for so long, and now I know how to move my way forward. So I can't wait for you to hear that today.

All right, so let's talk about emotional eating. The basics of emotional eating. So what is emotional eating? For a very long time I did not understand what it was. I don't know that anyone actually taught me, or that I actually sought out anybody to teach me. But I will tell you that I firmly was planted in the, I just like food camp. I did not think at all that I could be an emotional eater.

In my mind, someone who was an emotional eater was someone who was very emotionally labile, who really did not have their you-know-what together, struggled to live a functional life. And I just didn't identify with any of that. I literally had this image in my head of some poor woman in the corner of a room on the floor with a big bag of chips, sobbing and shoveling chips into her mouth as she's sobbing. I just did not identify with that at all.

So why would I think that I was an emotional eater? I just was like, no, I just like food. Food is fun. It tastes good. That's all there's to it. There's no emotional component to this.

And so as I start to realize that doing the Weight Watchers program a hundred million times, only slightly exaggerating there, and losing weight only to regain it again. And it just, being literally the exact same cycle again and again. Once I finally realized, hmm, maybe that isn't working, maybe this isn't the right program for me, I started trying a bunch of different other things.

And one thing that I tried was working with a dietician, she was a very lovely person. There really wasn't a whole lot working with her that helped me, but there was one thing. And so I for sure will give her credit for that. And that was that she asked me to read any book by the author Janine Roth. And Janine Roth has written several books on compulsive overeating and things like that. I have to tell you, I was like, I'm not compulsive about it, I don't overeat like that. I really was resistant. But she said, "Just look at all the books she's written and just pick one and read it. "

So I picked the one that seemed like the easiest to read, and kind of the most lighthearted. It seemed when I looked at them that they seemed very, very heavy subjects. And she really is widely known and seen as this amazing, amazing teacher. I just, like I said, I was like, yeah, that's not for people like me. I don't have that problem.

So I found this book, and I'm reading through this book. And she starts describing emotional eating. And I was like, hmm, well, that's interesting. And even then though, I did not have the aha moment. I didn't have that light bulb moment even then. But I read the book, and was sort of more contemplating what in that book applies to me? What in that book ... Basically, what can I get out of this? Put the time into reading it, there's certainly just got to be something.

And it was truly one of those shower moments. I was in the shower, and I guess thinking about that book, or just thinking about the whole kind of situation, when it was like my brain put two and two together, and I finally saw it. I was like, wait, so emotional eating is eating for any reason other than needing food for fuel for your cells, for your body to be alive and healthy.

And if that's what emotional eating is, then a hundred percent for sure I do that. Yes, yes, yes, for sure. I do that. I was just so incredibly disconnected from my emotional life and what my emotions were, that I could not even see the connection. I was like, no, I'm not experiencing emotions and then avoiding them, actively. I could not see any of that, but I could see that I definitely ate at times when I was not physically hungry.

That was really the opening for me. I was like, yes, there are times that I do that, 100%. So if that means I'm an emotional eater, okay, fine. Then I'm an emotional eater. But I still didn't feel like I knew what to do about it. I read this book and I thought, okay, well then she's going to tell me what to do. There really wasn't a whole lot of what to do next. It was more of an awareness-building kind of situation.

So I didn't know what to do next, so I continued my epic quest to understand this better, which of course finally led me to life coaching. But what I had to understand in order to move into understanding emotional eating very deeply, and then from that place know how to move away from it, was I had to understand what feelings were, and had to recognize that I did experience them.

Not like I really, deeply didn't think that I experienced them. I just thought that I was extremely even-keel. I just thought, I don't experience a lot of extremes. I just kind of get things done, I just do my thing. I don't know about this emotions thing.

But what I came to understand was that what creates our feelings are the thoughts that we have in our brain. And what creates our thoughts ... What are actual thoughts? Thoughts are when two neurons in our brains have a synaptic connection. So, right? Synapse fires, and a whole chemical cascade is triggered. And of course it depends on a whole bunch of different factors, but essentially this chemical cascade is triggered. And the result of that thought, those neurons firing together, is a chemical, hormonal experience in your body.

