



# WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Well, hello there, my friend. How are you today? So glad that you are joining me. Thank you for being here with me. I do not take your attention and your listening, your ears lightly. I really do appreciate that you're taking the time to listen in today and I think I've got some good help for you. I'm really excited actually to bring you this topic.

Before I get going, though, I wanted to share something with you that I hope some of you will try. If you're a shift worker, I'm so curious for you to try this thing that I'm about to tell you about, and then let me know what you think.

So, where this all kind of goes back to is I have been over the years kind of looking for something to help reduce jet lag. And I feel like as I've gotten older, jet lag just bothers me more and more. And so, several years ago, like this is well before COVID — I feel like that's like the line in the sand. Like was it before COVID or after?

It was before COVID, I heard about this app called Timeshifter, and it is an app that helps you to figure out exactly what to do when you're going to be traveling. So, you enter in what your flights are and all the information, like your whole trip. And then it gives you all the information on what you should do for ... I mean, it depends how far you're going and stuff like a few days leading up to the trip, the actual trip itself, and then what you should be doing once you get there as well.

So, in terms of like should you be seeing light, should you not be seeing light? Should you be trying to avoid light? Should you take a nap? Should you be trying to sleep now or not? If you are a caffeine drinker, like should you have caffeine or is this a time to avoid caffeine? Same with melatonin. So, you don't have to use caffeine or melatonin, but if you want to and you do, then it tells you when you should be using that.

And all the data from this comes from NASA. So, NASA, did all this research on circadian rhythms with its astronauts and really, kind of figured out how to get people to adjust as best as possible.

Now, I will tell you that I've had some good success with this app. I will also tell you though that the times when I haven't had as good of success, it's a hundred percent because I just haven't followed what it's told me to do.

So, I'm like, "Yeah, it wasn't so good that time." It's like, "Well, right, but you also didn't do what it said." Yeah, okay. Well, I can own that. That's fine.

So, you can buy like an annual subscription or you can buy it just like per trip. I've done it per trip because I usually don't travel enough to make it worth it to buy it for the whole year. But so, we just got back recently from a family trip to Italy. My oldest son has only two more years in high school, which is really, really crazy to even say out loud.

And so, it's become all the more clear to us that we really don't have that many more opportunities to take like a meaningful family trip for just the five of us. Like we even took a trip in February and just took my younger two kids because the older one had school, and the other two had a week off.

Well, the high schooler was like, "I can't take that time off. Like it's too much to catch up." And honestly, in his case, I think it really would've been. So, anyway, we just had that trip. And so, I was looking at Timeshifter again in terms of trying it out again to help with jet lag.

And as I was downloading it again, I think I hadn't used it in a while, so I don't know, offloaded it or whatever — whatever our phones do to get rid of things that we don't use very often. I noticed that they have something new now. They have the Timeshifter app that's called the Shift Work Edition. So, Timeshifter, Shift Work Edition and it is totally for people who work shift work.

I was like, "Yes, oh my gosh, this is such a godsend for so many people who have changing schedules and don't really know what they should be doing." And I just think this is the most brilliant, brilliant thing.

So, it's really pretty new, this app, it seems. I mean, I kind of researched it a little bit. And I am so excited for those of you who do shift work to try it out. So, you can put your whole schedule in and how things are going to change and what you have to be doing. And then it's going to tell you what to do.

My first introduction to this kind of a thing was way back when I was a resident, they changed things I want to say it was like my second year of residency, they kind of were changing things around. They had us do all nights for a month if we chose to, to get some of like our call done on like the step-down unit. And I chose to do it, I don't really remember why. I just thought it would be better.

And so, my group was the first group to do that first month of nights. And I remember that one of the pulmonologists at the time pulled us aside and was like, "Look, I really want to talk to you guys about how you should be handling this for when you go home so you can sleep throughout the day and stuff."

