



HEALTHY WEIGHT IN HEALTH CARE

with Katrina Ubell, MD

Katrina Ubell: Hey, my friend. Welcome back to the podcast. How are you today? I am so excited to do this podcast for you today, because this is seriously ... Gosh, if I had known and really understood this concept when I was back in practice, I'm not even sure I would've left. Maybe not. Maybe I still would've. I'm still very happy with my decision, but ultimately this would've been such a huge game changer for me, and I really hope that it is for you too if you're struggling with your life at work in the slightest bit.

We're going to talk about work and our experience of work. Before we get into that, I want to just love on my doctors' groups that I have going on right now and just let you know how much amazing work they're doing over there. They are losing a bunch of weight. They are doing all the hard work. They are not only changing their whole eating and their relationship with food, but they're changing their whole entire lives, and that's what really helps you to become a permanently thin person. You can't just fix this one small component and not take care of all the other things that made you want to overeat in the first place.

The other night, one of the gals who's been working with me for a while and just really doing the work and getting the results big time just on her own, without me asking or encouraging her, totally just left this amazing message for me. I'm not going to read the whole thing to you to protect her privacy, but I'm going to read a couple segments from the beginning and the end to just let you know what kind of results you can have when you do this work.

This is what she wrote: "You know, when I went out on a limb and emailed a nice sounding and smart woman who makes a great podcast because I was just so tired of the weight struggle, I never could've imagined the effects. At the most, I thought maybe this person could help me with my weight. Between Katrina's lessons and learning from the members of this amazing group, my life is so incredibly different."

Then she goes on to list a whole number of ways that it's so different. At the end she writes, "I can't believe how much a few tweaks in my thoughts has had such far-reaching effects. I remember listening to the podcast about starting at 'I hate my job' and getting to 'I love my job.' I didn't hate my job, but I sure didn't love it, and I wanted to. I had no idea how to create the rungs on the ladder to get there, and now I find myself there. I'm so incredibly blown away and thankful. This is really powerful stuff, and it does feel like the sky's the limit."

I mean, come on. Does it get better than that? This is what kind of result you can get when you really start applying this work to your life. I really want to encourage you to listen to this podcast and start applying it to your work life and everywhere you're interacting with people.

This episode today, though, is a follow-up to episode 31, which was about relationships and a coaching tool called the manual. If you have not listened to that episode, episode 31, I want you to turn this one off for now and go back and listen to that one first, because that's where I lay all the groundwork for what I'm going to talk about today on this podcast. It might be a little bit confusing if you have not listened to that one first.

I'll still give you a little quick reminder, because even if you listened to that episode, you might find that your short-term memory isn't quite what it used to be, so I'll give you a little refresher. The manual is an imaginary instruction manual that all of us have for other people in our lives. Just like electronics and appliances come with an instruction manual that tell you what to do and what not to do, we have similar imaginary manuals for every person we interact with. Even if you think you don't have a manual for someone, you still probably expect that someone on the street doesn't just walk up to you buck naked or something. You probably expect people around you to obey the law and not just start peeing on your lawn whenever they feel like it.

At least to some extent, we all have manuals for the people around us that we interact with, and even for people that we don't interact with, like the President for example. We have very thick manuals, meaning manuals that contain tons and tons of rules, for the people that we're closer with or that we know really well or that we work with. That's what this podcast will be about today, the manual as it relates to coworkers and employees, with a little dash of how to be happier in the workplace thrown in too.

I had mentioned in the first podcast about the manual that there are a couple of exceptions for the manual, and that's if you're a parent or a boss. I'll do a different podcast later about the manual in parenting, but let's just focus today on being a boss and an employee here today.

What some people think when they first learn about the manual is that what I'm saying is that you shouldn't have any expectations of other people, and that by default means that you should just let people walk all over you and then change your thinking so that you're not upset about it. That's not at all what I'm telling you, though. Of course, if you're a boss, you're going to have expectations of your employees, but this is a different type of a manual that we're talking about.