I think that one of the easiest ways to understand this is to think about what it feels like to be nervous. Most people can come to that one. You're feeling very, very anxious, or really worried about something. I think of it more like nervousness like, I have to go give a big presentation, or I have to go have a hard conversation. That butterfly in the stomach feeling, a hundred percent I can, yes. I know that feeling.

Well, that feeling is created by our thoughts about whatever the thing is that we need to go and do. Right? So we have these thoughts, this chemical cascade is triggered, and it goes across the blood brain barrier, and it goes into our bodies, and it creates sensations in our bodies. And that is what we call a feeling. Okay?

So it's our thoughts that are creating those feelings or emotions. I use feelings and emotions interchangeably. So it's our thoughts that are creating those feelings. If that's the case, we have to figure out what we're thinking. I literally was like, I don't know that I have a lot of thoughts. I really think that I just sing songs from the radio in my head all the time. Which just goes to show how long ago this was, because I listened to the radio on a regular basis when I learned this. Who listens to the radio anymore, except maybe NPR? I don't know. But most people don't, right? You're listening to a podcast right now. That's what most people are doing these days.

But anyway, I just was so disconnected. I was like, I don't know what I think. I never even, I just had never come across my path of life to even think about what I was thinking about. So I needed to start thinking, okay, what are those thoughts?

Just becoming aware, watching and observing what was going on in my brain. I also, like so many other people, thought that my thoughts were just the facts or the truth. I was just reporting on what I was noticing around me, when in actuality most of those things were not facts. They were just my thoughts, my interpretation.

So our thoughts are our interpretation, our brain's interpretation of what's happening around us. And facts are things that everybody would agree upon. Right? So we got everybody in the whole world to come and look at this thing and be like, yes, that is a water a bottle sitting in front of me. Everyone could agree, that is a fact.

But, that person was mean to me is not a fact. It's really our thought, it's our interpretation of what has happened. It doesn't mean that we're wrong, it doesn't mean that we should change the way we think about it. We just need to recognize that it is a thought. And that thought will always create an emotion.

When we start to understand that we actually have emotions, we can start to identify some names for those emotions. What do I actually feel? I know I was feeling so much frustration that I just thought was normal. At certain times I felt quite a bit of anger. I had a lot of negative emotions that I did not recognize as being emotions. I just really just was living in this haze or this fog about what was going on for me.

And so what had happened for me, and very likely has happened for you as well, is that you are at a point where you've been overeating, or just eating food, or possibly drinking alcohol in order to avoid feeling those emotions for so long that you really are completely disconnected from what you feel.

If you'd asked me, what feeling are you avoiding by eating food? I had literally no idea. No concept at all whatsoever. And the reason for that was, because that thinking cycle, which is that thoughts create your feelings, and then feelings drive your actions, the action of eating and sometimes having alcohol, was quick and fast, and it's such a well worn path, so habitual, that there was no stopping at the midway point. Right?

It's like when people are like, do not pass go, do not collect \$200, the Monopoly game, that's what was happening. My brain had an interpretation, which within a split second was driving the desire to eat or to drink something. I just did not know what was in between, and I had to figure that out. That's exactly what I help my clients to do now.

Now, one of the quickest ways to find out what's in between what those emotions are, is to decide to take a break from overeating. To take a break from eating for any other reason besides physical hunger in your body.

So when you decide, you know what? I will eat when I actually feel physical hunger and I won't eat even if my brain suggests it if my body is not experiencing physical hunger, you'll start to figure out something out, right? Because you think of that thinking cycle, thoughts create feelings, feelings drive actions, right? If you create a space or a little pause between the feelings and the actions, the actions being the eating or the drinking, you can take a little moment to figure out, what is it that I'm actually feeling?

So a lot of people think, oh my gosh, then I just can never eat for emotional reasons ever again? This sounds terrible. And what I like to do is to say hey, if you could do that, if you can just stop, that's amazing. If you feel like that's going to be too difficult for yourself, what you can do is tell yourself, you know what? I can have that snack. I can go grab the ice cream, or whatever it is that you want at night. I can pour myself another glass of wine. But first I need to know what my emotion is. That's my contract with myself.

