



# WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Well, hello there, my friend. Welcome to today's episode. So I want to talk to you today a little bit about something that I personally have been going through in my life.

I feel like I'm not super far ahead of somebody who's about to go through this, but I do feel like I'm maybe like one step ahead of maybe some other people. And what I'm talking about is kind of sending that first child away. Maybe it's off to college, maybe it's to some other stage in their life. But that kind of shift in life, like big, positive life changes that still can feel like a lot. So I think I always think of empty nesting as when literally all your children are gone. And of course, it's still going to be several years before I'm in that position, but I still wanted to take the opportunity to talk about this because it's a topic I haven't ever addressed on this podcast, and I think it's a big one that a lot of women can end up eating through.

So it's something that, you know, there's there's resources on the internet for this. And a lot of people have different thoughts and experiences to share. So there are resources out there. But I still feel like I want to talk about it through the lens of the work that I do and a little bit with my own personal experience. So my oldest child graduated from high school a few months ago and is already gone. So I would say that probably for a lot of people or majority of people these days, that child graduates and then they still have the summer before they transition into their next educational endeavor, if that's what it is, which it is for a lot of people, maybe they've moved away, starting a job, maybe it's military service, different things like that.

So I know that some people are in a similar position to me where the child is already gone, but I wanted to record this episode and have it go live now, because for a lot of

people within the next month or so, they're going to have kids leaving. And it's interesting talking to people. Some people say like the first one leaving is the hardest one. Some people say the last one leaving is the hardest one. Some people, they have just one kid. And so it's it's all wrapped up into one, right? It's the first one and the last one. It's the only one that's leaving.

And all the feelings that go along with that. And so I wanted to share with you a little bit more about my experience and what I've learned – and also just from a coach's perspective, what I can recommend so that this is an experience that you get through is kind of smoothly as possible. And what I mean when I say smoothly, I want to put that in quotes, little air quotes that you get through it in the best way that you can, and maybe not with an additional 15 pounds, because that would be nice, right? If we don't end up having to rely on food. So just to give you a little bit more of my personal experience.

My oldest son graduated from high school, like I said, in the spring, and I could tell probably through the whole last year of him being in school, last year of high school, that senior year that I was going to have some feelings about this. What I have realized is that I'm someone who really, really, really does enjoy my kids getting older and them growing up in the sense that I really enjoy adolescence and I know I'm not I'm not always joined by other people. A lot of people have other thoughts about adolescence, I think on reflection, it was a lot harder for me to be a parent to toddlers. That was a lot harder, like young school age kids, than it is to have kids who you can have really cool, interesting conversations with and just include them in things that you enjoy.

We started watching *The Sopranos* together with our son and just like doing really fun things together, just kind of transitioning a little bit into more of that parent/adult-child relationship rather than like, this is someone that we have to actively be parenting all the time. And so a lot of that was really fun. But there already was a bit of a countdown for me in my mind, which was the timeline of like, this is the last of this and the last of that and the last time we'll do this. So like last trips, last spring break, last Christmas, like this.

My son is actually really close with his siblings too. And so part of me was even starting to think like, okay, how am I going to help to manage this transition for them as well? What can I do to help facilitate that? Because they're quite a bit younger than he is. And

you go away even for a few months, and they're in a stage of life where they're going to be changing a lot, and it would just be a bummer to me if they didn't maintain at least some level of closeness and all that. So this has been something that's been on my mind for a while, and I think even the summer before, I guess the summer between junior year and senior year, I had a moment in coaching when I was working with my own coach, where I just burst into tears and I was like, okay, this is a bigger deal for me than I think I had realized.

So I already knew it was kind of coming. And I think I mentioned my son applied to college and he is all accepted and everything, but he deferred for a year and he's traveling for a year solo by himself. And so I think with the college applications, I think we were kind of distracted by that. And then him getting ready for his trip, those kind of exciting and some distractions and some of the end of the year things with school and sports and other activities and things. So.