If you're setting clear expectations with your employees and have clear consequences for when they don't meet those expectations, then you have no reason to be emotionally hurt if or when they fail to meet them. If you have, say, an employee handbook that delineates very clearly what your expectations are of your employees, then when an employee doesn't meet or exceed those expectations, you have no need to be hurt or to get upset about it. What you then do is hand out the consequence for that infraction as laid out clearly in the employee handbook. It's very transactional and neutral.

The best bosses are consistent in their expectations and crystal clear about them. Maybe you've had a boss like that in the past where you knew exactly what you needed to do and what would happen if you didn't do it. There was a clear framework for you to work within, and you knew exactly what was going to happen. That was great, right? But, more likely, you've had a boss that didn't operate like that, that said one thing and then did the other, or if you asked a question for clarification you always got a murky answer. You never really knew where you stood. You saw consequences being handed out inconsistently based on the mood of your boss at the time. This could've been in your high school job bagging groceries all the way up to the chief of your department right now. This applies to everybody. As an employee, we always prefer the boss who's really clear and is managing her emotions and is fair and consistent when handing out consequences.

The way you'll know if you have a manual for your employees, besides the expectations that you've already clearly given them, is by whether you become emotionally affected by their behavior or not. When you're managing others from what we call a clean space — a clean space means you've been managing your emotions — then there's no more negative emotion. That emotion is gone, and your job becomes much simpler because it's not even about you anymore. It's all about the employee. You're not making it mean anything about you. It's all about you neutrally assessing what happened and determining which consequence is necessary for the situation.

Here's an example. Say you just hired a new receptionist and you explain to her what the office dress code is and she expresses her complete understanding. Then, after the first week or two, she starts showing up in what looks like pajama bottoms. She's just hanging out in her jammies at the office. You don't want to be too harsh with a new employee who's still learning the ropes, so you don't really say anything at first, thinking maybe it'll get better, but her attire just gets more and more sloppy looking. The other staff are noticing that there seems to be a double standard. You just want to have consistently professional looking receptionists manning the front desk.

Let's say that in the employee handbook it states that if there is a dress code violation, then the next step is to be written up. Then, after the second violation, they're put on probation. If there's a third violation, that's grounds for termination. You pull this gal aside and you ask her if she has any questions about the dress code, you maybe weren't clear. She says, "No." You tell her that you'll have to write her up for not following the dress code, explain again what kind of dress is considered acceptable and what's expected, and then send her on her way. Things improve for a little while, but then the jammy pants start showing up again.

This is a pivotal moment. I'm just thinking to myself, "Because I want to be in my jammy pants too. It's not fair." No. Obviously, you're looking for a professional environment. It's a pivotal moment because here's when you get to decide how you're going to respond and what you're going to make the jammy pants mean. You can make it mean something that makes you upset, or you can put her on probation, or you can just decide to let it go if you want to. These are all options for you. What most of us do is get upset, at least irritated and annoyed. We think she's disrespecting us or willfully disobeying the rules, which then makes us seethe inside. It doesn't feel good.

Now, if she hasn't been the sharpest tack so far, or if she's been a little rude to patients on the phone, then our thoughts are totally different than if she's been an absolute rock star employee and everyone loves her. If she's a rock star, you might be willing to let it go or be more patient with her, but only because your thoughts and feelings about her are different. Why do you feel patient with her? Because of your thoughts about her. Why might you feel impatient with her? Because your thoughts about her.

Ultimately, no matter how she's performing otherwise, you don't have to get upset or be angry about it. You don't have to be annoyed or frustrated. That is totally and completely 100% optional. You don't have to get upset when people don't comply with what you wanted or expected. This is managing other people from what's called a place of non-violence for yourself. You're no longer punishing yourself with negative thoughts and emotions about others while doing your job. You're letting the office run itself by having clear expectations and clear consequences and then simply enforcing them.

I think personally the best way to manage people is from a place of compassion and love for them, because everybody ultimately is just doing the best they can with what they have. I think this is the best way only because it makes the experience of being their boss so much better for me.

