



WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Well, hello there friend. Welcome to today's call. So glad you're here. I decided to dig into my question and answer list that I have for podcast topics.

So as people have written in emailed over the years with questions, sometimes they say, hey, I'd love it if you do a podcast on this topic or that topic, or some question that I have something like that and we always file those away. And as I was thinking about what to talk about this week, I thought, I have not looked at that list in a long time. Let me go in there and see what's in there, see if there's something that can inspire me. And sure enough, it did not disappoint.

You all did not disappoint. And there was one that jumped out at me as like, yeah, we should talk about this. We should definitely talk about this. So this was requested by a lovely woman named Jess. And here is what she said. She said one of your previous podcasts made me realize that part of why I overeat is fear of food spoiling.

I grew up pretty poor, and it was something my parents always expressed worry over. Currently I am food secure and I meal prep on weekends. I realized that I either one over eat before the prepped food goes bad or two. As I get to the last few planned meals, I worry that they've spoiled and I throw them out and then get something off plan. I'd love to hear a podcast about this if you have some advice specific to food spoilage.

Meal planning for whole week has helped me financially and time management wise. I hate to give it up. So I thought immediately I was like, oh, this is so, so good. Can't wait to talk about this. So that's what we're gonna talk about. They're gonna talk about the fear of food spoilage and how to overcome that kind of combo combined with some

scarcity around food. But I think that this is something that is really great to address. So I do want to say, just like right off the bat, the once a week meal prepping has not been something that has really worked for me. And honestly, probably partly because of this issue. I remember years ago trying this and I think I did it. I actually, I remember exactly like I got the inspiration from someone back in the days when I was on Facebook, someone that I kind of knew peripherally locally.

I think she was like involved in one of the multi-level marketing things. So she was doing a lot of posting about her life and different things, and she always talked about how she meal prepped and it seemed like it worked great for them and for their family, very busy family. And I was like, okay, like that's something that maybe I should do. I can figure out how to do this. And so I did it on a couple of Sundays. I remember trying to make all this stuff. I remember my husband was not super in love with the idea of it, because then there were so many dishes to do, and it was just like many hours of work on that weekend day. And he didn't love that.

But that was okay. I mean, I was willing to push through if it worked, but really what happened was I had one call weekend then, and I wasn't able to do it because I was busy, and then the whole thing kind of fell apart. It was kind of my limited experience with meal prepping in that way, but I know that it can be super helpful for tons of people. And I also think what I want to like express here is that there are so many different ways you can do this, and the important thing is that you find a way to do this that works for you as an individual, right? So it could be that prepping all the food on one day for the whole week ahead and having it sit in the refrigerator the whole week isn't the way.

Maybe there are some other ways that you can plan where you can maybe do some of it, or some of the meals for the week are handled in this way, and there's other options for the rest. So with food spoilage, there's a lot of overlap with food waste. Like just kind of the idea of I paid for it, it was here and it didn't get eaten, but it's not the exact same thing as food waste. So with food spoilage, I mean, the food isn't good anymore. Then you can't eat it. You shouldn't eat it. I think some people have more of a comfort level with some form of food spoilage than others.

Like a little kind of weird. Like we can scrape that part off and still just eat it. And other people are like, absolutely not. I'm not gonna take a chance. That's fine too. I think, you

know, it's important for you to to recognize where you are on that spectrum so that you can plan accordingly. So I think a fundamental kind of like truth here, though, is that if you make a week's worth of food on one day, so probably a weekend day, let's just say if you make a week's worth of food, I mean, at least some of the time By the time five, six, seven days have rolled around, some things are going to have spoiled.

And I think the thing that I would anticipate I would guess would happen is that sometimes you make something and it's fine, and it totally lasts till the end of the week, and other times you make the exact same thing and it doesn't. And it could be because there's fresh produce involved. And as we know, right. Sometimes you buy like blueberries and they stay really good for many days, and sometimes you buy them and within two days they're already starting to get moldy. And so that can be the case with vegetables and other things as well. Just different freshness levels.