Once I identify what my emotion is, then if I still want the thing, I can go and have it. But at least we're creating some space first. We're creating some awareness, we're understanding what's creating the problem in the first place. We're understanding what's driving it.

Now, when you look at the mainstream weight loss industry, what they are focusing on is your actions, right? They are completely unconcerned with what you're feeling or thinking. So this is why this is what creates permanent weight loss. You have to understand what is happening, thoughts and feelings wise, that's driving that action. You have to understand, what's gotten you to where you are right now before you can meaningfully make a change.

And what I mean by meaningful is permanent. Ongoing, you are actually changed. Not just a temporary, different thing that you're doing for a while, which is what it's usually like when we're dieting, only to just go back to old habits again. But to actually change it for good.

So when you understand that your thoughts create your feelings, which then drive your action of overeating or drinking more than you like, or would like to, then you start to understand what is the issue here.

It doesn't really matter which diet plan you're on, you know what I mean? It doesn't matter if you're counting macros, you're doing the keto thing, or whatever you're doing. A hundred million different options that we have for losing weight. That's a lot less important than understanding why you are driven to take actions that cause weight gain in the first place, or at least don't promote your body being at its ideal weight and staying there long-term.

Okay? So we have to understand what those emotions are that we're unwilling to feel. What emotions are we numbing out, are we avoiding? And a lot of the times we figure that out and then we're like, well, okay. But now what? So I realize that I am really, really mad a lot of the day. Or I realize I'm super frustrated with everybody at work all time, or frustrated with the world, and the current state of affairs, and the situation that we're all living in, or whatever. So what, I'm just supposed to feel frustrated all the time? Well, there's two things.

The first is kind of, yes, in the sense that you do need to learn how to feel the frustration or the emotion that you're experiencing all the way through, rather than trying to avoid it by eating. When you avoid it by eating, you're effectively just hitting the pause button on it. You're just saying, hey, not right now, but maybe later.

And when you do that again, and again, and again, and again, you have built up so much emotion that is just waiting to be processed, of course you're going to eat. You're going to be like, I don't even know what I'm going to find. I'm scared to death. This is years and years, possibly, of emotions that are all stuffed down. And I don't know what to do with any, I'm afraid there's going to be this volcanic explosion of vitriol or whatever's going to come out. And so it's normal to feel that way.

What we have to learn to is recognized you know what? I'm feeling an emotion right now. We have to learn the actual skill of feeling it, which is exactly what I teach my clients, so that you can allow it to move through you. I like to think of emotions as energy. It's just this energy in your body, and you can dull the energy by eating, but it's still there. Or you can allow the energy to move through you and out of you, and have it be gone.

And when that's the case, you don't need the food or the alcohol to make it go away, or to numb it out. You have allowed it to move through you. Now, the best part about this is that most of the time we find that the process of processing these emotions takes much less time than we think it's going to.

We're like, well, yes, if I had hours a day, of course I could process all my emotions. Who has that time, who has that energy? But it really, really isn't as difficult as you think. And it doesn't take as much energy or as much time as you think it will.

I see this time, time again. I remember being totally shocked and surprised about it, and my clients so often are as well. They're like, oh my gosh, wait, that's all I had to do? And a minute ago I wanted to eat everything, and now I literally don't care? And it's just not even something on my radar anymore? Whoa. That's really powerful. And it is really powerful.

Now, when you get to a place where you're like, you know what? Okay, yeah, I can process this, but you know what? Maybe I just like to not feel so frustrated at work every day. Because you know what? I'm the one who's feeling the frustration. And I would like to not feel that so much.

What we often think, and what so many people around us say and the way they think about it is that you just need a different job, right? Or someone needs to be fired, or you need a promotion, or something needs to happen outside of you so that you don't have those emotions anymore. But remember what creates your emotions? It's not who's around you, it's not who you work with, it's not the administration, it's not the setup of the system, it is your thoughts about it.

