

The Done Bingeing

PODCAST

EPISODE 11: AFTER THE BINGE

What's the difference between failing down and failing up? And why might you want to fail your way out of binge eating? 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 11 of *The Done Bingeing Podcast*. Thank you for being here with me.

Since Episode 3, we've been applying the concept of self-regard to almost every nook and cranny of binge eating. So far, we've talked about how self-regard helps to address six key areas that binge eaters often deal with.

Episode 4 zeroed in on unhappiness with weight.

Episode 5 explored using diets to lose weight and to control eating.

Episodes 6 through 8 focused on the urges to binge—understanding where they come from, how to witness them, and why you want to welcome them.

Episodes 9 and 10 dealt with the binges themselves—both the fact of being locked into the cycle of binge eating and the actual act of bingeing.

This episode, Episode 11, talks about the aftermath of a binge.

The topic of dealing with your weight after the bingeing has stopped is coming up.

So, this week, we're shining a light on what some of my clients like to call the "post-binge blues."

How do you bring self-regard to the most regretful, distressing part of being a binge-eater?

Surprisingly, by sticking around for it. Yes, I want you to *stay*. Sticking around with self-regard can turn the binge, and its aftermath, in your favor.

So much of bingeing is about running. We run to get the food because we feel driven—dragged even—by our urges. We blitz through the binge because it's too hard to watch ourselves do something we don't want to do, or because the urge feels so unbearable, or because we're trying to hide so no one discovers our secret. And we want to outrun the aftershock of the binge because it just feels so bloody awful: our bodies are bloated, our minds are dull, and our souls are screaming, "Why the hell did you do that to me again?"

But something happens when we run: everything goes by in a blur. And what can you see in a blur? Not much. Some unidentifiable streaks perhaps. And this is exactly where bingeing thrives. In the blur, in the streaks. In the unwillingness or inability to see, to be aware, and to be conscious. In the unwillingness or inability to stay *still*.

Have you ever driven in a winter blizzard? I spent many holidays in my youth visiting my grandparents' farm in northern Ontario, one of Canada's provinces. My father would drive our family north on Highway 11 from Toronto—a two-lane highway at the time, a passage blasted through Muskoka rock, a strip of pavement shared by everything from motorcycles to transport trailers.

In the winter, the drive predictably entailed whiteouts, which meant you literally could see nothing but streaks of white, as the snow raced by. My grandfather, after a good many beers by the woodstove, told my brother and me a good many tales of the ones who didn't make around Suicide Corner or down Dead Man's Hill.

In the dark, our brown Chevy Nova crept up that highway, guided only by two red dots (all that could be seen of the vehicle in front of us) and the occasional rumble that told my father the car had veered off the road and onto the right shoulder.

We navigated our journey by faith and touch. Faith that that driver in front of us was actually *on* the road and on the *right side* of the road. And by the touch stones that told us we had left it. While we made it to my grandparents' every time, these were perilous guides. You could see so little in the blur. But when the car stopped for the inevitable re-fuel or pit stop or pile up, you *could* see.

What had been a blinding swath of white eased into soft fluffy flakes falling from the sky, landing tentatively on the windshield, pausing until one tendril of each flake gave and melted in on itself, pulling the rest of it down in a wavy stream on the glass. We could see so much better in the stillness. It wasn't as scary. *The stillness wasn't as scary.*

When the binge and the aftermath whip by like the driving snow, our guides are as precarious as barely visible taillights and the crunch of tires skidding into gravel. What are your guides? When do you stop eating? Do you stop when you're full? Do you stop when you're stuffed? Do you stop when you're sure one more bite couldn't possibly fit in? And when will you stop bingeing? Will you stop when you're 20

pounds overweight? Fifty? One hundred? Two hundred? Three hundred? Will you stop with insulin sensitivity or diabetes? Or worse?

What are your guides? If you're still running, you probably don't know.

