



# 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 my friend. Welcome to today's episode. Really glad that you're joining me today. I am jazzed to talk to you today about something. It's a little bit anti what most people say and think, and I can't wait to tell you about it.

So I titled this episode Lose Weight without wielding Portion control. And I want to tell you a little bit about how and why I use the word wield. So first I was going to say leverage. So lose weight without leveraging portion control. And then I was looking at the list of episode titles. And I think two episodes ago I used the word leverage and I was like, oh, I can't use that. I got to find something else. So I googled synonyms for leverage, and none of them were right at all. And then I thought, okay, let me google synonyms for using, because using just seemed boring to me.

And there popped up wield. And I thought, hmm, is that a little dramatic? I kind of want to use it, I don't know. So I then I looked up like, what is the exact definition of wield? Because you know how sometimes you think you know what a word means, like you're pretty confident and in fact, you're quite confident, but there's that little part of you that's like, maybe that is not actually what it means.

[00:01:49] So now let me just look it up. And what came up online was to hold and use like a weapon or tool. And the word weapon stood out for me and I was like, oh yeah,

I'm using the word wielding because I believe that many of us have and continue to use the concept of portion control as a weapon against ourselves. So let me explain. Portion control, just the word itself is something that is actually like distasteful.

It doesn't sit well with me. Is there one person in the world I want to know who's, like, excited when they hear portion control? Like, is there a world where somebody is like, oh yes, portion control. I mean that jokingly, but I also mean it sincerely. Nobody really wants to do that. But we've been led to believe that that phrase, that tourm portion control is really what's needed, and that if we don't have it, we cannot lose weight and we can't keep weight off. Now, you might be like Katrina, I'm confused. You over here are talking about how overeating is a problem, and now you're saying we don't control our portions like what is happening right now.

[00:03:04] And I get that. And what I want to say is that portion control is not the only way to stop overeating. When I think of portion control, like if someone said, listen, you know what we're going to do? We're going to do some portion control. Like, I am not exaggerating because I've been thinking about this a little bit. I immediately feel some emotional hunger, like I'm not physically hungry, but I feel a sensation in my body that is reminiscent of hunger, that is emotionally based. And if I didn't know better, I would at least consider going to eat something. So isn't that interesting?

This concept, this tool, this tourm, this thing that's supposed to help us to do better and help us to create a result that we want, actually, at least drives me, and I don't think I'm alone to do the exact thing I'm trying to stop doing or not do. It makes sense, though, why we think about portion control. I started Weight Watchers, gosh, close to 25 years ago, I think was probably the first time I went. And their whole concept of counting points and everything, you know, that has shifted over the years. But the general principle is the same, which is assigning some sort of value to the food and then keeping the amount you eat within that, that like the designated a value that you get to have based on various characteristics about yourself and. So by definition it is a limit.

[00:04:33] It's a boundary. You can eat this much and you can't have more. At least that's the way I interpreted it. Now, I do recognize that there are people who eat more points on Weight Watchers than is allotted to them, but I, I mean, I just didn't do that. If I ever had an experience like, say, I ate out or something and, you know, it was very, very

hard to determine a point count. I would just not document anything. I'd rather just not document anything than admit that I had gone over the allotment. It's like the wanting to win the game, or wanting to get the gold star or the A plus like I did it.

I totally followed it accordingly. And the problem with that was that when I did follow it to a T like that, I did really lose weight and like at a nice clip. And so that was enough of a positive reinforcement to me that it's like, oh, like when you control your portions, when you put this, control this like governor essentially on how much you eat, you get this weight loss result that you want. The part that I never connected to that, though, was that having that limit was unsustainable. I was physically and mentally unhappy. I did not feel great in my body, did not feel super great in my mind. I mean, I did like the weight loss part, but there was no part of me that wanted to continue doing that forever because it had, you know, enough discomfort to it that there was no way that I would be considering doing that ongoing.

[00:06:10] And that's just one example, because so many weight loss programs talk about portion control. And that's just built in to the like, the lingo, so to speak. We just automatically assume that what we need is portion control. And this actually came up because someone had reached out to me and had said, like, I'd love some help with portion control. And so I started thinking about that firm because I do not use that firm at all, at all, at all. It's nowhere in my program or anything. And I thought, interesting that this person believes that they need this and they want help with creating it, yet it actually isn't necessary.

So I started thinking more about portion control, and then I started getting a little fired up, a little fire in my belly like portion control. What the heck? We don't need portion control. And so we end up using the concept of portion control, essentially like that weapon. Remember when I talked about wielding portion control? It's like we're using it against ourselves. We're saying, hey, you're too much. You're a glutton. You consume more than your share. And you need to have less. And when you have less, you will feel bad, like your needs are not being met. It will not be a pleasant experience. And then you should do that forever.

