



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hello there, my friend. How, how are you today? So glad you're here with me. Thank you for joining me. If you are new to the podcast, then welcome. So glad that you're here. If you are a longer term listener, I'm so glad you're back. I have a really interesting episode. At least I think it's a very interesting. Can't wait to share it with you, and for a while now, since I have a book coming out soon, I actually have the cover reveal and some more information about that coming up very soon. So stay tuned. Very exciting. I have been spotlighting, periodically, different books that I have read and really enjoyed that I want to share with you because there are lots and lots of books out there. Lot of people have put a lot of effort and energy into getting published. It's sometimes hard to know even where to begin.

Sometimes even I feel like, oh my gosh, what to even start with? And this one, maybe a lot of you actually know about this one. But Brené Brown, who a lot of people know about. She's a psychologist, who's written several bestselling books. She has a newish book out called Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human Experience. And I've really, really been loving this book a ton, and let me explain why. What this book is, is basically a description of dozens and dozens of different emotions. Now that may sound very boring to you when I put it that way, but she tells lots of stories. It's actually very research based. And I find it so helpful to understand, what is the difference amongst different words that we use for emotions. And what she really talks about, and the reason that she created this book, was because she just found that our vocabulary for describing feelings and emotion is in general on average, extremely, extremely limited.

It actually kind of ties into what we're going to be talking about a little bit later. And so the purpose of this book is to help us to understand the definitions of various words so that we can use them more. So that we can stop thinking that we only ever feel like happy, sad, and mad. That there is a broader array of emotional experiences out there and what the differences are. I just found it super, super interesting. And I just recently discovered, on Netflix I believe, she has, I think, like a five part series. Maybe it's a six part series. Where she actually is taking the concepts in the book and bringing them to life, kind of speaking to a smaller audience there. I watched the first episode and enjoyed it a lot. So if you're like, look, the book sounds good but I'm never going to read it.

Then check out the show. I think it's also called like Brené Brown's Atlas of the Heart or something like that. Just if you just type in Brené Brown, you'll find it, if you're more of a show or a listening kind of a person. I just have thoroughly enjoyed it a lot more than I expected to, to be honest. It's got some nice pictures in there and it's just, it's been a really, really nice book for me to read.

It's not one that you hunker down and read in a day or two. I've been kind of doing it in the mornings, maybe 15, 20 minutes, getting through sort of a chapter at a time, or sometimes just sort of a chunk of a chapter, and kind of letting it like sink in. There's some real good tidbits and nuggets in there. So highly recommend that one.

Okay. Today I want to talk to you about a concept called reparenting and this is something that I've actually been coaching our program members on for really quite some time, we've been talking about it. I've never really addressed it on the podcast. And I thought this might be something to just, maybe less of like teach you everything about it, but more just kind of give you an idea about this as something that exists and something that can be super, super helpful. I find it to be actually really helpful for a lot of people in a lot of ways. So I'm going to give you some more information about it and maybe some examples of how it can be helpful. It's something that you can definitely try out on your own. It's also something that you can do with a therapist. You can do it with a coach. And it's just, it can be a really, really useful and healing, very healing process to go through.

So I first want to just be clear that there is a form of psychotherapy that's called reparenting, it's kind of controversial. Sort of like where the therapist becomes like the parent figure. That is not what I'm referring to here at all. Okay. We're talking about reparenting yourself. It's a process that you can be guided through, but you ultimately are doing it with yourself. Initially, when this first came out, it was really sort of geared toward people who had experienced abuse or neglect in their childhood. But I think what's been found over the course of time is that it's actually very helpful for anybody who has current issues, like an adult who has current issues or struggles that are stemming from their childhood. And so I'm going to help you to understand what that means it.

