



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hello there, my friend. Welcome to the podcast. I'm so glad you're here today. I've got a great, great episode for you. I am actually really excited to share all the things. I have three separate things that I am going to share with you today, I'm excited. The first thing I want to share with you is that I have another book recommendation. So if you are newish or have been hopping around with this podcast, I do actually have a book being published later this year. It's coming out in September more to come on that can't wait. Oh my gosh, I can't wait to tell you more about it. The book jacket's all decided on. It's very, very exciting. Very exciting.

So knowing what it takes to create a book... Actually, someone was asking me today, they're like, "This is longer, like you could have had like all of your children during the time that has taken." I was like, "Yeah, just about." It's really a process. And so it's really opened my eyes to what it takes to create a book. I have to say, it's not like I thought that creating a book or writing a book was easy, but I think I kind of took for granted books. And they should not be taken for granted because there's so much that goes into it, and so many people who put so much effort into creating a book. And so I just want to celebrate other authors who have written books that have made a difference in my life. And I want to share them with you. I've gotten a lot of really great feedback from many of you on and how much you're loving these book shares. So let's just do some more.

The book I want to share with you today is called Dopamine Nation and is written by Anna Lembke, MD. She is the medical director of the Stanford Addiction Medicine Program and is very smart and very accomplished and I believe she's a psychiatrist. And I really, really enjoyed this book. If you are someone who's kind of resonated with a lot of what I've taught, what I found is that this book describes so many of the things that I teach, just sort of in a different way. Like I kept reading going like, "Yes, yes, yes. Oh, I love how she describes that. I love how she explains that." It's just kind of a different angle. And so if you're interested in understanding your brain better, this is a great one. And do you know what? It's so nicely written, like really readable with good stories and she shares some of her own struggles of her life. I just love a book like that. The subtitle is Finding Balance in the Age of Indulgence. Dopamine Nation, Finding Balance in the Age of Indulgence.

And if you're anything like me, I've done a lot of thinking about this is just the world we live in, so what do we do? And that's exactly what she's addressing in this book. And there's just a couple lessons that I think are so important.

I can't even begin to share everything and I wouldn't, you should just buy the book and read it or listen to it so that you can get all this great information. But there are just a couple notes that I wanted to put a point on. One lesson from here is that the relentless pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain leads to pain. Let me say that again. The relentless pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain leads to pain.

That's exactly what we're doing with food. We are relentlessly pursuing pleasure through the form of food and possibly alcohol. And we do this to get the pleasure, but also to avoid what we're actually feeling. And that creates pain, 100%. It just does, it just does. I love this one, just in the context of medications for weight loss and weight loss surgery. She writes medications can restore homeostasis, but consider what we lose by medicating away our pain. And so, listen, I'm not going to say that no one should ever do those things. Everybody's got their own life, their own body, and you have to work with your doctors. But I think that there's so many people who are still skipping over the most important part when they're trying to medicate way or surgically solve their weight issue, especially if it's something that's been going on for a long time.

Okay, ready? Radical honesty promotes awareness, enhances intimacy, and fosters a plenty mindset. I think what she means by a plenty mindset is what I call them abundance mindset. I think she probably chose plenty mindset because abundance can sometimes be considered little woo woo. And this book is definitely not on the woo spectrum. It's very much based in research and reality. And it's just so true, if you can radically be honest with yourself about what's really going on for you and not pretending like it's something else like you just like food, which is what I always told myself. It makes such a difference. Such a difference.

And the final lesson that I'll just mention here is instead of running away from the world, we can find escape by immersing ourselves in it. So, so good. So listen, if you want more of that goodness, and you should, pick up the book, Dopamine Nation. Finding, what is it? Yes. Dopamine Nation, Finding Balance in the Age of Indulgence by Anna Lembke, L-E-M-B-K-E MD. She is amazing, great author. If you know her, tell her I really liked her book.

Okay. The final thing I'm excited to share with you today is how to make eating food on plan as easy as possible. I really do not spend much time at all on this podcast talking about actual food. I don't give recipes. I don't, because that's the wrong thing to focus on. It really is, there's a million other people in the world who are doing that way better than I ever could and also it's not that important. Okay? So I get this question all the time though. Like, "I get everything you're saying, Katrina. I understand, I'm on board, but it's still complicated. I'm a busy doctor. I do not know how to make this work for me." So I'm going to give you some really actionable tips today that you can start applying right away. These made a huge difference for me. I think they'll make a huge difference for you. I know they've made a huge difference for so many of my clients as well.