Now that doesn't mean that maybe working somewhere else isn't a better thing for you, it very well may be. But before we jump to that and start blowing our lives up and making all these changes, we have to recognize that it's our thoughts that are creating that frustration.

So just like your thoughts about your current situation can create frustration, your thoughts in a different situation or a new job can also create that frustration for you as well. So before you start making all those changes, it can be really, really a good idea to understand what your thoughts are that create that frustration.

We call this emotional responsibility. That means owning the fact that your emotions are 100% created by you. That means not blaming your emotions on other people, outside forces, viruses, systems, or any of those things. It doesn't mean that we don't think those things should be changed or that we think they're all great, it just means that we own that we create our emotions, always and every time.

Okay? When you understand that you can look, okay, well, what are the thoughts that create all that frustration? If I didn't feel so much frustration, I wouldn't have to process so much. It might be easier for me to not over eat, eat, right?

So then we can start going, hey, you know what? This is one way of interpreting the situation. Is there another way that also feels true and believable to me that makes me feel less frustrated, or a different emotion than I would prefer to feel? And can I correct my brain, right? Because we can really develop this negative filter, where we're just interpreting everything through the lens of, how is this not working out? How is this happening against me? How is this a problem for me? How is this not right? And then that's all we see.

So what we can do is we can change our filter, essentially. Thinking about different things, deciding to interpret things in a different way. You might be hearing my dog barking right now. And if that's the case, then I apologize. I know my microphone's pretty good, so I'm going to hope that you're not hearing it, but he's pretty loud right now. So we'll see.

So we have to own and understand our thoughts, create our feelings. We decide and choose how we think. And we are creating those emotions. Again, this is not a blame thing. This is not saying that there aren't systems of oppression in the world. We're not saying any of that. We're just saying, you know what? There are facts right now, and then there's the interpretation that my brain offers on those things, and that I have control over. Okay?

So understanding the thoughts and the feelings is where your major focus needs to be so that eating the way you want to eat, that supports your body, and promotes weight loss, and promotes weight loss maintenance, is so much easier. So much easier, right?

If you are in a place where feeling a negative emotion equates eating food or drinking alcohol, you've created this connection that is adaptive, or has been adaptive, but now you understand is maladaptive. So what you want to do then is essentially divorce those two things from one another. There's eating food and drinking alcohol, and then as a separate thing, there are your emotions.

And so when you're experiencing emotions, you process those, you take good care of yourself. You look at the thoughts when you're ready, you decide if you want to change them. Sometimes we want to, sometimes we don't. And then sometimes our bodies need fuel, and we eat then, and then on occasion we have some food for pleasure. And maybe alcohol for pleasure. A little bit of pleasure, mostly for fuel. Which is two separate things.

And honestly, this is how naturally thin people approach food. They're not asking food to solve an emotional problem for them, and that's why it's easy for them to just leave the food. It really is just not an issue for them. Now, they may have issues with something else, right? But when it comes to food and their emotions, that connection does not exist. So the good news is that we can identify that connection, and we can create a separation. We can burn that bridge and understand that these are two separate issues.

Through habit, possibly in your childhood you learned to do this, through some adaptive process you figured out, hey, you know what? It actually really helps me if I eat or maybe drink alcohol when I'm feeling this way. And in the short term, it probably did. The issue is that it's now creating a problem that's more longer-term. And if you've tried to stop doing that and you have a hard time, this is that work that we need to do.

So that's emotional eating. Emotional eating is eating for any reason other than feel for your body. And the good news is that this is totally something that can be remedied. You can learn how to stop doing this. And I'm telling you what. If I can learn to do it, I promise you, you can as well.

I hope you've enjoyed this episode of the Back To Basic series. If you would like some additional basics information, you can just Google search back to basic series, Weight Loss For Busy Physicians, or Katrina Ubell podcast, that comes up too. That works as well. This is really just those first episodes that you should be listening to, to get yourself started, get yourself going.

All right. I hope you enjoy the rest of your day. Have a lovely rest of your week.

Take care. Bye-bye.