



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

[00:00:08] Welcome to the Weight Loss for Busy Physicians podcast. I'm your host, master certified life and weight loss coach, Katrina Ubell, M.D. This is the podcast where busy doctors like you come to learn how to lose weight for the last time by harnessing the power of your mind. If you're looking to overcome your stress, eating and exhaustion and move into freedom around food, you're in the right place. Well. Hello there friend. Welcome to today's episode. I'm really glad you're here with me today. I want to talk to you about something that's been on my mind a little bit lately. And that's a difference between how you feel and how you look and the priorities of that.

I kind of wonder if my thinking about this is partly just a part of life, like a part of maturity. I'm in my later 40s now, and I just kind of wonder if this is something that maybe a lot of people think about. I don't know, maybe you let me know if this is something that's been on your mind as well, or if it has been in the past. If you're older than I am, if you're younger, you might be like, wait, what? Because I have a feeling that even ten years ago I would have maybe had some resistance to this. But anyway, regardless, wanted to just bring it to you as something to consider. Because for many years now, I've worked with people who struggle with eating food, weight, and of course, I have my own history of struggling with those things as well.

[00:01:37] And so it's something I think about a lot. Of course, I want to, you know, always do whatever I can to help any person, really, but particularly the women physicians that I help, I'm always interested in helping to make this process easier, simpler, more enjoyable, and to try to help each person I work with to create whatever kind of relationship with food in their body that they really want, not the one that they think that they should want, or the one that they have always thought that they should

want, but the one that they actually do want, so that when they get there they're like, yes, this is it.

I have it now, and I want to maintain this because this is really, really good. So I was thinking about using the metric of how one looks to guide us or lead us when it comes to weight loss. And of course, you know, altering how we eat to do that. I think a lot of that messaging or kind of just the idea, it's almost like a habit to think about it that way. Like I want to look a certain way. I want to lose weight so that I can look a certain way, so that any specific part of my body will look different. I think part of how you look is also the size clothing that you are wearing.

[00:02:56] Sometimes people are using clothing size as their measurement, maybe even just the number on the scale. And look, I want to be clear here, I'm not saying that these are bad ways to measure it. It's just something to think about. I just something I'm thinking about and I want to encourage you to, you know, just think about it as well to figure out what really is going to work for you as an individual. So when we use even the scale, then, you know, at a certain number on the scale to determine how we should stop losing weight or you know what those numbers mean? It's a direct correlation to how we look. Right.

We're kind of like, well, why do I know that I want to lose 40 pounds? Well, maybe it's related to some other metrics that, you know, are maybe arguably considered a quote unquote healthier weight for us or something like that. But ultimately, we also are like envisioning how we're going to look, and we're going to feel proud of how we look. And, you know, maybe you're going to feel just more confident or feel sexier or just feel more comfortable wearing certain types of clothing that you like to wear. A lot of it still comes down to looks. So thinking more about where this all comes from and I think, you know, mainstream media, advertising, society, patriarchy, you know, all those things I think have a lot to do with it.

[00:04:15] But I'll just speak for myself. And recognizing that that prioritization of looks really goes back to me being a young teenager, the messaging was thinner, is better really. You know, it was okay to be thin at all costs, right? So to prioritize how we look, I think really just stems from old messaging, old priorities. And it's just a habitual way of thinking. It's just habit thinking. When we think about weight loss, we think about how

we look as the goal. The problem with this, right? Because is it even a problem? Like who cares? So you want to look a certain way? Does that have to be a problem?

I don't think it has to be a problem, but I do think that it often ends up leading us into what I call means to an end behavior, which is typically what also would be called diet mentality behavior, which is doing things that you have no intention of doing long term in your life in order to try to look a certain way or, you know, get to that certain weight. It could be something that you maybe even do for a long time, but you kind of have to suffer through it. You kind of have to endure. It's not something that's very comfortable for you. It's maybe fear based. You know, you're afraid that if you don't control things in a certain way, then you're going to gain weight and then what's going to happen and you're going to look a certain way, and that's going to be terrible.