So just to give you a little background, so I fashion myself, I like to think of myself as someone who knows their way around the kitchen. I'm certainly not like chef level or I couldn't work in a restaurant and I'm not even particularly creative. I can really follow a recipe. To me, it's just like chem lab, like do these things and it will turn out. And I find that most of the time it really does. I don't do a lot of adjusting or just kind of making things up. But I kind of have a sense after all these years where I can make some adjustments and where I can't.

So I don't really do it with a creative pursuit in mind like I know a lot of people like to do. For me it's just like, let's just eat something that tastes good, serves our body. And also it's just kind of fun to create something, just like it's fun to do chem lab and have your experiment work. It's fun to do all that.

I think the first time I ever baked with yeast, I think I was 10 years old, 10 or 11. I went to the library, I got some sort of book, it was some novel. And in the book, the main character, the girl, was totally into bread baking. And at the end she had a bread recipe. And I said to my mom, "I want to try making this." And she was like, "Great, okay, go for it." And so I just never really had this whole thing in my mind like I can't do it. I was just like, "Yeah, I'm going to do this. And the bread turned out and I thought that was fun." So combine that with emotional eating and of course getting a ton of my entertainment and pleasure from food. Of course I watched a lot of cooking shows, read a bunch of cooking magazines. And over the course of time, I really have picked up a lot of skills.

Now what that meant for me was that I loved to try new recipes. I will also say that my whole entire life, my parents are from Germany and people would always say, "Oh, you must have eaten to German food every night." And really the fact of the matter is that we ate German food rarely, actually. Maybe on some special occasions from time to time. But my mom, it was so funny, I was just talking to her about this two days ago, three days ago. I was laughing with her. She literally cannot pass by a recipe. What she had done was she had emptied a bag of flour into the container in my house where we keep the flour and on the paper package, it had a recipe for some cookies or something and she cut out the recipe.

And so out of the corner of my eye when she was doing this, I did notice that she grabbed some scissors and cut something out. I literally paid it no attention at all. And then later I saw this recipe and my husband's like, "Yeah, where'd that come from?" And I was like, "I have no idea. It was just sitting on the counter." I was like, "Oh my gosh. I think my mom cut that out of the flour bag and left it here for us." So then she came the next day and I was teasing her about it. I was just like, she literally cannot help herself. The main spice store that we use, that I've talked about. I talked about this years ago on the podcast it's called, Penzeys. They have amazing spices and they're actually headquartered in my little hometown. And so anyway, we always get our spices from there. When you walk through their sales room, they have little tear off pads of different recipes so you can see how to use of the different spices because they have a lot of blends and a lot of things that are more unusual.

When she goes there, she has to take every single one. Like, she just cannot help herself. So my whole life, she was cutting recipes out of the paper, out of magazines. She had some cookbooks, but we just rarely ate the same thing again. Sometimes, but I was teasing her because I was saying, well, it didn't matter if she made something good because even if we super loved it and asked for it again, she could never find the recipe again so we could never have it again. So we were having new things growing up all of the time. And I think that actually was part of what made me think that variety is so important and it's fun to try all these new recipes and it is fun to a certain extent, but it actually made life very complicated.

Every time I was cooking something new, it's new. I haven't made it before. So it's just more complicated, it takes longer, you may not have the ingredients the house. So you end up with all these barely used different condiments and stuff in the refrigerator. Because for that one recipe that you'll never be able to find again, you need that one kind of red curry paste or whatever it was. And so I, as an adult started doing this too. I literally had a whole binder because I thought, I'll get myself all organized. Binder of all of these recipes that I printed out. Once we had Pinterest, then it was like, Pinterest was the way of having everything all organized in there, like so many recipes.