I have to say the term can be kind of like, woo, woo. Froufrou. Like, oh my God, were you parenting yourself? Get me a break. I'm telling you, it's actually something that's really, really useful, really worth checking out, especially for people who overeat or over drink. So what it really ultimately means is taking on the process of meeting the needs of a younger version of yourself, those needs, when those needs were not met when you were that age. So basically parents can only parent from their own level of awareness or consciousness or even skill level. So I do want to just make sure it's clear here that the purpose of this is not to blame our parents. It's not to decide our parents did a terrible job, to blame them about anything or ruin that, any kind of relationship that you have with them. Now, some people will say yes, the way I was parented was horrible. And I had a terrible upbringing. Okay. That is fine. That's valid.

But there are a lot of people who actually resist that saying, "You know what, my parents are wonderful people and I really had a great childhood. So if I do this reparenting work, am I essentially saying that my parents did a bad job?" And that's not what we're saying at all. But for anybody who has children, you will know what I mean when I say that when we're kids, we think that our parents like are like extra special and know how to be parents, at least a lot of us feel that way. And then you become a parent and you realize, oh my gosh, they were just completely winging it, like literally making it up as they go along. Even if they read any parenting books or whatever. I mean parenting books are really a relatively new thing. So just the idea of even parenting as like a verb is a very, very new concept.

It's really something where you're just trying to do the best you can with the skills and tools you have, and resources at your disposal in the moment. And also when you're a parent or even if you've ever like babysat or taken care of any nieces or nephews or friends' kids, it's really interesting how sometimes you can actually really rise to the challenge. I remember having my first child and being so surprised at how patient I could be with him. I just never really considered myself particularly patient and being so surprised that I could do that. But on the flip side, sometimes we're really surprised at the behavior that can come out of us, even when we really don't want it to be coming out of us.

And so when we're kids, we're on the receiving end of that. And so I just want to let you know that first of all, it's never too late to re-parent yourself. Okay. So some people will be like, well if I'm 50 or 60 or older, like, I mean, that ship has sailed. Do I really need to go back to my childhood? A lot of people are resistant to doing that. And this again doesn't mean that we're like reliving your entire childhood. I'll kind of give you some ideas of when this can be really useful, but it's never too late to do that. And secondly, it can be actually really, really useful as a tool to help you create some forward movement in areas where you feel like you've been stuck for a really long time.

So if you feel like, you know what, you're just like circling back on the same issue again and again. And you're like, what is the deal here? What is it with me and this thing? I've done all this work. I've tried approaching it from these different ways and it's not really working. It really could be some re-parenting that might be the thing that really gets that ball rolling for you again. So essentially what it comes down to is that if you had an experience, which I think all of us have had at least once or several times as a childhood, if not many, many times, if you had an experience as a child where the adults in your life did not meet you emotionally, the way you would have liked them to, that can be an opportunity for re-parenting. Okay.

So what I want to offer, like the way I want to kind of explain this to you is, like where this comes up sometimes with clients is they will say I just recently had this experience where I really felt a certain way. So actually something that just came up with one of my lovely clients, she said that she was going on a family vacation. And as she was planning on going, she was having a lot of feelings that she didn't belong, that she was going to be forgotten about. Basically like people, like rejection in advance. Like people didn't want her to be there, even though there really was no evidence that was the case. And she said she was having so much anxiety about it and that this was a recurring thing. And so she had this trip coming up and she was like, I just don't want to feel so anxious. And she could logically see this doesn't even really make a lot of sense, yet it was how she was feeling.

And so right away, that was kind of a trigger for me to go, hmm, I wonder when this began. If this is a recurrent thing, I wonder what kind of set off this process. And so I asked her about that and she shared that there had been a group kind of like camping trip when she was young, that she was going to be going on. And it was kind of like, who was pairing off and who was going in whose car and all these different things. And everybody got in the cars and she didn't know which car to get into. And they left without her. And it didn't take long for them to figure it out and they came back. But you can imagine during that short period of time, how she felt as a young girl, basically being forgotten about and abandoned. And making that mean they don't care about me. I don't belong here. And then she went through the rest of the trip, like just pretending like nothing had really happened, but deep down really hurting emotionally because of this.