And I remember him saying like the minute you leave the hospital, you need to be putting on the darkest sunglasses you can. You want to make your house really dark. And he was really, really emphasizing how important blocking that light was. I think at the time, I didn't even realize that you can get sunglasses that are really, really, really quite dark, and you could still drive with them, but they really block out a ton of the light.

So, anyway, as a total side note and also super weird, probably how many years later? Five years later, I actually bought that doctor's house from someone else. But there had been another owner in between, but it was just so weird when I found out that before her, it was actually him. So, it's really weird. Anyway, that's an aside.

But the point is, he's talked about that and so, it just totally makes sense. When you're shifting, when you're working and you want to be getting as good of sleep as you possibly can — I just had an episode not that long ago about sleep that you want to be just working with your natural systems instead of against them.

So, check it out, Timeshifter, Shift Work Edition and let me know. I'm so, so, so interested to hear what you think about it.

So, let's talk about common weight loss advice that I disagree with. It's actually just one thing that I really want to talk about, because it's so ubiquitous and people just think like this is just what you have to do. And it came up again, was actually listening to something, and they were talking about something totally different.

But it was like as an aside or as kind of like a random example, they said, "Well, just like if you want to lose weight, I mean, the first thing you have to do is throw out all the junk food in your house" as though this was just like common knowledge, everybody should just do this. And like, duh, that's the solution.

Well, immediately I bristled at that. So, just think, if throwing out all the junk food in your house was what you needed to lose weight and keep it off permanently, like we wouldn't be here talking. Like how many times have we done that and it doesn't work? It's actually terrible, terrible weight loss advice, and I want to explain to you why.

It may seem like I'm splitting hairs, but I'm really not. And I want you to understand why this is so important because people are offering these thoughts to us all of the time. They talk about it like it's just the truth. Everybody knows this. These are just the facts. And you start thinking like, oh, I have to do that too if I want to have any success. And whether that's the right thing for you or not.

So, I want you to really pay attention here and then you can apply the same line of thinking to any other kind of standard across the board weight loss advice, or just what people think is just common knowledge or just what everybody thinks needs to be done. All I have to say is if what everybody "thinks needs to be done" worked, so many people wouldn't be struggling with their weight, is all I have to say.

So, you always want to be just kind of questioning: is that even true? What if that wasn't true? Maybe it is, but what if it isn't? If it weren't true, then what? So, bad advice, throw out all the junk food. It's a bit problematic for five reasons. I'm going to go through all of them with you here.

First of all, calling anything junk food — that term “junk food” is a negative judgment of the food. So, the reason it's called that is because people have deemed it to have low nutritional quality. Like maybe it doesn't have a lot of nutrients and it doesn't really contribute much positively to a body that consumes it.

And so, my apologies, I did not research the term junk food and who coined it. I don't know that that's really necessary for this, but somebody along the line, somewhere along the line made up this term, coined this term junk food and it caught on.

So, we can all agree that there are plenty of foods out there that are low in nutrients that don't contribute positively to the health and proper functioning of our bodies. But when we call it junk food, there's like a negative judgment of the food, when the food is just sitting there, it hasn't done anything wrong, it's just sitting there.

So, the problem here is when that food that's supposedly junk and is judged so negatively also actually brings you a lot of comfort, a lot of pleasure. It might make you feel companionship, it might make you feel safe. It might make you feel like your needs are met. It might make you feel like all is right in the world or that you are okay in the world.

And those are all feelings that are really valid and important and experiences that we want to have. And if it's this negatively judged food that's helping you to create those experiences for yourself, it's really easy to extrapolate that judgment on to yourself. “This food is bad, yet I get a lot of positive things out of it, therefore, I am bad.” Or “I am bad for liking it or for eating it” or just overall judging yourself for liking it or for eating it.

So, like one thing I thought of immediately was at Trader Joe's, if you've ever been to Trader Joe's — and if not, you're still going to know what I'm talking about. So, peanut butter cups like Reese's, peanut butter cups are like the original. Well, at Trader Joe's, they have these dark chocolate peanut butter cups that are like their brand, and they're pretty much from the heavens.