What season it is. There's so many factors that play into that. So there is ultimately going to be a little bit of an element of unpredictability in terms of that. I also think that it's important to recognize, like, how much does having fresh food in your life really matter to you? I think that if you're okay cooking everything and having cooked things waiting for you, it's probably more likely to last. Even better would be if you could make them, let them cool, and then put them in the freezer and then thaw them to eat. That's probably going to be the least likely to spoil, but some of us don't want to eat all cooked food like that.

And so I'm just going to speak for myself. I think we can all get used to anything, but I do know that I'm someone who does enjoy having something fresh. It doesn't have to be every single day, but I do like having some fresh things, like meeting fresh produce. And so that's just like a priority. It's something that I enjoy. I like that it tastes good to me. And so I would have to factor something like that in. So again, important to just look at what is important to you.

What do you enjoy eating. Because again, right, the whole point of this is to make it so it's easy to follow your plan. It's not easy to follow your plan when you make a bunch of things that you don't want to eat when it comes time to eat them, remember my whole thing, which is like, don't eat anything that doesn't taste good to you. So just keep that in mind, right? Okay. So when you're figuring this out, I think it's important to look at two

separate things. So there's going to be thoughts and beliefs and then the ensuing feelings that come from that about food spoiling about how you approach it. If food has spoiled. And then, like the scarcity and the food waste that may come from that. And then just your actions, right. Sometimes there are some action things that you can do.

So let's start with the actions. Because I think that's kind of where we tend to lean toward first. And then we'll talk about the thoughts and feelings. So I think in this kind of scenario, right where this where Jess says realize like, hey, I end up noticing that like, the food's starting to be a little bit off. So rather than letting it totally spoil and throwing it out, I should just eat it. And then overeating, right? Eating now for hunger you might have later, which just doesn't work. But in our minds, right. We're like, well, this food is edible right now. Soon it won't be. So I should eat it while it's edible, right?

So there's that element. And then there's also the evidence that she has, which is at times things do spoil. And then that was the plan to eat that. But it's not good anymore. And so now I got to figure something out. So I think that again, like just zooming out and starting to brainstorm is the best thing to do. So you like being able to prep food on the weekends. It sounds like it's something you want to be able to continue doing. It's helped you from time management standpoint, financially, all that stuff. It's like something you want to do. But is there a way that you could do it in a different way, slightly different. That would minimize the amount of food that goes bad, that you've prepped and makes it easier for you to have something that does work for you so that you're not finding yourself kind of last minute scrambling.

But then I also want to say that if you do have to find yourself last minute scrambling, because that's real life and sometimes that happens. You can also have a plan for that last minute and I'm scrambling. Then what do I eat. Right. And so this is really where your freezer is going to be like a very good partner for you. I would say potentially some things in your pantry as well, like making sure you sort of have like some backup food always available.

And of course things that are canned or like dried grains or things like that or things that keep really well. So that can be a little bit easier and there's less chance of that spoilage. So what I would say is if the prep food, if you kind of are like, okay, pretty much like for 3 or 4 days, the food that I made on the weekend is fine and that works

great. It's like days five, six and seven that it starts getting a little wonky. Then what I would suggest is you make the things that you know are going to last, or that you like making. That's easy for you. And lasts those three, four days or whatever it is.

And then you come up for the remaining days. You come up with some plans of things that you can put into the freezer. So like you make a thing and then you freeze it, and then all you have to remember to do is maybe 1 or 2 days before you're going to eat it, pull it out of the freezer, put it in the fridge to thaw, and then you're just heating it right back up again. So that could be built into your meal planning. Because when you're meal prepping on the weekends, by default you are doing all your meal planning. So that can just factor right in. And it could be that at first you're like, oh, I don't know. None of these would really last that well. Or like they wouldn't freeze that well. That's okay.

There's so many resources on food that does freeze super well. Thaws really well reheats really well. Or maybe it just could even be like the way that you are freezing. It could be changed so that it lasts a little bit better. There's tons and tons of resources out there on Google that can help you with that for sure. So that would be like an action that could make it so that it's kind of solves for some of these things. And then also, like I said, brainstorming those other options. So if it's spoiled or you forgot to take it out of the freezer or whatever, like what are the options? Like how long does it take to actually thaw it? Is it something that you can thaw in the microwave? And yeah, it delays dinner a little bit, but it's not really that big of a deal.