And so there's no sense in spending any time thinking, well, the adults should have anticipated and should have checked in with her more. I mean, you know what? There's like a bunch of parents taking these kids on a camping trip. I mean, you know what I mean? Like they were for sure doing the best that they could. And maybe outwardly she was really good at pretending like everything was fine, but inside she was hurting. That little girl was not getting, wasn't being met emotionally the way she needed to be by the adults in her life and the adults that were available. And so that can set into motion this idea that like, I'm forgettable. People won't remember me. I don't belong. And your brain really starts looking for evidence of this. And the thing about this is the purpose of that as a child was like to keep her safe.

You got to make sure that you belong, so people don't forget you, because you could be left in the wilderness somewhere. As a child, it makes so much sense to have those fears and those worries, because they really can keep you safe and alive. But as an adult, of course, she's completely safe. She's completely capable of taking care of herself. Yet she's still having that experience. So we can talk to her, offer her new thoughts, help her to process that emotion, but reparenting, going to the root of that issue and reparenting that can be super, super healing.

Another time that this can be so helpful is if you have a situation where as a child, there was some scenario where something happened and then you figured out that food made you feel better. Okay. So let's say you were really lonely. Maybe you were a latchkey kid. I don't even know if they use that term anymore. I don't think they do. But what a latchkey kid means is that your parents worked or the parent you lived with worked, and so you came home from school by yourself, let yourself in the house by yourself. And then you were there on your own until your parent or parents came home from work. So you had a few hours at home by yourself. And so say you were a latchkey kid and you would come home and you would feel really, really lonely. And you figured out, as a way to take care of yourself emotionally, since there were no adults there, you figured out that if you went into the snack cabinet, and started eating snacks, and maybe watching TV while you did it, that reduced that feeling of loneliness that you felt.

Or maybe it was boredom. Or maybe it was even fear. Maybe you felt uncomfortable being in your home by yourself. And by eating, you figured out that you could distract yourself from that way that you were feeling. And then your parent would come home and you'd move forward, and everything was fine. So you can imagine like that was an adaptive process when you were a child. You weren't getting your emotional needs met and you figured out a way to do it. It's like pretty smart. If you think about it, like go you. But as an adult, when you continue taking part in that behavior, it's now considered maladaptive. And that's where we want to start looking at. If you're like, I just don't know why when I'm in the house by myself, I just like, I am just restless until I start eating something. What is that? I know I don't need the food.

I know I'm not hungry. Trying to feel the urge to eat, but I still just want to eat. Well, it can be helpful to recognize, I started this pattern when I was home by myself. And when I was home by myself I was really kind of scared and I was bored and I was lonely. And I wished that I had someone there with me and the next thing was turning on after school television and eating a snack. And that's the way I figured out to take care of myself. I'm like, okay.

So, so good to know. So when you are going through this process of reparenting yourself, it's allowing yourself, that little younger version of you, to feel seen and heard and loved. And then you're going to give yourself that love and attention that you wanted from the adults around you, that you wished you could have had.

Again, this is not assigning blame or saying that they did anything wrong. It's just not what you needed. And you're instead offering yourself that. So essentially you now, like the mature version of you now, is becoming the parent to your younger self that you never had, or that you wished you had had. And so that relationship is actually really, really important. Your childhood experiences influence us. They influence us so much. They influence our self image, the way we perceive ourselves, our self-esteem, our confidence, our self worth, and also how you learn or don't learn to cope with difficult feelings, difficult emotions, difficult situations. When a child, that was a result of how you were parented. When you were a child you were taught or not taught how to deal with those things. Okay. So going back to those adaptive behaviors that you figured out, they were totally useful in you figuring out how to meet your needs when you were a child. But they, like I said, they can be considered pretty maladaptive once you are older.

So it's essentially like meeting your needs is also a way of soothing yourself, a way of taking good care of yourself, of helping yourself feel valued and taking care of. But the thing is that just because you soothe yourself in that way, doesn't mean that it's healthier. That it actually works. We could say like, oh yeah, you soothe yourself with three glasses of wine every evening. I mean, does it work? I mean, I guess in the short term it numbs you out, but does it actually create anything positive for you in your life? Does it actually help to prevent stress in the future? Does it actually help you to process that stress? Is it healthy for you, emotionally healthy for you? And then of course we can argue from a physical standpoint as well. Maybe not so much.

