

The Done Bingeing

PODCAST

EPISODE 10: LOVING THE ACT

Why might you need to flowers, smooth Jazz, and candlelight for your next binge? Keep listening!

Welcome to *The Done Bingeing Podcast*, where you'll hear about powerful life coaching strategies that empower you to end binge eating.

Binge eating is no joke. So, explore all your options. If you're functioning well in your life and you want to explore a non-clinical approach to stop bingeing, coaching might be perfect for you. Life coaching isn't therapy, but it may help you on your journey whether you also choose to do therapy or not. Trust yourself, take good care of yourself, get the support you need, and see what works for you. If you want to hear how life coaching can help free you from binge eating, you're in the right place! You have more power than you know. Why not take it back? And now, your host, Life and Weight-Loss Coach Martha Ayim.

Welcome to Episode 10 of *The Done Bingeing Podcast*. Thank you for being here with me.

We've been taking a solid look at the concept of self-regard since Episode 3. So far, we've talked about how self-regard helps to address six key areas that binge eaters often experience:

1. Their unhappiness with their weight—we considered this issue in Episode 4.
2. Their dieting to lose that weight and to control their eating—we explored these in Episode 5.
3. Their urges to binge—we looked into this in episodes 6 through 8.
4. The bingeing itself—we started to tackle this last week in Episode 9 on loving the *fact* of your bingeing. This week, in Episode 10, we're zooming in on the *act* of the bingeing itself.
5. The post-binge blues and 6. Dealing with weight after the bingeing has stopped—are coming up in future episodes.

For some binge eaters, accepting their weight is all they need to do to stop binge eating. Ironically, that's when their weight comes off too.

For other binge eaters, dropping the diet is all they need to stop bingeing. As soon as they feed their body satisfying nourishing meals, their lower brain relaxes and stops firing out powerful urges.

For others, the practice of understanding, witnessing, and welcoming their urges works right away. It's all they need to see that their urges actually aren't that bad and are no match for their higher brain.

But sometimes the whole process of stopping the bingeing takes time. And that makes sense if you think about the fact that if you've been bingeing for a long time, the neural connection between the urge and the binge is strong. We're working on weakening that old connection and building a new, stronger neural connection that serves you. But setting that up takes practice.

I know what it's like to want the binges to end right away. But hang in here with me. Let's talk about what to do if you're not yet able to defuse and bypass the urge.

I can't let you off the hook here. Yes, you've guessed it. You've got to binge with self-regard—that form of deep, unconditional love for yourself that we've been talking so much about.

It often seems like there's so much to get upset about when we binge. There's the amount of food we eat. There's the kind of food we eat. The lightning speed at which we eat it. The unnerving dissonance between how we want to eat and how we actually do eat. It's like, "OMG, there's so much to freak out about!"

But I want you to stay calm and be kind to yourself during the binge by taking these three steps:

First, make a date with yourself to binge.

Second, binge on food you love.

Third, commit to enjoying the act of bingeing. If you're scratching your head, stay with me.

Okay, # 1, make the decision to binge ahead of time—in other words, plan the binge.

I want you to make a date, as special as a first date. Perhaps a vase of white hydrangea and roses is called for, or your nicest dishes. Maybe a soft symphony, accent lighting, and flickering candlelight. Yes, I'm asking you to make a binge date.

This might sound weird, like I'm telling you to put "shoot up heroin" in your calendar. But I'm not. It's different, I promise!

Now, you may be wondering, "Why would I *plan* to do something that I'm trying to *stop* doing?" Because you haven't yet been able to stop—though you're well on your way. And in the meantime, you want to make any remaining binges part of the process of consciously wiring a new neural connection, not part of the old process of unconsciously strengthening the old one.

Making a deliberate decision to binge keeps you *conscious*. And what part of the brain does this involve? You got it! Your primate prefrontal cortex, or higher brain. The home of your executive functioning. You can only make clear and specific choices about what you eat from this part of the brain. This is probably very different from the way you've binged in the past. Most likely, your binges have been unconscious and completely driven by the whims of the urges coming from your lower brain. Remind your higher brain that *it's* in charge—no matter how hard your lower brain tries to boss it around.

Planning your binge ensures that you're not eating as a reaction to your urge. Reactive eating comes from the lower, primitive, unconscious, and automatic part of the brain and is what gets you locked into unhealthy patterns where you feel you have no control over what you eat.

Proactive, conscious, deliberate bingeing allows the act of bingeing itself to stay part of the healing process because this level of awareness teaches you so much about the actual experience of bingeing.

So, plan the location of your binge so that you can be comfortable while you eat without worrying about being interrupted. Plan the food and plan the amount. You'll stop eating when that amount is gone or when you stop enjoying the food, whichever comes first. Make your plans 24 hours ahead of time.