So there was definitely a lot of like just feeling really proud of him, really excited for him knowing that really good things are on the horizon. But I kind of knew, like, there's probably going to be some feelings moving forward. And how that showed up was something that made me just be really, really, really happy and proud of myself for all the work that I've done. On being able to process my emotions and being able to be with whatever is true for me. And so what I decided was that however, I was feeling, whatever I was feeling that I was going to decide that was normal, that I wasn't going to judge myself for feeling however I was feeling.

I was like, Maybe I'll be totally elated. Maybe I'll be super happy that he's leaving. I didn't think I would, but I was like, it's a possibility if that's how we feel. If that's genuinely how I feel, then that's okay. So I decided to just not judge myself and be open, and I want to encourage you to do the same. So what I found was that there were some things that were coming up, some kind of end-of-the-year things, some wrapping up of things that I kind of anticipated. Thinking like this is going to be pretty emotional for me.

One thing in particular was his last voice recital, which I think it was like his seventh or eighth voice recital with the same teacher, and just thinking about all the times that he had gone up in the same location and performed. And then, of course, for his senior

solo that he chose, he chose this song. That is extremely sad. Like when he told me it was that song, I was like, oh, that's a sad one – but it has a lot of meaning to him and so that's why he chose it. But anyway, then at one point we were sitting at dinner and my other son was like, oh, what's which song is that again? So I played it on my phone and I was looking at the lyrics while I was playing it, and I was like, oh my gosh, this is so sad.

This is the saddest, saddest, saddest song. I was like, tearing up, just even thinking about that and listening to that song, and I thought, oh man, I think I'm gonna cry big time when he is singing this, just because it's such a sad song, and then just recognizing that there were emotions just kind of at the surface, there is a Taylor Swift song that is escaping me, the name of it right now, which maybe it'll come to me, but it's on her Speak Now album. Oh, it's called Never Grow Up and I remember playing that within that his senior year and totally getting a lump in my throat.

And I actually leaned on that song quite a bit to help me to bring up the emotions when it was an appropriate time to do that, to help, to get them out of me. I'm not someone who can always just, like, cry at the drop of a hat or do that kind of thing. So I would play the song when I was alone and could boohoo to just get those emotions up. I mean, even just thinking about that song makes me a little choked up. It's just so, so, so touching. And for whatever reason, that song really hit me in the in that spot. So I had that experience. Graduation was okay. That was okay. That was more exciting.

I was kind of like on the lookout for was graduation going to be hard? But then it was really just a couple of weeks and he left. And so he actually took the ocean liner over to Europe, and he decided he wanted to take the train from where we live in Wisconsin to New York City, where he got the ocean liner. So we actually said goodbye to him in the train station, and I had been feeling some emotions leading up to it. But then the day of, he was feeling like a little, you know, having some little nerves.

And so I was kind of doing the total mom like, it's going to be fine, you're gonna be great. You just, you know, like totally talking him through it, kind of stuffing my own emotions to be strong for him. But we got into that train station and it was like I could not even help myself. Uh, just talking about it, um, chokes me up. I mean, I just started sobbing. I just couldn't even control myself. I just, I oh, man, just talking about it. It was very emotional. I don't know what else to say except that I just was like, I'm just going to

have to be with this. I'm going to have to be with what is really true for me right now. And he got on that train, and I just was in a whole group of people just crying.

And the same thing happened during his voice recital. I realized I didn't finish that story. I think there were like 30 kids who sang, and he was like the 28th or something. So all these amazing, amazing kids are up there singing their hearts out. It's just so emotional in general. And then he gets up and sings this super sad song, and I held it together until the end. And then I was literally just like boohooing. The lady behind me tried to talk to me. I couldn't even speak. You're gonna have to talk to my husband. I mean, I couldn't even get up out of the pew. It was in a church for a while, but what was really cool was how nobody was looking at me like, who's this crazy weirdo? Like, everybody was patient.