So what reparenting does is it helps you to learn to soothe yourself in a healthy and effective manner. And again, this is very likely could be something that your parents just didn't know, they didn't know to offer to you. It just, it's again, nobody's fault. Okay. So if you look up this concept, there's actually tons and tons of information regarding this, and I'm just going to focus in on sort of the one segment of it that I think is going to be the most helpful to you. If this is something you want to take a deeper dive into, of course, you're welcome to do that. But what the process is that I take people through, or one of the processes is like, for instance, in this storyline where, where the young girl was left behind, when everyone was getting in the cars. What I recommend doing, and this is just one way of doing it, is to envision or reconnect to that younger version of yourself.

So say she's nine years old. So you envision yourself at nine years old. If it's helpful to look at a picture of yourself around that age, maybe that's helpful. Some people do have a hard time visualizing, maybe you can just even close your eyes and think about what it felt like to be nine years old, or kind of what it felt like to be you around that time of your life and just acknowledge them. Even in your mind, just one example would be like envisioning yourself in third grade running around at recess on the playground and in your mind's eye, just kind of like witnessing yourself, that little version of you running around, playing, going on the swings, having the best time, just kind of connect with that child version of yourself and acknowledge them. And then you can let them know that you're there. That you're there to support them.

One way, another way to get in touch with that version of yourself is to have that version of you. So in this example, that nine year old little girl write out what it was like for her to have that experience of being left behind. And you're just writing and it's really, really important that you're not judging it or thinking that this is stupid or whatever, just try to suspend all of that disbelief and just go into, if she could have had a voice back then, if someone really knew what was going on for her, what would she say, what was really going on for her? And you just write that all out. After you see all of that, I mean, as it comes up, there might be some emotions. There might be some tears. There might be some other things to work through.

And just allow that as much as you can. If anything, it helps you to just understand where you were in your life emotionally, when you started this maladaptive process, which was adaptive at the time. Just understanding what was really fueling it in the first place. You want to really be treating yourself with love and kindness and respect while you're doing this. Okay. Then what you want to do is offer that younger version of you, what you wish the adults around you had given you. So that could be writing back to that girl. Like she's written, you through her, has written everything that was going on for her. And then the now current present mature adult version of you responds back. I'm so sorry that happens, responding back the way that you wish you had been responded to.

Okay, this is, can be extremely healing. Some people find that, especially if they're really good visualizers, that they can literally visualize talking to that younger version of themselves and saying all of these things, or putting them on their lap and giving them just like a huge hug and whispering in their ear. That's an option as well. I personally am not super great with visualizing stuff like this. I kind of feel like I'm in the middle. It's not something I super feel really, really good about doing, but it's not like I can't do it. So I think there's, you just have to know and try, know yourself, try different things, see what really kind of resonates. And it may be different in different situations, different things that you're dealing with. What's so great about this too, that I think is, I mean, for sure there are times when we need to be talking about things and part of healing trauma is telling other people.

Part of healing the shame is not hiding about it anymore. But I do think that sometimes overall it's like can be a relatively minor thing, but it still hurt. And sometimes I think it can be helpful, or at least a good first step, for us to be able to have this just with ourselves. We don't have to necessarily share it with somebody else or bring it out into the open in that sense. It just can be like this inner connection, this inner recognition of that pain that was, and then offering that love and kindness and whatever emotional response that we wish we'd had, offering that in exchange. Now, sometimes we find that there's this harsh inner critic in us too. Right. That's just like every time we think about that little version of ourselves, that inner critics like, oh, that's so stupid. Why was she upset about that? She made such stupid decisions.

Some of us have that real active inner critic voice. And so one thing to always consider is would you speak to any child in that way? Would you say those words to any child and I certainly hope that the answer would be no. When we can understand how cruel that inner critic voice can be, we can work to offer ourselves that love and affection and intention that we really do want. Now dealing with the inner critic, that could be a whole other podcast episode.