Let's imagine ourselves observing one of my clients, Evangeline, planning her binge. Let's see how she does it.

It's Monday night and Evangeline decides that on Tuesday night she's going to pick up fresh-cut flowers and two pints of Luna and Larry's Organic Coconut Bliss, Naked Almond Fudge flavor. She will eat it at home after the kids are tucked in. Owen works late on Tuesdays, so that'll give her a chance to binge alone so she can really focus on the experience. She'll tell Owen about her plan. He's a pretty awesome support to her.

Remember, planning a binge disrupts your outdated urge-binge neural pathway. It *thwarts* it. That's because when you decide to binge ahead of time, you're not *reacting* to an urge to binge from your lower brain, you're *executing* a plan from your higher brain.

Even if you don't plan a binge 24 hours ahead of time, try not to *ever* binge unconsciously. At least, pause and say, "I'm going to binge now. I know that I have a choice, and I'm choosing to binge." That pause is the wedge between you and your lower brain's outdated signal. We want to take that wedge and widen it.

So, that's the first part: pre-meditating the binge. Thinking through your binge ahead of time in this way will help you ensure that you love the food you binge on, which is the second step.

One thing you should know about Eva is that Luna and Larry's Organic Coconut Bliss, Naked Almond Fudge is her favorite flavor and her favorite special food.

Like Eva, make sure you plan to eat food that you love. Sometimes we don't realize that our bingeing has become a form of self-punishment when we force ourselves to eat food we don't even really enjoy. Sometimes we're so unconscious when we binge, we've never noticed that we don't really like what we're eating. Sometimes we eat way more than we truly want because we're not getting any satisfaction from our food. Loving the food you binge on helps you stay compassionate toward yourself, helps you stay conscious of the process, and means that there's a chance that you will eat something that will satisfy you.

Give yourself the dignity of bingeing on food that truly delights you. If you need to drive 20 miles to get that handmade fettuccine, go get it. By having a minimum, baseline requirement that the food you binge on be food that you enjoy, you get to send yourself a message that you care.

When I learned to insist that I *only* binged on foods I loved, that revolutionized my binges and I stopped bingeing on food I didn't even like. I was no longer interested in more than half of my previous binge foods. I had no idea that I didn't like candy, or licorice, or most flavors and brands of ice cream, or most chocolate bars. Once I knew that, those foods lost their pull on me. I went from eating almost any chocolate bar to eating only KitKat to eating only organic, fair-trade, chocolate-covered almonds. I had to drive 25 minutes to get them. If I couldn't find amazing food, I wasn't bingeing. Both the volume and frequency of my binges decreased dramatically because I was no longer willing to settle.

So that's the second part, binge *only* on food you love.

The first two steps of planning your binge and loving the food you binge on will help you with the next step, which is . . . prolonging your binge. Yes, you heard that right.

Listen, part of the reason you've rushed binges in the past is because you probably didn't entertain the possibility that you could handle just watching everything unfold minus the hatred, secrecy, and shame. Because you've been working so hard to move all that out of the way, and because you've consciously given yourself permission to binge on food you actually enjoy, what's the rush?

In fact, if you're going to binge, I want you to savor every single solitary mouthful.

Why?

Because savoring allows you to treat yourself with respect, a form of self-regard. And adding pleasure and intention to your binge takes the helplessness out of it.

Savoring provides an opportunity to learn. You might learn that you don't actually like potatoes with butter as much as you thought. Or you might learn that you love the first three mouthfuls, but the next three? *Meh*.

Savoring gives you a chance to notice when you're getting full. When you eat really fast, you may miss your satiation signals frantically waving white flags.

Savoring keeps you conscious. To savor every bite, you need to notice every bite. So, at all times, try to stay present, aware, and deliberate during the binge. Losing your ability to witness your binge means you risk slipping back into the unconscious, reactive habit of bingeing. Keeping your witness allows the binge to serve as a step toward new neural wiring instead of just another loop through the old neural groove.

Savoring food takes time, and the results are amazing.

Let's check in on Eva and see how she's doing.

It's 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday and the kids are in dreamland. She's already noticing the saliva gathering along her tongue. She intentionally notes her body heading down to the kitchen: her leg muscles activated on each stair, her arm muscles engaged as she opens the freezer door and pulls out the first carton of Naked Almond Fudge. Eva reminds herself that these voluntary movements are governed by her higher brain.

While the carton warms slightly, Eva clicks on her cued Spotify playlist and puts a few drops of organic vanilla essential oil in the diffuser.

On a scale from -10 (absolutely famished) to +10 (positively stuffed), she's about a +2. She's not hungry after eating a small dinner with the kids. She feels light and satisfied.