My family was patient. No one was embarrassed of me. It was just like, yeah, I'm feeling some feelings and that's normal. And that can be okay. So I just want to speak to a lot of the anxiety and fear and feeling terrified and everything that you can feel when you're sending your kids off, or just with other big, positive life changes. I mean, I was very nervous. I knew that him traveling was the right thing to do. I keep telling myself it's going to be so much easier just to send him to college, because after this whole year, if he can get through this, which so far he is getting through it, but then he's going to be fine.

I also did some things that helped to make me feel a little bit better. Think thoughts that helped to allay my fear and anxiety. So one thing I was concerned about was his personal safety. And what if he found himself in some place that isn't a good place and there are some nefarious people around doing whatever? And what if he gets attacked? And so actually flew out to Las Vegas with him several months ago for the weekend, and we did this personal safety self-defense kind of a class. And after that I was like, well, that was good for me too, because now I feel like I know what to do so much more.

But it was really good for him as well, Like, now, I don't have to be as afraid of what if that happens? Because I know he knows exactly what to do and how to protect himself and just exactly what to do. So. So sometimes there are things like that you can do. It doesn't have to all be just changing our thinking, right and processing our feelings. Sometimes there are some actions to take that make it a lot easier. So what I want to

share just anytime you are going through one of these big positive life changes is again, like I said, whatever you're feeling is normal.

And I also want to encourage you to be open to the reality of what you're feeling. A lot of us have this idea of how we should be feeling, or someone we know they felt this way, or just whatever idea we have of what the experience will be like. And then when we think it's going to be one way, but it's really a different way, then we start wondering what's wrong with us and what could even be that you're thinking you're going to be sobbing all day long and you're not. And you're like, oh my gosh, am I like a horrible, unfeeling, uncaring parent? Like, no, it doesn't mean that at all. It just means that whatever you're feeling today, whatever the reality is of that, is normal and is okay. So whether it's anxiety, if you're feeling terrified, if you're worried, if you're feeling sadness or grief, you're feeling excitement.

You could be feeling pride. I mean, I am so excited for college because there's so many cool things he's going to get to take advantage of. Like, it's okay to have all those emotions and to be kind of holding all of them simultaneously, or many of them simultaneously, where you have a lot of positive emotions and some maybe more negative emotions at the same time, it's all normal. And so the next thing is to practice riding those waves of feelings. So if you're not going through something like this right now, all the emotional processing that I talk about, what I teach my clients and all of that work is all about learning how to be with the emotional truth that you're experiencing, which means that when emotions well up, when there's a wave of emotion, being willing to be with it and letting it be there and letting it flow through you.

So not using food or alcohol to stuff it down to avoid it, to try to maintain some sort of facade for others. My younger kids saw me totally boohooing about this kid leaving. I don't think that's a bad thing. And if anything, maybe they can see like yeah, I really love my kids a lot, so practice writing riding those waves of feelings before you find yourself in a position like this. And if you are now just finding yourself in a position like this, just practice it. When the waves come, just think about it like you're like a cork in the water, in the ocean. You're just floating on the top. Just let it come, let it come. I also want to really encourage you to get support where you can speak honestly, and then process what's really true for you. I'm telling you, having coaching in my life has been so, so

helpful, so important, and I always know I have that time where I really can get help letting those emotions flow through me, processing it, talking it all out.

Nobody's going to be trying to talk me out of how I'm feeling or give me advice. It's just a time where I get to just be with the truth of what's going on. So get support. It could be a friend that you can talk to. One of my very dearest friends who is always kind of she's kind of like, you know, the big sister to me in terms of like, her kids are a bit older. I was asking her, like, what do I do? She's giving me such great advice in the past, and she's like, her kids stayed at home or really pretty close to home or first three all did. And then it wasn't until her last one left that she went further away and she was just yeah, they stayed there.