[00:07:34] We're not going to do it. When I think about portion control, like I said, I immediately start to feel some emotional hunger. I. There's not one cell in my body

that's excited about doing that. Not one cell in my body. Who's interested in doing that long term. If anything, it just makes me get into a diet mentality kind of mindset. I start thinking, okay, well, I can suffer through this for however long until there's whatever the quote unquote cheat day or I finally gotten to my goal weight and I can let myself have more at that point or whatever. It's very much means to an end behavior. It automatically feels like I'm not getting enough, like my needs will not be met.

And when we believe that our needs won't be met, they are not met. We try to meet them. And often the way our body does that is by creating urges, by creating that emotional hunger like go and get some food, maybe even physical hunger, because it might just really not be enough food for you, because that's a whole other issue. Sometimes this portion control kind of stuff is like, yeah, you need to eat more food than that. Like, that's just not enough. Now, I do want to pause for a moment and say that if a portion control type of situation is working well for somebody, absolutely. God bless. Like there is no part of me that's saying you should stop doing that.

[00:08:57] I'm not like morally against portion control. I'm not saying it doesn't work for anybody. I think there are people who have found that, you know, weighing and measuring their food every day. It feels like a sustainable, doable thing for them. I don't know that they really would say that they experienced peace and freedom around food, but, you know, it could be. Everybody's got their own back story. And for some people, I think sometimes just having that level of strictness around what they eat is supportive to them, at least in some ways. Like they may believe that if they don't have those limits and they don't have those numbers and figures and amounts all dialed in, then it's just a free for all.

And they can't do the free for all. So there have to be limits. I am aware of some of the food addiction programs for people who identify as being food addicts. Like, you know, you can't abstain from all food, but you can abstain from some foods. And part of the treatment in some of the 12 step programs for that involves weighing and measuring your food and having limits around that. So I do believe and recognize that it can be very helpful and arguably even life saving for some people. But I think that that's an overall small subset of people. I think the vast majority of us who don't identify as food addicts, who have, let's just say, a relationship with food that could be improved upon.

I just don't know that the concept of portion control is particularly helpful. And so what I hope to accomplish with this episode is pushing back on that widely held belief. What if you don't need portion control at all? You could forget that term and never think about it ever again. In terms of your eating, I think that thinking about portion control, it can feel judgmental. Like, oh, I got to control my portions is basically like judging us. Like, yeah, you eat too much, it's too much. It's like it doesn't feel like it's a compassionate way to approach ourselves. Now, of course. Can we change the way we think about anything? Of course we can. Can we decide?

No portion control is going to become my most favorite time in the world? Sure, we can do that if we want to, but I also know that I lost my weight. I've maintained it and so many like literally hundreds and hundreds, you know, well over 1700 physicians that we worked with. Now we don't talk about that and they have success. So knowing that with that said. We can consider the idea that we can still get the results that we want without thinking about it through the lens of portion control, and it might be more effective, more comfortable, and more sustainable than we could ever imagine. Like, if that were the case, we could probably just so dramatic. The visual I had through the tourm portion control in the garbage, that's what just came, popped into my mind.

[00:12:03] We can just get rid of it. We can just say goodbye to that tourm and never think about it again. So maybe you're like, okay, that's cool, I'm behind that. But then what do I do instead? Like, if I'm not controlling my portions, I'm usually overeating. So what am I supposed to do instead? And to that I say that you don't need to control portions or measure anything if you pay attention to your body's signals. And as a side caveat, if your body signals are relatively trustable and what I mean by that, when people are eating a decent amount of foods that can kind of mess up your hormones, such as flour, sugar based products, it can make it so that it is harder for you to actually be able to identify and understand, like interpret your body's signals.

So sometimes we take a break from those foods for a period of time for a variety of reasons. But one of the main amazing benefits that can come from it is the clarity in the messaging of those signs. Like it becomes much clearer are you actually physically hungry or not? And your satiety signals become much clearer and more interpretable as well when you're doing that. So it doesn't mean that you have to never eat those foods ever again. What it means is that you can take a break. It's kind of like tuning in, like on

a radio, you know, like you can kind of hear the message, you can kind of hear the signal, but there's a lot of static.

[00:13:37] Think about the old cars from like 1970s and earlier where you had the dial and the car radio. You know, you would just shift that dial just a little bit and then the signal would come in. Clearly that's what we're trying to do. So the idea that something else or somebody else outside of you knows how much food you should be eating and you don't. I just don't agree with that. I just really, really don't. When I hear of people doing that to get a certain result, there's often some sort of long term downside to that.

For instance, many people who do fitness competitions, they're counting everything and totally looking at everything and have, you know, very, very dialed in way of eating that helps them to achieve the physique goals that they're creating for themselves or they're, you know, trying to create. And it works. I mean, they get those results. But what I also know is that disordered eating and actual eating disorders are rampant in that community, particularly among women, but men as well. And so it's kind of like you end up paying that price at some point. Are there people who love counting macros and it's just their favorite thing, and they want to do it forever more? I think there are there are people who really have found that it's very helpful and very easy for them, but there's nothing I want to do less.