I mean, they're just super delicious. They're just really, really good. Now, we could argue that that's junk food. Like little nutritional value there. But those can be like such an amazing thing to look forward to, create so much pleasure for you just feel like, ah, I've gotten to the end of the day.

How many times do we do that? We're like, I've gotten to the finish line of the day, whether that means that the charts are all finished, the kids are in bed, you finish up paying all the bills — like whatever all the tasks are for the day, all your responsibilities for the day, it's like that's all done.

And then we're going to mark that. We're going to mark the start of the "good or fun" part of the day or evening with something to eat.

Maybe something like that or a glass of wine or a beer or whatever it may be; a cocktail. And so, I think that there's ... I don't think that it's super helpful to judge those foods in that way. The other thing that I'll say is like if you have a brain-like mind that can get real ... what word should I use? Can kind of like argue that things aren't maybe quite as bad for you as they seem.

Like with these Trader Joe's dark chocolate, peanut butter cups, it's like, yes, but this is like organic and it's a dark chocolate, and it's not like made in some like horrible plant by whoever owns Reese's, M&M'S Mars or whoever it is. It's like, oh, it's like Trader Joe's, it's like healthier, it's like better quality ingredients. Like I mean, basically, dark chocolate is good for you.

You can start rationalizing it in your brain how it's not actually that bad for you and this is like a good option. If you're going to have anything, you might as well have this instead of like the real thing or whatever it is. And it just creates this kind of push and pull, where part of us is pushing it away. We're like, "No, this is junk food, get it away." And part of us is pulling it towards us: "No, I need this to feel good. I need this to feel okay. This is a part of how I feel good in the world."

And so, I don't think that that's very useful as soon as we say, "Okay, it's junk and you need to get that outta the house," well, now, you're taking away your way that you figured out of making yourself feel safe and good. Now, we don't have to keep using food in that way, but to just pull it all out is like the first thing we do to lose weight, is throw that stuff all out, that a lot of times can really backfire.

Because then we're like, "Well shoot. Now, I feel super horrible." So, then we're either overeating the healthy food that we brought in. That's what I love too. It like doesn't even take into account the fact that I'm like, listen, I have overeaten a lot of healthy food.

So, like whether it's junk or nutritious, like overeating is overeating regardless. But it also is just leaving you high and dry on how to actually create those experiences for yourself. Now, of course, you can learn how to do that. You can wean yourself off of your dependence on these foods and create that for yourself in other ways.

But do we need to do this in such a like dramatic ... like I just always think of like, I think it was on Oprah, they'd have like people come in, they're doing this whole pantry clean out and it was like this just very dramatic, kind of throw it all out. Like that's going to be the solution, don't buy this stuff again. It's like, pretty much, that is not solving it.

Number two; just because it's not in your house, doesn't mean you won't eat it. Or it doesn't mean you won't eat something comparable. The idea like you just need to throw it all out of your house like forgets about the fact that literally every single place you go is more of this non-nutritious food — everywhere, everywhere you go. And a lot of it is free.

So, sure, when you're in your house, you don't have it around to eat. Like I just mentioned, doesn't mean you won't overeat, doesn't mean you won't try to get the same pleasure that you got from the junk food with other healthier things. I for sure have done that so many times. But it also just forgets about the fact that unless you like work from home and don't really leave very often, there are so many opportunities for you to eat that food.

Now, when you know that you don't have that stuff at home, you're even more likely then to act out of scarcity and grab it while you can have it. Someone brings in some treats to work or you're at the gas station paying and you see something — I mean, it's like those impulse decisions that do not support you at all, like, “Why am I doing that?”

Well, because deep down our primitive brain is like, “This is your chance. All those ways that you want to feel safe and well-cared for and pleasure and comfort, like none of that's going to be available to you when you get home. So, this is your chance, you better eat it now.”