So it was not until I learned life coaching tools that I realized, I think this might actually be part of my problem, part of what makes me over eat. Because sometimes it was great if the food is really good, but also sometimes it just wasn't that great of a recipe and then the meal wasn't that pleasurable. And then of course I'd be surfing the pantry later that evening looking for something else. It was just so much novelty around food, it really was becoming a problem. So here's what I recommend, This is what I did for myself. It worked so well and I just think it's like, I don't care. So you might be like, "Listen, I don't like to cook Katrina. I'm the opposite of you. I barely know how to boil water." Whatever it is. And that's fine too, but you could have the same problem. You could be constantly ordering out and being like, well, I've had that before. I need to try a new restaurant or new entrees at the restaurant or just always seeking out something new. And if you do it, this is the exact same issue. So what I suggest that you do when you're trying to lose weight, and honestly you can continue this on, even when you're maintaining. And I do to a certain extent still.

I suggest that you make a list of your perennial favorites. If you are just cooking for yourself, of course, you're just checking with yourself about what you always like to eat, you're always happy to eat. If you cook for a family or prepare food for a family, then of course you can take into account everybody else in the family as well. I have three children and a husband, so that means there's five of us. I looked at it like if four out of the five of us always really like this food or having this meal, then I'll put that on the list and just, the extra person can have some leftovers or something else. Because it can even start getting more complicated when you're trying to get consensus from everybody.

So I made a list. I think I initially thought 10 to 15 recipes is probably good, but I think then that made me uncomfortable because of my history with variety. So I went more to like 15 to 20, I think I was more on the 20 end. Also knowing that in the winters we're eating more soups and chilies and things like that. And in the summer we're going to be eating, less of those things and maybe more salads or lighter foods and things like that. But really 10 could be enough. So you're looking for recipes that are already on your plan. So if you are losing weight in the way that I recommend, then these would be recipes that are already free of added sugar or any flour. Okay?

So this can be really, really simple stuff. And if you can't find, or if you have something that maybe just has one thing added to it, like for instance, my family really likes Mexican food. So maybe we would normally have tacos and have the tortilla or hard shell taco shell. You could say, well, okay, we're going to have that but what I'm going to have is the filling on a salad with some good ranch dressing or you know, some salsa on top or whatever, things like that. Or I have literally just to make it easy, sometimes it's like we're having carrot sticks and I'm eating the taco filling in a bowl and it's still tastes super duper good. Okay?

This is, what's really important. It's a perennial favorite. It's something you're happy to eat again and again and again. Okay? Whenever you make it, you're always like, oh yeah, I always love this meal. And it already is just naturally free of whatever it is that you're avoiding. In the case of what I recommend, no added sugar and no flour. Then if you don't already have a list of your 10, 15 or 20 recipes just from that, then start thinking about things that have maybe a little sugar added or a little flower added where it really wouldn't be that hard to make a modification. So I remember there was actually this one marinade that I really like to use and it had some maple syrup in it. And I thought, well, you know what? I wonder if I could still make that and just omit the maple syrup, because that's sugar. Like I wonder if anybody would even notice?

So the next time I made it, I didn't put the maple syrup in it. And I just waited to see if anybody noticed, no one said a word. Then I said, "Hey, did anybody notice anything different?" And they couldn't really put their finger on it. They were like, "Yeah, maybe it's slightly different, but they could not actually figure out what it was." And then when I told them they were like, "Oh yeah. Okay, totally cool. Just don't put it in there. We don't even care." So that can become one of your perennial favorites as well. And just with those alone, okay? So you are not researching new recipes, very important. Okay? You don't need new recipes. You need to look what you already know how to make and that is easy and simple. Okay? We don't need all sorts of fancy stuff and you've got to go to the special grocery store to get whatever.

We're talking about regular stuff that you can get at any market that's easy enough to have. If you order groceries in, they always have it. Like eggs, any grocery store always has eggs. Not like this specialty thing that sometimes they carry and sometimes they don't. You want on your list things that you know you can count on. It's going to be super easy. Okay? What this means is that you are constraining down the variety. Now this can feel very uncomfortable to you as it did to me at first, I had this whole idea. Like you need to be eating all these different things. And honestly, when you look at a lot of healthy, whatever, food experts, they're like, "You need so much variety. You need so much variety." Yes, I do things that some variety is good. And if you want to plan some variety into those perennial favorites, I think that's a great idea. Aiming to have in terms of vegetables and stuff, different colors of the rainbow, I think is a great idea. But I don't want that to limit you from being able to move forward.