What we know from brain science is that nothing actually forces you to binge, though it may not feel like that when the urge comes. Every binge requires a decision to say yes to the binge and a voluntary movement to get the food. Yes, you fear the binge and the aftermath of the binge, but you fear the urge and not bingeing *more*—or you wouldn't binge.

You want to stop. You have the capacity to stop. But you don't stop.

And so, you come to the moment after the binge torn in two—pulled on one side by the part of you that said, "Please, no," and pulled on the other side by the part of you that said, "Fuck, yes."

It is precisely this dissonance that is so unnerving, so disconcerting, that makes you want to just keep running.

And yet, this is exactly where you need to stay, quite still, and feel that tear.

There is no need to run after a binge. If you've been listening to this podcast from the beginning, you know that we've been sprinkling a gentle, neutral curiosity over every aspect of binge eating through the application of self-regard.

You've probably been bingeing for a while, so why not stay and let yourself see what happens when you do? Remember, self-regard leaves no room for shame, so you can stay and face the choice you made. And the fact that you made a choice to binge is not a reason to beat yourself up.

When I let myself really feel the full physical fallout from my binges, I realized how truly awful my body felt. Instead of automatically popping an aspirin for my raw and aching throat, I'd take the time to *feel* the rawness and ache. Instead of gulping Pepto, I'd let myself *feel* gassy and bloated and like I might throw up.

I also started to let myself feel emotionally awful after a binge. I let myself sob in the full sorrow as it came, as it often did, if I let it.

Before I was willing to do this, I felt like every time I was about to binge that it was going to feel so awesome. I'd brush off how I'd feel after—that didn't even enter the picture. But once I stopped pushing away the aftermath of my binge and let myself *feel* it, I started remembering that awful feeling *before* I started bingeing.

It's like that balance scale held by Lady Justice—you know how the one side will bang down if it waaaaaay outweighs the other side? Well, that's what it was like for me. The "I-want-to-feel-good-right-now, just-binge, just-binge" side kept banging down right before a binge. It seemed like there was nothing on the other side of that scale.

But once self-regard had booted shame out of the way, and I could let myself actually *feel* the other side—I had something to plunk on the other side of the scale: My raw throat and the *ugh* feeling that gutted me after a binge.

Now, before a binge, the scale leveled out. I could now see past those first few minutes of bingeing rapture and imagine—on a visceral level—how bad I’d feel later. For the first time, that understanding of the aftermath entered into my decisions about whether or not to binge.

Self-regard helped me to hang around after my binges without shame. And sticking around helped me to remember that awful feeling *before* a binge, and stop it in its tracks.

What’s more—self-regard helped me close off a binge as a single episode. A matter-of-fact event that happened and ended, not a moral indictment of me.

I want you to change judgment about your binge aftershocks to curiosity about them. How do you feel physically? How do you feel emotionally? Describe both in as much detail as possible.

If your binge wasn’t planned, you have some additional work to do. Grab a journal and write down what happened so you can learn from the binge and move on. What did you eat? How much did you eat? How much did you spend on the food and on gas or transit to get it? How long did it take you to get the food and eat the food? How long did the aftereffects of the binge last—for example, the bloating, nausea, sugar crash, mental fog, lost productivity, poor sleep?

What were the circumstances leading up to your binge? Describe these as neutrally as possible. The description should be a set of facts that everyone could agree on. You can’t say, “Joey the Jerk tempted me with his pineapple upside-down cake that he knows I can’t resist.” You can say, “Joey brought me some of his pineapple upside-down cake.” Do you think there were any particular triggers for you?

What was the primary emotion you were experiencing before you binged? If you had to explain to a Martian what this emotion felt like in your body, how would you describe it? What were you thinking just before you felt the desire to binge?

Did you try to witness your urge? If so, what worked and what didn’t? If not, why not, and what do you need to do to witness it next time?

And, why did you choose to binge? Remember, this is an evaluation of what happened, not an indictment. Your urge might have felt super-powerful, but it was not responsible for you deciding to binge or for getting you to the food or for eating the food. Don’t be afraid. It’s really helpful to know why you made the choice to binge.