Or it could be that you have some backup plans, like places where you can get takeout. You know that you can like order on DoorDash or like however you order Uber Eats or however you order food in. There's something that you can pick up on the way home from work. And, you know, it's something that like, tastes good to you and is on plan and it works well for you.

I'll give you an example of something that I do or some a food that like my whole family, we all enjoy it and it is often our kind of go to in a scenario like this. And that's going to our local poke Bowl place. It's like a whole bunch of vegetables. I usually get the cauliflower rice because I actually like that. My family usually gets regular rice, and it's just like a super tasty meal that fills us up, gives us a lot of good nutrients, and we feel good after we eat it. It just like works for us. We don't really get tired of it. So it's like,

that's one of those backup things that I always have, right? Rather than being like, oh, the food spoiled.

I can't eat whatever I planned, I throw it out, I get something off plan. It's like, oh, I have all these things that I do love to eat that are on plan. Cool. Like getting a burrito bowl or like there's so many different things you can get or plan for, whether you're picking it up yourself, getting something that usually your grocery store has pre-prepared or something, you also can have some other kind of backup food in your freezer that is pretty easy to thaw or easy to prepare straight from the freezer and then like, okay, that's okay. Like if this happens, then I can always have this thing and I just make sure I keep the stuff on hand.

So, so a little creativity goes a long way when it comes to this kind of thing. And I think that alone will actually solve for a lot of this. But I do want to talk about the thoughts and the beliefs. And then, of course, the way that we feel. And I want to address this, particularly because of what Jess expressed with what her growing up experience was like, and she said that her parents expressed worry over food spoiling and things like that. We just can't help but pick up on that. We're kind of like sponges when we're growing up, and we're going to we are going to pick up the thoughts and beliefs and the concern, the feelings of the people around us, of the adults around us. So it's like if food spoiling was an issue for your parents, We're not even judging whether that was rightfully or wrongfully so.

It's just like it just was. Then it would make sense that at least a part of you, even maybe even subconsciously, maybe not even always consciously, but part of you subconsciously is like, oh, this is something that we need to be concerned about. And so then it is factoring into how you're interacting with this food. So I want to kind of point something out. And I think that this is kind of the truth. My belief is that when you are a human being, like some food that you get is going to spoil. Like, I don't think that there's a lot of people out there who are eating like fresh things.

Obviously everything is pantry safe. Like it probably won't spoil, although it can still can go bad. I think that's going to be like some food. Spoiling is just a natural, normal part of life. Sometimes you get the package of whatever and when you open it up you're like, oh, I don't know. I don't know why lettuce is coming to mind, but like it looked like it was

fine. But when you get it open, you're like, oh, this is actually this isn't that great? I'm going to end up having to get rid of some of this stuff. Like, that's just kind of a natural, normal part of being a human. Now, are there certain things that spoil faster or more readily or whatever? Yes, absolutely. Like I've noticed, like raspberries are very sensitive that way.

Like if we get raspberries, like they need to be eaten within like 2 to 3 days probably max, or they're really just not that good if you can't eat them within that time, like maybe you shouldn't get them or don't get that many, or however you end up using them. Maybe like frozen raspberries work just fine in that case. And then there's less of that food splitting. So I definitely think this is not like me saying like, let's just be wasteful and let's just not even care and let's just buy a bunch of food and have it spoil in the fridge.

That's not at all what I'm saying, but we can think about it and plan accordingly and get food that some things need to be eaten kind of right away, and some things can last longer and plan accordingly. And even with our best attempts, sometimes food's just going to spoil because that's just life. And can that just be normal? And so I would just suggest for anybody who struggles with this to kind of sit with that question and like how much food spoilage is, okay, I think we all can agree, like there's no way you're going to be like 100% perfect with your food and anticipating how much to buy and the checking out the quality of it.

I've noticed if I order groceries, it's more likely to spoil because I think I'm a pickier selector of produce than whoever the shoppers are, so that's something to factor in too. I mean, I typically would prefer to just shop myself.