It's outside of the scope of this one. But ultimately what we're working on here is learning for ourselves now, what our parents were not able to teach us. Whether they weren't available, they didn't know about it, whatever it was.

So this can be often, so often, how to feel and process emotions. If our parents didn't know how to do that, how are they supposed to teach us? Right. And that's a big part of this, is recognizing there are those old hurts and it's very possible that you just stuffed them down, didn't let anybody know, or were told that they weren't valid or important or worth crying over. And so they've all been stuffed down, are still there waiting, and so much of our healing comes from actually processing those emotions. I always love that phrase, like there's no sense crying over spilled milk. Sometimes there is sense in crying over spilled milk. There really is sometimes.

And I think I've shared on here before, I, with my oldest son, who's 16, I mean, for the first 10 years of his life, I would spend a lot of time talking him out of his emotions, talking him out of crying. And now with my younger kids with, you know what I know so much more of, I mean, the minute I see that lip quivering, I'm like, come here, give him a hug, let it out, let out those emotions, just let it out. It's okay to cry. Just let that move through you. It's just a completely different approach because I know so much better. I can offer that. And so of course, if you do have children or you're responsible for children or influential on children, of course, please do not beat yourself up for what you didn't know in the past. It's always, always, always the right time to learn for yourself how to better approach yourself. And then you can offer that to your children as well. Children are so resilient and so adaptable. I think that really, even later in their lives, they still can get significant benefit out of us doing this work for ourselves.

Okay. So then you also want to practice offering yourself, encouragement, that kind word, that unconditional love that you wished you had. Maybe you knew your parents loved you, but you just didn't really feel it. It just didn't really come through. Or you're like, no, I know they love me, but only if I'm this version of me. If I really let them know exactly who I was, or if I really told them what I really wanted, then I'm afraid they wouldn't love me. Well, that's conditional love. And so we want to offer ourselves unconditional love. No matter what you do, what you say, who you are, I love you. Okay. We want to practice being our biggest cheerleader, our biggest champion. No matter what we do, we still just think we're great.

And then another element of this can be learning to create healthy boundaries and then to enforce them. And that can be with really anybody else in our lives, but sometimes boundaries even with ourselves. It's like, what are you okay with? What are you not okay with? And how are you going to enforce those? How are you going to make sure that those boundaries are kept? And I think that is one of the most important things, actually was even in that Brené Brown Atlas of the Heart book. I don't have it pulled up right now, of the top of my head, but she basically talks about some research that was done asking tons of various amazing like healers and therapists and monks and like amazing, amazing people who just give and give and give and give, what makes it so that they can continue giving so freely and not burn out.

And they were shocked to find out that the answer, the common answer was boundaries. Giving when it's time to give, when you are consenting to the giving. And being really clear about when it's not time for you to be giving, and not being coerced into giving without your consent.

Really important when you think about so many doctors have so many issues with boundaries, especially with their phones now, and that may be you too. Where some of your patients have your cell phone number and then they're texting and whatever, and it can be very intrusive. And maybe you don't want to set that boundary and that's fine, but I've coached many, many people who want to set a boundary. They don't want it to be the way it is and they want there to be some improvement on that. And it can be very uncomfortable at first to change that boundary.

Because, of course, you have a boundary. It's just one that you either don't enforce or is extremely flexible. And so it's uncomfortable at first, but then it's so much better, so much better for them and for you afterward. So because often that extreme and flexibility or that extreme availability that comes from how we felt we needed to be as children to be loved, to be accepted, to be safe, to have our needs met. So I think that this is just a really awesome tool to kind of pepper in. Like I said, we use this within our coaching program within Weight Loss for Doctors Only all the time. And so this is just a brief introduction to it. You can give it a try for yourself if you'd like to. Of course we would love to help you with it as well. The next time that we are open for enrollment.

All right, with that, I will leave you for the rest of the week. I hope you have a great, great, great enjoyable week and sending you tons of love. Because you know what? I know that little version of you in there, he or she just needs a squeeze. And I'm sending that to you now. All right, love you very much.

Have a great week. I'll talk to you next time. Bye bye.