[00:05:41] So often when we prioritize the look, it has that effect on us when it comes to us figuring out what changes we want to make or arguably should even make. Now, I will say that focusing on how you look, which also comes down to sizes and scales and stuff like that, it is easier to measure. Like if you're like, I want to be a size four, you're going to know when you fit in a size four. You know, if you want to weigh whatever 150 pounds on the scale, you're going to know when you weigh 150 pounds on the scale. So to a certain extent it is easier to measure. And so in some cases, I think it can make sense in that way.

And like I said, I'm not saying you shouldn't be using this. I'm not saying that you shouldn't ever look at the scale or ever have a goal for yourself for a clothing size. But I do really think that there are some significant downsides to using this, particularly as we get older. So what I have seen a lot of times is that we do finally get to the clothing size. We do get to the number on the scale, but we're still kind of dissatisfied. Right? We're still not fully happy with how we look. And this can be as we age. But there are plenty of people who are in their 20s and 30s who have this exact same experience, you know? So we finally get to that sort of like coveted size or that coveted number on the scale, and then we're like, oh, like, I really thought it would be better than this.

[00:07:06] I thought I would look better than this. So, you know, any number of concerns that people have, right? Skin issues, sagging, wrinkles, cellulite, you name it, whatever the things are that we don't like, we really hope I'm going to put this effort in. I'm going to

get this weight off, I'm going to make these changes, and then I'm going to feel really good in my body.

And a lot of people still don't because they're focused on how they look. You know, not to say that you can't go and maybe make some surgical changes or like things like that, but like, you cannot stop the aging clock. Like there's no way to just like, freeze your skin and your body in a certain age or in a certain decade of life or anything like that. Right? So it really can be a letdown for people. A lot of hard work to get there and not really being all that happy with the result at the end because of the prioritization of how we look. And I wonder if that's maybe part of why it's often unsustainable for people to keep the weight off. You know, they just never were really even that pleased with what they saw when they got there.

[00:08:15] So let's talk about focusing more on how you feel versus how you look. Now, I do not want to suggest that just because you weigh a certain amount that you necessarily feel bad, because I don't think that that's the case. I think there are plenty of people who are, whatever we could characterize them as overweight or obese who actually feel quite good. So I don't want to equate size with how you feel in your body. But I do think that for enough people, even if they relatively feel good in their body, there's still some limitations that they find for themselves.

And things that I'm talking about is like, say you decide to go for a hike, I don't know, you can go by yourself or just with other people that you enjoy doing those types of things with. And, you know, you climb to the top of a hill and maybe you're like really sucking wind there at the end. You know, it's rough. Like you're really needing to take more time than a lot of other people to catch your breath. And you're like, you know, what would be really awesome is to feel like I could recover more quickly when I do something more strenuous or taxing. Right. That might be something that you notice. You're like, you know what? Like, I'm not like feeling bad, but there are some things that might, you know, really be nice to do.

[00:09:38] So I think that at least factoring in how we want to feel. Into our goals with food and weight. I think it's a good opportunity. It is harder to measure, but you get to enjoy how you feel on going every single day. So. Where this has been coming up for

me recently is with strength training, and I am not going to assume that you've listened to all 372 episodes of this podcast before this one.

Maybe you've recalled me saying at some point in the past something about this, but if not, I'll just kind of give you the executive summary. So I grew up at a time where being rail thin was desirable. Kate Moss waif look, heroin chic. Really just being as thin and kind of twiggy as possible was what was desirable. And so that was what was imprinted on my young mind as like, this is the ideal and this is what you should be trying to create. And I mean, even as a teenager, I mean, basically my whole entire life I have been a more muscular person. And as we know, muscles like take up space. They just do. And I really hated that about my body. I hated that idea that I just couldn't create that, like small lean frame because my body just wouldn't do it. And so without getting into every detail, it would take way too long to talk about it.