So, getting rid of all the junk food at home can actually make your emotional eating worse at home and in other places. Because you're emotionally eating at home, all this supposedly healthy food, still trying to feel the way you felt when you ate the other stuff. And then of course, you're taking advantage more so, in other places than you might have otherwise. Number three, another reason this is terrible advice. A lot of people share a kitchen or a pantry with other people and those other people get to eat whatever food they want. So, if you have a roommate or a housemate or a partner or a spouse, or I mean, we could argue that maybe children don't get to have a say, but I mean, who are we kidding? They usually do.

This comes up all the time that it's like, “Well, I know I just have to get rid of all that stuff, but I can't. And therefore, I can't be successful. My housemate, my roommate, my husband, whoever it is, like they're always bringing in these treats. And then I see them, and then because I can't get them out of the house, I just can't have success.”

So, this idea that like the solution is to get the junk food out of the house, I mean, it only gives us more reasons to believe that we can't have the weight loss that we want because they get to have that food in the house. So, it's just another reason why it's a terrible thought to think and it's just completely untrue.

Other people can have the food that they want to have in their house and you could get to a place where you could not care less. It's just food, it's just sitting there. You could take it or leave it, it does not matter. That's the true piece and freedom around food.

It still can be your favorite thing and it doesn't control you. You eat it when you've decided you want to. And when you're not having it or it's in your best interest not to have it, it's just as easy to leave it as it is to eat it.

Number four; having the food around can actually be really helpful in helping you to solve your overeating and the weight loss roller coaster that comes along with it. So, let me explain. So, often we're like, I got to get rid of all of the food and then we're just white knuckling ourselves through the process of trying to get the weight down.

Like I'm only eating the stuff that's on plan and have the like good choices around. And I'm just having all that stuff. And what we're completely skipping over is why we were relying on those other foods in the first place. We're not giving ourselves the opportunity to actually learn from that and identify what emotions we're not willing to feel.

So, very often, I'll have a client who will say — well, let's just take my example. They won't say this necessarily, but you know, it could be any food. They'll say, "Listen, my family loves having these dark chocolate, peanut butter cups in the house, and I don't even know what comes over me. All I know is like all of a sudden, there's one in my mouth."

Like I literally, it's like almost like I black out, like I'm in a fog, I don't even know what happened. Like I was doing whatever and then all of a sudden, I'm like three in and I don't know what's happening in between. So, say those are all out of the house now, and we're not paying attention to what's going on with that, and we're losing weight and we're following some other plan.

Well, eventually, let's just say that we're going to be around those again, or someone's going to bring something else into the house that is of similar desire for us. We're just going to repeat the same behavior. We're just going to do the same thing again.

We're going to have no more insight into why we do that and how to stop than we did in the beginning, which is how we gain our weight back again after we lose it. So, it can actually be helpful to have that food in the house because what you can do is you can work on being really, really aware, even if you still end up eating it, especially at first.

You can go, okay, I'm going to start really paying attention no more like checking out, going into a fog. I'm going to stay aware and present about what my actions are. When I notice myself going and reaching for those dark chocolate peanut butter cups, I'm not going to tell myself I can't have them.

I'm going to tell myself, "You know what? You can have it, but first, let's spend a little time figuring out what's going on for us. Let's just check in, in the body, what am I feeling? Is there an emotion there I can name? If I don't know the name of it, just describe what it's like, what is it like in my body, and let me just see what's going on for me."

And maybe you can do that for a few minutes. Maybe you can do it just for 30 seconds at first, maybe just for 10 seconds at first. Maybe you can gradually increase that and stay with whatever's going on or get a little more curious about it.

So, what's the problem that this is solving right now? Like get some information about why you're eating it in the first place. And then especially in the beginning, if you still want to eat it, then go ahead and eat it. Okay, fine, now you eat it.