So I didn't really go through that. And I was like, no, you're the one who's supposed to have all the good ideas and all the good advice. And so she still could be supportive of me, but I could see what I was doing there, which was like, tell me what to do, how to think. So I don't feel this so much. And she, of course, was just like, you just have to feel it. Whatever you're feeling, it's normal and it really is. Oh man. I did not realize how much talking about this would bring these emotions back up for me. Okay, next. Don't believe anyone who's going to tell you about how you're going to feel.

And this is about, again, like sending kids off or any other big positive life change. A lot of people are like, okay, this is how it's going to go. But particularly when it comes to sending a child off, like your relationship with that child is unique and how you experience that separation is unique. For me, it very much felt like a loss, but I recognized like there are some people who are probably like, oh my gosh, finally, this has been so hard. These last several years have been so difficult. And finally we get a break and it's like all good all around. And that's amazing. If you feel relief like, that's totally fine, that's totally great. Whatever you're feeling is normal.

Again, because your relationship is unique. So don't judge yourself for how you're feeling and be open to you being wrong about how you thought you were going to feel. It may just really be totally different than what you expected. A big thing that I had to work through was my thought it'll never be the same again. Like it's never going to be this way ever again. And that is true. That thought brought a lot of sadness for me. Even just saying it out loud brings up a lot of sadness for me. And so I just needed to process that because it's really true, right? It won't ever be the same again.

It's not going to be the way it was when he lived here all the time. And so that would come up and I would just like release those emotions and process through all of that. And then I just want to give you an example of what happens when you take time to do that. What happened over the course of time was I all of a sudden, then I processed some of that, and then I had this sort of like glimmer of hope. I had a another thought was like, well, yeah, it's true. It's never going to be the same again. But what's to come?

Could be good to like, who's to say that the new relationship isn't also good, right? In my mind it was like it'll never be the same again, equals it will be bad. Or it could also be that it's different, but it's also awesome because I allowed myself to process that and be with the emotions and ride those waves. I was able to come to that place. And so I think it's too early to say I haven't seen him since he's left. We stay in touch and everything and thank goodness for the Find My app, because I can look every day and see where he's at, see what's going on. Except like yesterday when it was like four hours ago, he was here. I'm like, why is it not updating? What could this mean? And I'm like, okay, calm down, it's fine.

It's all okay. But you know, that's something that you might be able to get to as well as, like what's to come could be good too. And then finally my last little bit of advice is that remember that time helps. And over time you will integrate this change into your life like even big positive life changes. We think they're going to be so great. Why do we feel a lot of negative emotions? Because it's changed, right? Because there's something different. And over time, particularly if you're willing to process and ride those waves of feelings, you will start to feel like it's the new normal. It'll just start to feel like the next stage. And you may still have feelings of loss and grief, maybe for the rest of your life that things have adjusted to where they are.

But I also kind of looked at it like, yeah, I can be sad that is over, but also recognize that this is actually exactly how I want it to go for him. And it doesn't have to be so all or nothing. We can have some gray areas where it's like, it's so good and I'm so happy. And I'm also devastated and grief stricken at the same time. You know, I think they call that, you know, having a bittersweet experience. And I think that is definitely what's happening here. So if you are going through a big positive life change, if you are



sending a child off, maybe the first child, last child, only child, hopefully these words have been helpful to you.

All I can really say is just be willing to feel it's good practice. If it's something that is a skill you could develop, then I want to encourage you to do that because it's only going to help you. And of course then you won't be coming across to that child as needy or weird, or totally pestering them or showing up in a way that you'd really rather not. All right, I'm going to leave it there. There's a special place in my heart for all of us going through this, and those who've done it before us, they've gotten through it.

And so we know that we can as well. And for all those who are in the throes, little kids, all that stuff, it's like, I totally feel for you as well, because when you're in that stage, it feels like the day will never come. And then all of a sudden the day is here and it's like, how did that even happen? Literally, how did that even happen? So okay, well, I'm going to leave it here. Have a great rest of your week and I'll talk to you next time. Take care. Bye bye.