I actually don't mind grocery shopping. I know a lot of people don't like it doesn't bother me, but, you know, regardless. Right. Like you just you have to kind of keep that in mind. So if some is inevitable and we can be okay with some food spoiling, just knowing that's a natural part of living human life, then we can decide for ourselves how much is normal because there's no food spoilage police. Right. That draws that line for us. So at what point do you start to get uncomfortable with the amount of food spoiling? I think, is my question. Like, I feel pretty good.

I was thinking about the food that we eat and I mean, I really in general, I think we do a really good job of eating what we buy and kind of keeping tabs on things and making

sure it gets used up and doing our very best. But sometimes. Right, like I was just thinking the other day, open up a package of peppers and like, couldn't see it because it was kind of covered up like, oh, this one's like all super moldy. Bummer. You know, like that one went bad. So, like, that doesn't make me feel away a certain way. But when I think about lots of things spoiling in my fridge, like, I don't like that, that doesn't feel great to me. Like, it feels like I can do better. Like my thought is like I'm not being a very good steward of this food or even of my finances.

Like I just paid for a bunch of things that are just rotting. That doesn't make sense. And that's not the kind of consumer that I want to be. So it's figuring out what your values are like, what are your priorities and what are your values. And it could be that it comes from a very clean and positive space. You want to try to minimize food spoilage, and it could be that you're coming from like, I'm a bad person. This is wrong. Like like a really kind of punitive or beating yourself up kind of a place to also avoid food spoilage.

So that's where those thoughts and beliefs and then the feelings are going to help us to understand, like we can be doing the same thing, trying to do our best to avoid food spoilage and recognizing that some things will just spoil because that is life and we can be doing it driven from thoughts and feelings that we like and want to experience, and thoughts or thoughts and feelings that don't feel great at all and make us really feel crummy if we're not doing it in a heavily emphasize in quotes, perfectly right, whatever perfectly is in our minds. So I think for anybody who has this coming up for them, it's worthwhile spending some time exploring this, figuring out like, okay, so this was my experience when I heard my parents speaking about food and food spoiling and expressing worry over that. Like, what did they say? What did I make that mean? What part of that do I still agree with? And what comes of that belief? Meaning the thinking cycle?

So when I believe that, how do I feel then what actions do I take and what is the result for me? And so anything that gives you a result that you're not happy with, like in this case for Jess, like she's overeating the prep food before it goes bad, or she's throwing out spoiled food and then getting something off plan like those are worth looking at and thinking like, okay, well, what actions do I want to be taking? And then moving up the ladder, going, like, how do I need to feel to do that? And what thoughts and beliefs still

feel true and believable to me and make me feel that way so I can take those actions and get that different result.

Okay, so that's how I would suggest approaching this. I think it's something that when we hold ourselves to a really high standard, which over the years I've noticed so many women physicians do, we just we often have very little room for any grace or compassion with ourselves at like an emergency comes up or whatever happens. Had we known, we would have done something differently, but we didn't know, and then we beat ourselves up, or we kind of Monday morning quarterback ourselves, right? Like, well, now that I know all this information, I was so stupid that I did this and this and this. Yeah, but you didn't know that information, so how would you have known to make that decision.

Right. So any of that that might be coming up, I just encourage you to explore that and work on letting that go, releasing that, recognizing that whether food spoils in your house or not, this is not a referendum on are you a good person or not? Like, are you doing wrong or bad things or not? It's just it's a fact of life. And to a certain extent, it's a choice that you make. You know, how much food do you bring in? What types of foods do you bring in, and then what do you do with them to try to minimize that spoilage?

It really can be something that is still a value, something you still want to try to take action to avoid happening like that. Food spoils, but it doesn't have to be something that is a judgment on you or anyone else for that matter. All right, well, Jess, I hope that this was helpful for you and for anybody else who struggles with food spoilage and thoughts and concerns about that. Hopefully this is helpful for you. And I just want to thank Jess for sending in this question, because this was a fun one to discuss with you. I really appreciate it.

All right, friends, well, I hope you have a great rest of your week and I'll talk to you next time. Thanks. Take care. Bye bye.