Eva's excited and a bit nervous. This is the first time she's planned a binge. She reminds herself that she's not reacting to an urge from her lower brain. Her decision to binge and her movements toward the freezer are both functions of her higher brain.

The urge doesn't own her. *She* is in charge.

She scoops the full pint into her nicest bowl and sits down at the table. The fresh bouquet blooms out of the top of a glass vase with clear, aquamarine stones settled at the bottom.

Eva turns to her bowl and takes in the streaks of fudge and specks of almonds. She eases her spoon into the tip of the softness and lifts it up to her nose. She notices the scent of almond amaretto and a surge of anticipation. She puts the spoon in her mouth and the explosion of flavor shuts out everything else. She feels the coldness in her mouth and tracks it as it slides down her throat and into her belly. She puts her spoon down. That was *ex-quis-ite*. On a scale from 0 (not enjoyable at all) to 10 (absolutely delectable), that was a mind-blowing 10. Hands down.

Eva spoons up some more and puts it into her mouth. Almonds and fudge delight her senses again, though not quite as much as the last time. She puts her spoon down and ponders the experience. She gives that one an 8 on the Enjoy-O-Meter.

She swirls a third spoonful in her mouth. Down goes her spoon. It's a treat, for sure, but only a 6.5. Interesting. The score is slipping.

By the time Eva has swallowed the sixth spoonful, she notices her enjoyment has dropped to a 3. Her belly feels full, at about a 7 on the fullness scale. And the coconut ice cream feels heavy in her.

She keeps eating but stays keenly aware of each mouthful, of how each successive spoonful is less pleasurable than the last. She finishes the pint, noticing how she kept trying to recapture and relive the bliss of that first spoon. She recalls how in the past she would've mindlessly moved onto the second pint waiting in the freezer. But the deal was that she'd stop eating when she stopped enjoying the food or when she'd eaten the amount she'd planned on, whichever came first. She's definitely not enjoying it now. And she's now at 9 on the fullness scale. Eva decides she's done. She puts the bowl in the sink and curls up on the couch and picks up the latest edition of *The New Yorker*.

When you actually sit down and commit to enjoying the food, you may realize that bingeing wasn't so much about satisfaction as it was a way to end the urge to binge. Pay close attention to whether you're enjoying a binge, and you may well discover that you're not!

And before you protest that savoring every mouthful will take too much time, remember that it would probably have taken Eva about as long to eat two pints of coconut ice cream at her typical Tasmanian Devil binge rate as it would for her to eat six spoons slowly and mindfully.

Because Eva stayed conscious of her emotions, she was able to eat less food than she normally would when she binged. She's feeling excited about the experience.

But strangely, she's also feeling a bit sad that she didn't need to eat that second pint. It feels like a loss. The ambivalence confused Eva. It was like breaking up with someone, it left a void.

The truth was, Eva had long sensed that coming void. She told me it was the reason she's been afraid to begin working with me. She feared that nothing would be left in her life if she stopped bingeing. But now, Eva pours all that energy that bingeing had drained from her into the rest of her life. Now, *she's* the one that's blooming.

So that's the third step, commit to enjoying the act of bingeing. This will force you to slow down. To enjoy a binge, you're going to have to savor it so that you can truly take it in.

When I found a way to love my bingeing, I was essentially becoming mindful—although I hadn't heard that term yet. The mindfulness alerted me to the fact that, "Hey, I'm not really enjoying this sixth butter tart. In fact, I didn't really enjoy the third, fourth, or fifth." Loving my binges actually helped me to reduce the amount I binged on almost overnight. Another surprise.

So, these three steps are how you bring in self-regard to contend with act of the bingeing itself.

Now, in this episode, did I say throw everything to the wind and just binge for the rest of your life?

No. I didn't say that.

I said if you're going to binge, bring as much neutral attention and awareness as you possibly can to the act, from start to finish. You'll notice one thing right away. None of this would even be possible with shame. It is self-regard that makes each of these three steps possible.

Here's what I'm try show you:

Self-regard presents you with the choice of freedom.

I want to ask you a question. And I want you to answer in the privacy of your heart.

Are you willing to let go of the shame around your bingeing?

Because you can either stay in shame around your bingeing.

Or you can choose a path to freedom that starts with shifting to gentle curiosity.

Shame versus regard.

Prison versus freedom.

You get to choose.

That's it for Episode 10. Thank you for listening.

It is one thing to learn these concepts intellectually, but what my clients tell me is that applying them with the one-on-one direct support of a coach got them their results so much faster. If you're done with bingeing, click the link in the show notes to sign up for a free session and see how coaching can help.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *The Done Bingeing Podcast*. Remember, although life coaching can complement therapy, it's not a substitute for therapy if that's what you require. Make sure you get the support you need. And let Martha know if she can help you along the way. Come back next week for more on saying goodbye to the binge.