[00:11:14] Over the years trying different ways to lose weight. There were times when I wasn't exercising as much or at all for a lengthy period of time, and so my muscles then did shrink, because that's what happens, right? When you don't use it, you lose it. And that's what happened. And so I have actually had some periods of time in my life where I was closer to that ideal. I mean, never even remotely close to as thin as those models, but but definitely like that smaller size. And I enjoyed that look. I really did, but it still was never really what I had hoped it to be. And now, in hindsight, I can really see a lot of downsides to it as well.

Like for my body to be that deconditioned to have that small of muscles, like there was a cost to that, there was a price that I paid, and a lot of it pertained to chronic pain, just not really being able to use my body in ways that I wanted to. And I don't even think that I fully had awareness around that. I think this was a lot of like, you know, hindsight is 2020 kind of a thing, but where this has finally switched for me, I'm almost 48 years old. So maybe for those of you younger than me, maybe, maybe you can consider this a little bit a little bit earlier and maybe make some changes in the way that you think if you want to.

[00:12:39] So what happened was in the last year, I read a book by a doctor, I think her name is Jen Gunter. She wrote a book called The Menopause Manifesto. As I was starting, you know, going into perimenopause, I realized, like, I don't know enough about

this and I need to be educated. I actually heard her speak at the Canadian Women in Medicine conference a couple years ago. She was talking about the subject about menopause and talked about her book, and I thought, oh, you know, I should get that book, got the book.

And as we often do, let it sit around. I was like, not excited to read the book for a while. But then last summer, I finally was like, that's it, I'm digging in. I need to educate myself. Like, we educate girls so much about menarche. We really do not educate women well enough at all. I don't believe on what to expect with perimenopause and menopause. So anyway, that was actually a very interesting book and I learned a lot. And in that book, she really talked a lot about strength in terms of lots of different ways that it helps women as they age, particularly with osteoporosis, which is in my family. And I really just started thinking like, you know what? Like I need to do this for my health. I think that there's this such a long period of time for so many of us where, you know, eating and food is all about how we look, you know, what we weigh.

[00:13:56] And then does that look good? Is that acceptable? And then there comes this point where you start realizing, like, who cares how I look like, am I healthy? Do I feel good, am I well? And I think that was kind of like a shift for me. Oh, like, what difference does it make what I look if I'm not well, if my body is not healthy, if I don't feel good in it. Right. So I started working on some strength training. Knowing myself in my body, I knew I needed to kind of start small, work my way up.

And in case you're interested, I do a lot on the peloton app just because that is convenient for me. I've done other things that I've loved as well, but for me and the stage of life I'm in right now, that's what's working best for me. And I just started with their arms and light weights, you know, kind of things. I was like holding 1 or 2 pound weights and did those for a long time. And that was hard. And, you know, that's something that I focused on. And and then doing, you know, some of the cardio would build some strength and things like that. And then I started doing some of the barre classes, which is like a kind of modified ballet type of thing.

[00:14:59] And that's actually really good too, with strength. And so I was like gradually building it up. And then at the start of this year. Ish run. Then I decided, okay, for realsies. Now I'm going to do, like, real, real strength stuff. I'm gonna do it. I'm gonna

bite the bullet. And I know that I'm gonna put a ton of muscle on. It's going to change the way my body looks. I'm going to be bigger. My clothes will not fit the same way. And I have just decided that I don't care. I have decided because this is a decision. Like, what do we decide to think about something?

The meaning that we want to assign to it? I have just decided that the way my legs look is irrelevant, and really, nobody cares except me. And even if they do care, I mean, you know, if you're looking for the weight coach who's, you know, rail thin, I'm not your girl. I don't know what to tell you, you know? So I just decided, like, I'm gonna do this because it's important for my health and well-being to build muscle. Also, knowing that, you know, while I still have estrogen on board, this is the best time to get as much muscle on my body as I possibly can, because it will only get harder after I'm into menopause. And so I started doing like some real strength training stuff. I have a couple of friends. I'll actually just share this with you just in case it's something that is motivating or helpful for you.