Look, we all know on an intellectual level that we are capable of not bingeing, right? There isn’t some mysterious force that buckles us in the passenger seat and drives us to the drive-thru. Or that grabs our hand and drags us to the corner store. The fridge door doesn’t open on its own. And the box of cookies doesn’t empty itself onto a plate and place itself on our lap right in front of us. We all know for sure that

we are capable of not bingeing. No one and nothing forces us to take all the actions that comprise a binge.

So why do we choose to binge if we know we're capable of not bingeing? Here's why:

We are afraid that we can't handle what'll happen if we don't binge. It is as simple as that. That's why it's so powerful to *write it down*. Why did you choose to binge when you knew you didn't have to? What did you fear? What was it that you thought you couldn't handle?

When you know what you fear you can decide what to do about it.

What can the time after your binge teach you?

Yes, you binged.

No, you haven't blown it.

This binge can still help you prevent your next one. Why? Because if you maintained even an ounce of awareness during or after the binge, you are that much closer to not having to binge the next time the urge comes. Bingeing withers under the light of awareness. Every hint of consciousness you bring to the binge or its aftermath nudges you further toward freedom.

You haven't come full circle through yet another binge. Instead, you've spiraled upward through a layer of the urge-binge pattern. You're on your way. The binge was a single episode. Leave it at that. Light up any shame that may be skulking around and sit back and wait for your next urge. Welcome it and witness it with gentle curiosity.

Listen, if you're resisting gentleness toward yourself after a binge, I get how upset you are, how badly you didn't want to do it, how much you wish it hadn't happened. You may have felt that you failed because you did something you didn't want to do.

Have you ever heard the term "failing up"? At its heart, it means to be *willing* to fall, to get back up, to learn, and to move on—ready to stumble again if need be.

Sometimes failure seems like it's the end. Like it's not worth it to keep trying. Like you blew it. That's "failing down." If you've binged, you might be tempted to go down this road. And if you've been trying to stop bingeing for a long time, you've probably come to this point before. At least once. Possibly more.

Now, if you think about a cute little toddler learning to walk, here's what's totally fascinating: If they didn't fall down, they wouldn't have to get back up. What makes them strong enough to walk is *the act of getting back up*. It's like doing squats. Think about how much effort it takes to get back up. Toddlers have to fall countless times to learn to walk. My teacher and coach Brooke Castillo likes to say that if we had to learn how to walk as adults, we'd all be still be crawling because we wouldn't be willing to fail that many times. It'd be too embarrassing. We'd just give up after a hundred or so tries and say, "Well, *that* didn't work!" And I think she's so right. Thank goodness our brains aren't developed enough when we're one or two years old to make that call.

So, remember: toddlers don't learn to walk on their own *in spite* of failure, but *because* of failure.

This doesn't change for us even as adults. Failure isn't bad. Failure paves our way to success. Being willing to fail, and especially to fail consciously, is a good thing. Failure just means that there's something to be learned. Something to be tweaked. You won't know what that is if you're racing away in shame. Self-regard will give you the space and peace you need to stay.

So, don't fear failure. And don't give up. Get up. Expect to stumble again. Expect to fall again. And expect to work to get back up again. Nothing's gone wrong.

Healing from binge eating can be chaotic and messy. Things won't go the way you want them to. You can be pretty clear that you want to stop bingeing, but you may not stop right away. And that's okay. You failed, and you can fail better next time. How? By asking yourself some probing questions.

Don't let the failure sting you. Lean into it and listen. When you connect with the reasons why you failed, you can transcend the chaos.

You can fail down or you can fail up.

You can fail worse or you can fail better.

If you're going to fail, fail up, fail better. And fail your way right out of binge eating.

That's it for Episode 11. Thank you for listening.

It's one thing to learn these concepts intellectually, but what my clients tell me is that applying them with the direct one-on-one guidance of a coach got them 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.