[00:15:06] So I'm speaking with the people who agree or who also have that experience that they don't want to be needing to use a calculator and weighing and measuring to make sure it's the proper amount of grams to be able to have that. Like, that's just not the kind of relationship that I want to have with food. When I talk about peace and freedom around food, it is not like weighing this and measuring that. And you know, the one time that I did try doing that, I the quality of what I was eating because I was trying, it was like from a convenience standpoint, like trying to make it so that it would fit better. It was just not a good experience at all.

So for those of us who are like, hey, can I just like, live a normal life and enjoy food like the right amount and not too much and just not think about it excessively and enjoy it when I enjoy it and when I'm not having it, I'm not thinking about it like that's what I'm helping people to create. So like, could you get leaner if you followed, like the fitness

competition stuff or like followed macros and whatever to get a certain physique? Yeah, you probably could, but is that even really your goal? You know, for some people it is.

[00:16:16] But for the majority of people it is not. So if it's not, could we just ditch the whole idea of portion control, ditch the whole idea that we need to somehow put these limits on ourselves, and instead practice trusting and believing that what we already have issued to us at birth in our bodies, is enough to let us know when to eat, how much to eat, when to stop. When that is the case, then you get to actually meet your body's needs. Some days you may be hungrier and you know that might be because your body actually needs more food that day.

And when you really understand the difference between physical hunger and emotional hunger, you don't have to worry that you're eating too much food if it is actual true physical hunger. And then there are other days where maybe the amount that you're supposed to be able to eat, maybe you would have actually stopped eating a little earlier because for whatever reason, your body doesn't need as much that day. But when you're in portion control, well, you better eat now because it's your chance and this is all you get. You're not going to get to eat again until the next time.

Like these limits immediately put our primitive brain into like, fear that we're not going to be okay. And for many of us, we've had these experiences where truly our needs were not met. I mean, I was thinking the other day how many times, especially early days when I did Weight Watchers, how much diet soda I would drink, just trying to fill my stomach up, like with the carbonation.

[00:17:49] This was kind of before all the fancy bubbly waters existed, you know? And like all they had was like club soda. You gross. Who was going to drink that? So of course now I'd be like, mm back then. No way. So like all these diet sodas, just trying to get myself through the day, trying to distract myself from the true physical hunger. Like gnawing, stomach growling feeling that I was having, you know, so. So, yeah, like, if I was willing to suffer in that way, I did have this consistent weight loss, but there's no way I was going to continue on eating that way forever.

That just did not feel like the kind of life that I wanted to live. So if you are intrigued or interested in creating a life where you experience peace and freedom around food, and

then your body ends up at an appropriate weight for you and you're able to maintain that long term without a lot of effort, without having to control your portions, without having to measure things. I just want you to know there is something available to you, like when we talk about like, oh, I just need portion control. I need help with portion control or really saying, like, I need help making this not feel so bad. If we're using it like a weapon, we're basically saying, I need help to stop using this weapon against myself.

[00:19:05] And that's what I'm hoping to offer to you today. You can put that down. You don't need that. You don't need it to get the results that you want. And if you don't have a super positive and loving relationship with the concept, the term, the whole idea of portion control, you don't have to use it. It really I was just about to say it's optional and it's not optional. I mean, optional means it's like, yeah, I take it or not. Like either way is fine. I think for a lot of us it's not fine. It doesn't help us. It actually creates more of the yo-yos. The weight up and down creates more drama with food.

It actually detracts from what it is that we're trying to create with peace and freedom around food, so you can get all the results you want without portion control. Completely unnecessary to ever use that term ever again. Just want to invite you to consider that that you just really, really don't need it. And if you're interested, at some point I'm figuring out how to do it in another way. You can always check out more. You can check out my book, which is called *How to Lose Weight for the Last Time Brain Based Solutions for Permanent Weight Loss*. And you know, there's other great, amazing resources for free on this podcast as well.

[00:20:22] And of course, you can come work with us in the Weight Loss for doctors Only program too, if you'd like some personalized help on that. So can we just maybe stop with portion control? I don't want to talk about it. Not because I'm not willing to talk about it, but just because, like, no, we don't want that. It's not helpful. Let's just drop it and we'll think about food in a different way. What I really want to focus on is not how I can limit my food, and instead I want to figure out how I can meet my body's needs in a way that feels good and nourishes it in an appropriate manner.

Let me figure out what that is, because guess what? That's something that you can do ongoing. You can do that the whole rest of your life. And you don't need any special calculators or anything like that. You don't need your phone, you don't need an app. You



literally just need to be present in your body. Which guess what? You can't go anywhere without it anyway. So there we go. Nail in the coffin on portion control. I think that's what we've accomplished with this episode. I hope you have a great rest of your week. Take care and I'll talk to you next time. Bye.

Ready to start making progress on your weight loss goals? For lots of free help, go to [katrinaubellmd.com](http://katrinaubellmd.com) and click on Free Resources.