[00:16:22] A little while ago, these two friends, they'd actually. I'm friends with both of them. They had been doing it on their own and then they invited me in to it. We have a little WhatsApp channel with the three of us, and the whole point of it all we do is we just post what we've done for our exercise on there, and there's no writing back. We don't have to like, make any excuses or, you know, spend a lot of time like all we do is place an emoji on what the other person did.

And so it's just more of like very light accountability in the sense of like, here's what I did. But then it also can be very motivating. So there's definitely been times where I'm like, I just am not feeling it today, don't want to do it. And then I see my friends have done some things and I'm like, you know what? I could do that too. I could go do ten minutes. Okay, fine, I will go to quit, you know. So it has been very motivating, but not in a like an aggressive accountability kind of format. So anyway, one of those friends does some strength stuff and I asked her if she wanted. She actually actually told me if I ever wanted to do that strength program, that she would join me.

[00:17:21] So I said, hey, I'm going to start it if you want to do it. Yes. Okay. So that was a month long and we did that together. And that just ended a couple weeks ago. The reason I'm telling you all this is because last week I went on vacation with my younger

two kids and my husband to go on a ski trip. And most years we try to go out west for a week of skiing, if at all possible. And so this year my senior in high school had to stay back. He didn't have off that week, but my younger two kids had off for school and so we headed out to Utah. Shout out to Utah! I love to ski out there.

Went out to Park City and decided to ski. Now my background is skiing. I've skied since I was three years old, so it's a long time thing for me. But as an adult I have often really struggled with it where I just like am super uncomfortable, did not feel like I could really do it for very long. So for a long time I just kind of had this rule of like, whenever my body feels like it's done, I'm done. And I stand by that. I mean, that was by far for sure the right thing to do. What I've learned is once you're tired and then you keep pushing yourself like that's when you're going to fall and hurt yourself.

[00:18:21] So don't even do that. So I would usually ski for like maybe three hours or so, and then I would just leave early. I would just be done early and my husband would be out skiing with everybody else. And that was just how we did things. So with this trip, I was kind of open to seeing like, well, let's just see how I feel. And, you know, let's see how things go. And I was so pleasantly surprised with how I felt like I could not believe by building the strength that I can fully see on my body. Like it's like, yes, things are definitely bigger for having done this strength work. I had so much more of an enjoyable time skiing.

I was able to deal with the altitude much better. Which nice thing about Utah is the altitude is not that bad. So that was really good. But regardless that was great. I was able to ski 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. I mean, like, who am I? Like what? And then not even being super sore the next day, or really sore that much at all. That was the most shocking part of the whole thing, because usually I would just be so, so, so achy. It was just so difficult and really that strength training right there. And I thought, you know, because I prioritized that I get to feel really good and like, who cares what size my snow pants are, you know what I mean? Who cares what I weigh on the scale? Like I got to be outside in nature with my family.

[00:19:48] This was the first time we had no kids in ski school, so we all ski together the whole time. It was so fun. We had beautiful bluebird sky days. We had a day of amazing powder 15in on the mountain. It was incredible and usually a day like that would just my

legs would be shot and I ski the whole day and it was really, really, really nice. My point is, when we focus on how we feel doing the things that help us to feel good, right? Like I had the cardiovascular fitness and the strength to be able to do this thing that is important to me, that I want to be able to do for many, many, many more years to come.

I have to be willing to sacrifice this how I look priority. There's just no two ways about it. I can come up with, like, if I want to be strong, there will be size that goes along with it. And that's just how it is, right? When we are focused on how we feel and we prioritize that, that is like a present front and center experience for us every single day. Like, I think the novelty of wearing a size like ten years of wearing whatever size, like it's just normal. It's you don't even think about it anymore, right? Like it just kind of fades out over time.