But if you are just going from zero to eating it in a split second, you don't get that insight and you don't know why you're doing it, so you don't know how to stop. You don't know how to support yourself in another way so that you don't rely on that anymore.

So, having it around can be super useful in terms of helping you identify the root emotions. And it also, can be really good practice for when you're a little bit more skillful, and when you're working on maintaining at being something that you can work on reducing your desire for. Because we want you to be able to sit around like literally in a pool full of dark chocolate peanut butter cups and be okay, and be fine.

You're like swimming around, like it's no big deal. And you could have them or you cannot have them and you don't care. We don't have to be like, "I have no self-control, I can't be around it, so it has to be away from me." That's so disempowering, it gives the food so much power. Remember, the food is just an inert object that's sitting there. It does not have power over you. The way you think about it is what gives it power.

And the fifth reason why throwing out all the junk food is not a good idea, is because it's not the food that's the actual problem. When we are getting rid of it and judging it as junk food, it's like we're blaming the food. The food is responsible for all of our problems. And I will say that some of the more heavily processed foods and high sugar content foods, they sure don't work so nicely with our physiology and they do make it harder for sure.

But ultimately, the problem is the way that you're thinking about the food, like the job you're assigning it. Think about the food you eat as though you were hiring it. You're like, okay, I'm running a business and this business is called my body and my brain. And I need nutrients and hydration, and I need macronutrients and I need all these things so that everything is running properly. And I also, have the ability to experience pleasure, have different experiences and how I feel in my body based on this food. And so, I'm going to be hiring different foods to come in and do that job.

And so, if you are eating a lot of these dark chocolate peanut butter cups, like are you hiring the best food for your body? Like is it coming in and creating problems? Is it coming to work late? Coming to work drunk or high? Like it's just not really doing what it should be doing inside your body.

That's why I always say, when you really, really check in deeply with your body and like thinking about what your actual cells need, it's never dark chocolate peanut butter cups. They're never like, "You know what? That is the thing."

What our cells always want is like water, vitamins, minerals. They want things that are going to be really supportive. Maybe some protein, some carbohydrates for energy. Like think about like fruit, that fulfills all of those qualifications. That's what our bodies are really, really desperately wanting.

But when we're vilifying the food, then we're making ourselves the victim. And the way we vilify the food is by giving it all this power and saying that we don't have any power over it, and that it needs to just get away from us. Like it needs to change. It needs to be out of the vicinity of our eyesight or we can't control ourselves.



And therefore, if it's around us, well, now, we're screwed, we can't control ourselves. And it's just straight up not true, not true at all. It's a terrible way of thinking about being around food. I think one of the best ways to think about food is this is an inert object that is digestible.

That is all it is. It's all it is. Things have different flavors, different textures, different components that go into them. Like it's a very neutral way of thinking about food. Like how do I feel when I consume that food? What does that do for my body? And thinking about it in that manner.

Those are the five reasons. I don't think you need to throw out the junk food. When everybody talks about that — I mean, listen, you're welcome to do whatever you want, but I think it's actually almost like the easy way out. I'm just going to keep white knuckling it and just not actually like avoid doing the actual real work that needs to be done to lose weight by avoiding these foods.

I'm telling you, you need to like bring those foods in and do the work on them. And you can do it at the very beginning of your weight loss process. You can do it once you get to maintenance, you can do it somewhere in the middle, but listen, it has to be done regardless. Everybody who loses weight and keeps it off, has to do this work. They all have done it, just ask them.

So, I guess that's good news. You can keep the foods in the house, but it means that you have to actually work on your relationship with yourself, your relationship with the foods, what you think about the foods, how you're approaching yourself in terms of what's going on for you emotionally.

Have a wonderful, wonderful rest of your week. If you're a shift worker, try the Timeshifter, Shift Work Edition app, and then tell me all about it. I can't wait, I can't wait. I really hope it's a big game changer for so many of you. I think it's so great.

Love you so much. Have a great day, bye-bye.