Clients will ask me, "But isn't that just giving the under-performers a pass? If they're doing a bad job, maybe they don't deserve compassion or love." But remember, you are the only person who can feel your emotions. Your employees cannot feel them. They generate their own feelings from their thoughts about you and what you say and how you act. You can't ever control what they think about you or how they feel about you.

But imagine if you genuinely felt love and compassion when you thought about your employees, that every interaction with them was driven by love and compassion. Can you imagine how amazing that work environment would be? Not because you'd be changing them or making them interact with you or each other or the patients any differently, but because your experience of your entire day would feel amazing for you because you would be filled with compassion and love.

Did you just laugh out loud when I talked about feeling love for your employees and coworkers? I can just see some of you thinking, "That seems like a stretch." Let me just share some information with you.

There was a psychological study that started in the late 1930s that followed 260 men from their first day of college at Harvard all the way to the end of their lives. What researchers did with all of this data was to figure out the personal characteristics and life circumstances of the people who lived the happiest, fullest lives from those who didn't. Then, in 2009, the lead psychologist who'd been directing the study for 40 years up to that point was asked if he could sum up the findings in one word, and what he said was, "Love, full stop." Later, when he wrote about all the findings in detail, his conclusion was this: "70 years of evidence show that our relationships with other people matter, and matter more than anything else in the world." Now, that is powerful stuff. In case you were thinking that's just the special people who get into Harvard, these findings have been duplicated again and again.

There's this really interesting book by a psychologist, called *The Happiness Advantage*. It's mostly centered on happiness and success in the workplace, and the author lays out all kinds of research to back up his suggestions. His last suggestion for how to be happier he calls social investment. What he says is that when we have a community of people we can count on, like a spouse, family, friends, and colleagues, we multiply our resources so that we bounce back better from setbacks, we accomplish more, and we feel a greater sense of purpose.

In a study called *Very Happy People* — I love that title, *Very Happy People* — scientists studied the characteristics of the happiest 10% of people, trying to figure out what they all had in common. They looked at the climate they lived in, how much money they had, how physically healthy and fit they were. What they found was that there was literally only one common characteristic among them, and it was the strength of their social relationships.

Additionally, having meaningful social connections at work motivates us. Over 1,000 highly successful professional men and women approaching retirement were surveyed and asked what had motivated them the most throughout their careers, and overwhelmingly they placed work friendships over individual status and financial gain. If you want to love what you do, then start working on loving who you do it with.

I see this with my clients. One client adores her regular team in the OR. They have a great time together and it makes her days operating so fun. Even if she has a different team, though, her outlook is that they're doing the best they can, and she stays in her role as the supportive and ultimately loving leader.

But so many of us don't look at it that way at all. How often are we thinking, like, "They can't even get my preference card right. How many years have I been working here?" We aren't spending any time getting to know our coworkers. All our brains see is what they're all doing wrong, and then we spiral into self-pity, martyrdom, and what one of my clients likes to call righteous indignation. I think that's such a good description.

If you're naturally not that social or an introvert, though, you might be like, "Seriously? Now I have to make friends with all these people? Come on." But what this book says, though, is that the social contact with our coworkers doesn't even need to always be super deep to still be effective, to improve performance and job satisfaction. They can really be brief interactions, as long as they form what they call high-quality connections, because those connections create openness and energy and authenticity between the coworkers, and that leads to a whole bunch of other measurable gains in performance.

Then the author, Shawn Achor, of this book — who I swear I would love to have as a guest on this podcast, so if anyone can hook me up with a contact with Shawn Achor, let me know — then he writes about a concept called the vertical couple. In a 15-year study, researchers in Britain found that people who had a difficult relationship with their boss were 30% more likely to suffer from coronary heart disease. If that's not reason enough to start finding love for your boss, I don't know what is. Let's do it.

Of all the social ties and connections we have at work, the vertical couple, which is the name for the boss and employee relationship, is the single most important social bond you can cultivate at work, according to Daniel Goleman, who coined the term. Multiple studies have shown that the main predictor of daily productivity and the length of time people stay at their jobs is the strength of the bond between the manager and the employee.