[00:21:05] Same with the scale number. But being able to do stuff you love never gets old. So what I've noticed from focusing more on how I feel is I have much less pain. I have a lot more fun because just doing things that are strenuous is more fun and easier. I was shocked a couple years ago I went to see a pelvic floor physical therapist, shocked to find out that a lot of those issues are related to weakness. So stronger. I am in my hips and my glutes and all that better pelvic floor function, which is awesome.

It's more energy sleeping better. I mean, I've known for years that movement, even when I really don't want to do it afterward, it is great for my mental health. It's just better being me in this world when I've exercised. It's just how it is, right? So if I don't exercise, I can have the at least as close as I can get to the quote unquote desirable look. But there's a big price to pay and that's how I feel. Right. So I just want to offer to you, like, what if the goal is to feel good? What if maybe part of the goal should be to feel good? Maybe you do have a size or a scale number in mind, but you're also like, yeah, and I want to get there and then I'm going to see how I feel.

[00:22:27] Then I'm going to see how I feel, and maybe I'll add on 10 pounds of muscle after that, because I want to feel a certain way. Right. It really requires us to decide what's important to us, to decide what our priorities are, and to decide to stop thinking that how we look is bad. Right? Like how I feel is important. Therefore how I look is less important. If that's the case, then I need to stop thinking about how I look so much and

even bigger picture extrapolating that if you want to feel good and that's a priority, then you eat food that nourishes your body.

So your body feels good, your digestion feels good, right? You can maybe do things to work to improve your sleep so that you feel even better. Because when we're rested, we just feel better. Life is better. People get proportionally dumber the more tired I am right so, so more rested you are. Maybe the smarter people become, I don't know, right? But you're able to, you know, you move in ways that feel good. You create a body that feels good to live in that doesn't get old. The importance of that doesn't wear off. It doesn't fade away. And it becomes something that you. See as president in your mind day in and day out. And therefore I think it is easier and more important to preserve that because it's front of mind so much. And by preserving it, I mean maintaining what you have.

[00:24:00] You know, when I really don't want to get up and exercise. Yeah, but I want to keep the muscles that I have and I want to keep getting stronger. So I will go and do this also knowing that when it's over, I'll be really glad that I did. And I will feel happier because that's just how it works. So with that, I'll wrap this up. I want you to really think about that. What if you prioritized how you feel? What if you used how you feel as the temperature dial, so to speak, as you're going through the process of losing weight, changing your relationship with food? So many people tell me when they're eating is on track, how good they feel.

And then they're like, Now I'm back to eating whatever. And we know all of that, right? Because we have to learn how to process our emotions and feel them in other ways, and not use food to try to make them go away. But you know, when you're continually delighted with how good it feels to be you and your body in this world, it's easier to prioritize that and to continue making decisions that help you to retain that which is the permanence of your results. So something for you to consider. It was fun for me to think about. Honestly, I've just decided I'm like, you know what? You know? You know how, like, people as they age, like, they just care less and less about what other people think.

[00:25:19] They'll just like, say, whatever comes to mind. And they just don't even care if it's offensive or whatever. Just Ernest and I kind of think to myself, I'm like, you know what? I'm gonna stop deciding that my body is offensive to this world, to the eyeballs of

other people. Like, cause, you know, that sounds extreme. But honestly, when we're like, I need to look this certain way. Like, why? Particularly when that's against the way our body naturally looks.

There are people whose bodies naturally will look that way. Well, good for them. But for those of us where it doesn't, we can just decide. It's not important. Something else is important. And what that is, is the thing that I'm going to be working toward creating and then maintaining for myself. So give it some thought, see what you think. And, uh, maybe focusing more on how you feel is going to be the ticket. It's going to be the thing that really shifts things and makes this struggle start to shift for you.

All right. With that, I'm going to say goodbye. Have a wonderful, wonderful rest of your week. Thanks for your attention for being here. And I'll talk to you next time. Take care. Bye.

Ready to start making progress on your weight loss goals? For lots of free help, go to katrinaubellmd.com and click on Free Resources.