When we have all these rules around how we think we have to eat and then we can't follow any of them, it's not helping us at all. I'd rather you be a little bit more constrained than you'd like to be and take a multivitamin and actually have success in doing this. And then maybe in the future, when you're maintaining, you can start thinking about adding in a little more variety, than I can't do the variety so I might as well just order pizza or whatever's the easiest thing. Okay? So we're constraining things down so that you have fewer decisions to make, this makes your meal planning extremely easy. You just have these meals on rotation, right? If you have even like 20, that's three weeks worth, that's a lot. And then it makes your grocery shopping extremely fast and easy as well. And even preparing these foods becomes so much easier.

I know it came for me, I stopped even needing the recipe for a lot of things because I just knew how to make it. And this becomes one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself. We are all like, what would really help me is if I just had a personal chef who could come in and cook everything. Why do we want that?

So we don't have to think about it. This is just about as good, if not easier, because now you don't have a chef to manage. You literally are making again and again foods that you love that taste good to you that serve your body. And it's just so easy to know, like I need this, I need that. You don't need a million ingredients in your house. It becomes so much easier. Okay?

So you do this again and again and again until you get to your goal weight or if you're not getting the results that you want, then of course you might need to make some adjustments. But it may not even be the food that you're preparing that's the problem, you might just be overeating. See last week's episode about over eating healthy food. Okay? But if you need to make some adjustments, of course you can. Okay? Now, I don't suggest that you choose three recipes and eat them again and again and again. I see a lot of people have some results with that, but then they quickly get into a plateau because they're eating so much of the same thing. So mixing it up somewhat is important to just keep the body guessing a little bit, just not getting into homeostasis so quickly.

And so you're going to repeat this and repeat this, once you get to maintenance, you're probably still going to want to repeat it unless you keep losing weight and you don't want to. Then of course you can make some adjustments. And then you can start to see, maybe I want to try adding in something that has a little sugar in the marinade and see what happens with my weight. Maybe I want to add in a little something that has some flour in it and see what happens. You can start making some adjustments or adding in the variety, just doing it in a really thoughtful way.

Now the biggest issue you may have is boredom. You're like, I'm going to get totally bored with this food. And what I want to offer to you is to let yourself become bored with this food. Okay? This food tastes good. You know you like it. You will be getting pleasure out of eating it, especially if you slow down and let yourself taste it. But what you're doing is you're taking away the novelty of constantly mixing it up. And that is actually really good for you. Okay? You don't need your food to entertain you. The novelty in your life does not need to come from your food. This is actually a really important part of the process because you're eating good food, you're allowing yourself to be bored with what you're eating, and then you can figure out how to create some excitement and entertainment in your life in another way that doesn't create issues with your body, feeling out of control with your food. Your food is there to nourish you, to offer you some pleasure, and that's it. Okay?

Help yourselves to live. Besides that, it really isn't there to be the court jester, okay? And entertain you and be super fun. Of course from time to time, that is the case. But when you're overdoing it, this is what you need to be working on. Okay? So it's still tasting good. You're still getting pleasure out of the food. You just are getting much less novelty and that's important so that you can work on your thoughts about that and how you can create novelty in your life in a different way. And not so much with food.

So that is how you do easy food prep. You don't need plastic boxes that food fits in, you don't need measuring cups, you don't need a food scale. You need your hunger scale, which means you listen to your body signals. And you need your taste buds, which tells you what food tastes good.

And then of course if you have some other program or plan, like in my case, I recommend that you take a break from eating sugar and flour while you're losing weight, because it makes a massive difference in terms of your actual body physiology and also the way your brain works. So it's so much easier to do the thought work that's required to reduce your over desire for food when you do that.

Of course, it doesn't have to be something that you forever more, we can help you to re-add it in when the time comes. But literally that's all you need. So this is available to you everywhere. When you're on vacation, when you're out to eat, all of the time. You don't need anything, and that means that you always have what you need with you. So good. So give this a try and see what you think

Have a great time simplifying your food and making it so easy. Have a wonderful rest of your week. I just want to let you know that I love and appreciate you. Somebody out there is going to need to hear that today. If that's you sending, I'm you extra love, all right, take care.

Talk to you next week. Bye bye.