You guys know Gallup from the Strengths podcast. Gallup's been studying the world's leading organizations for decades, and they estimate that US companies lose \$360 billion per year because of lost productivity from employees who don't have a good relationship with their supervisor. When I read that, I immediately started thinking about my old practice. I was definitely bonded better with some of the staff than others, but I could definitely have made more of an effort to bond with others. I was thinking, if I had known this, I should've done that.

He goes on to talk about how doing things to make employees feel cared for is what the best leaders do, and he gives a bunch of examples. He talks about that it's in the best interest of everyone involved to prioritize that relationship. He writes, "A recent poll found that 90% of respondents believed workplace incivility was a serious problem. Many leaders simple refuse to put in the effort, and the reasons are many and varied: not enough hours in the day, a fear of undermining their authority by getting too close to those they manage, a perpetual crisis mode mindset, and even the simple belief that work is for work, not friendship. And yet the more they ignore the power of social investment, the more they undermine both their company's performance and their own." I mean, wow. Is that seriously powerful or what?

But I still feel like I can hear some of you groaning or rolling your eyes, like, "Come on, I don't really have space in my life for more friends." But what he suggests in the book is that you don't have to be BFFs or attached at the hip. It's more that when you interact with others, even just passing someone in the hall, saying hello and offering a genuine smile makes a big difference. It has to be a genuine smile, okay? You have to crinkle your crow's feet, or else people can tell that it's not sincere. When you've got a few moments of downtime, ask someone how they're doing and show some real interest.

In the book, he shares this: "Shelly Gable, a leading psychologist at the University of California, has found that there are four different types of responses we can give to someone's good news, and only one of them contributes positively to the relationship. The winning response is both active and constructive. It offers enthusiastic support as well as specific comments and follow-up questions, like, 'That's wonderful. I'm glad your boss noticed how hard you've been working. When does your promotion go into effect?'"

Interestingly, though, her research shows passive responses to good news, like, "That's nice," can be just as harmful to the relationship as blatantly negative ones, like, "You got the promotion? I'm surprised they didn't give it to Sally. She seems more suited to the job." Ouch. Perhaps the most destructive, though, is ignoring the news entirely, like, "Have you seen my keys?"

Gable's studies have shown that active constructive responding enhances relationship commitment and satisfaction and fuels the degree to which people feel understood, validated, and cared for in a discussion, all of which contribute to the happiness advantage. That is so good, right? Times we're distracted, like, "Oh, yeah, that's good. Yeah, that's nice," that's just as bad as ignoring them, basically.

I've just given you a lot of reasons why it's worth it to you to work on your relationships at work with your boss or bosses as well as your employees. I want to challenge you to give a few of these ideas a try. Start by noticing your thoughts when you're interacting with your employees to figure out what your manual is for them. Make an effort to smile, say good morning, and act genuinely interested in your employees' lives. Start working on that vertical couple relationship, but both ways, your relationships with your employees and also your relationship with your boss. Watch for big changes in your experience of your work life.

Please go to the comments section of the show notes page for this episode, which you can find at katrinaubellmd.com/33, and let me know. Let me know how it's working. I can't wait to hear from you. If you have other questions, please leave them there as well and I'll address those on a future podcast.

Listen, I recently checked iTunes to see how my ratings and reviews were going for the podcast. There's about 70 reviews, but last month there were over 30,000 downloads of this podcast, so we're a little off-balance there. I know you're out there. I know you're listening. If this podcast has helped you, please take a couple minutes to go into iTunes, search for Weight Loss for Busy Physicians, click on Ratings and Reviews, and leave me a review. You can even do it anonymously if you're worried about that. The more ratings and reviews the podcast gets, the easier it is for other people to find it amidst the sea of a trillion podcasts. I would so appreciate it. If you want to know how to leave a rating and review, go to the show notes page for this episode — again, katrinaubellmd.com/33 — and scroll down. There are some instructions for you there.

Have a wonderful week, and I will talk to you soon. Bye-bye.