

The Done Bingeing

PODCAST

EPISODE 16: CREATING FEELINGS

What does a mother-in-law's sigh have to do with creating the feelings you want to feel? Keep listening!

Welcome to *The Done Bingeing Podcast*. This is the place to hear about how you can pair emerging brain science about why you binge with powerful life coaching to help you stop. If you want to explore a non-clinical approach to end binge eating, you're in the right place. It's time to free yourself. You have more power than you know. And now, your host, Life and Weight-Loss Coach Martha Ayim.

Welcome to Episode 16 of *The Done Bingeing Podcast*. I'm so glad you're here with me.

We began looking closely at emotions in Episode 12 in a conversation about how to lose weight after being a binge eater *without* triggering any more binges. In that episode, we started to study why we have the desire to overeat in the first place. To understand that question, we needed to understand the three main reasons why we have the desire to overeat: 1. we use food to anaesthetize painful emotions, 2. we're conditioned to overeat by society, and 3. our dopamine system gets hijacked by high-sugar foods. So, since then, we've been exploring emotional eating and taking a deep dive into emotions—understanding them, choosing whether to eat them or feel them, and now we're on to creating them.

Why would we take at least four consecutive episodes to consider emotions? Here's why: They are the reason we do everything we do.

We've been talking a lot about how emotions feel in our bodies, about how they essentially culminate in a collection of physical sensations that we experience, and about the choices we make about whether to allow them to unfold or eat to make them go away.

But what we haven't talked explicitly about yet is where emotions come from in the first place. You may think that your feelings are involuntary—I certainly did. That they just happen based on whatever's happening in your life.

Your neighbor raised her eyebrow about your lawn (which is a litter longer than you'd like it to be), and it was that *elevated eyebrow* that made you feel irritated.

Your co-worker side-glanced your backside (which is little bigger than you'd like it to be), and it was that *side-eye* that made you feel shame.

Your mother-in-law sighed when you ordered in dinner (which you do a little more often than you'd like to do), and it was that *audible exhale* that made you feel angry, right?

But what do we really know about what your neighbor, your co-worker, and your mother-in-law were thinking?

Nothing.

Your neighbor may have wondered if she could learn to be more relaxed like you because you seem to have so much fun with your kids than she does with hers.

Your co-worker may have wondered where you got your jeans from because those pockets make your butt look *mmm-mmm good*, and she wants a little of *that*.

Your mother-in-law may have momentarily mourned all the times she'd made dinner when she didn't want to and slammed plates of resentment down on the table for her family.

Okay, I can hear you already.

"Whoa! Wait a minute, Martha. You don't know my neighbor! She *actually told me* that if I cared enough to look after my property, I'd do the whole street a favor."

Or: "*Girlfriend*, you don't have a clue about my co-worker! She thinks I'm a fat, lazy glutton."

Or: "You obviously haven't met my mother-in-law! She even said it's too bad her son doesn't have a wife who cares enough to cook for him."

Alright, already, alright! Let's say that you're right. Here's my question: What do you feel when you believe that your neighbor thinks you don't care about your property or community? When you believe that your co-worker thinks you couldn't give a rat's behind about your own behind? When you believe that your mother-in-law thinks that you don't really love her son?

Oh, yeah. You feel irritated, ashamed, and angry. And how do those emotions feel? Lemme guess. Like crap, right?

And what are you more likely to do when you feel like crap? Eat crap you don't want to eat. And then what happens? You gain weight you don't want to gain.

Sound familiar?

Well, I have another idea.

Right now, you're giving all your power away to your neighbor, your co-worker, and your mother-in-law. You think you felt irritated, ashamed, and angry because of a certain thing that happened in your life, yes? That arched brow, that peripheral glance, that sing-songy sigh.

Well . . . that's not why you felt like crap and ate like crap.

The reason you felt like crap is because you let yourself believe a thought about the brow, the look, and the sigh.

Your thought is what made you feel crappy. In other words, how you're feeling is caused by what you're thinking.

Now, why is this *very good news*? Well, let me ask you, do you *really* want to put your mental health in your neighbor, co-worker, or mother-in-law's hands?

I'm gonna guess that that's a "no." And if so, it's time to own your power, because you've got it.

You have a privilege as a human being shared by no other animal: the ability to be conscious of your thinking, and the ability to think *deliberately*.

Yes, you get to change your thought.

Let me toss out an alternative one: "It's okay for Nelly the Neighbor [or Cathy the co-worker, or Mandy the mother-in-law—or *whoever*] to be wrong about me."

Now, how does *that thought* make you feel?

I have a hunch that it brings a sense of relief and a sense of calm. Now, you may not feel like doin' the boogie, but you may be able to talk yourself down from a seven-layer cake, right? I mean, I can feel my *own* heart rate going down just thinking that thought *for* you!

When you feel relieved and calm, do you tend to run out for cake? Probably not. Why not? *Because you feel better*. You feel emotions that inspire you to chill, and to just take care of business.

So, here's what happens sometimes in the free coaching sessions I offer right about this point when people realize that their feelings are caused by their thinking: they want to immediately change their thinking. "It's like, oh my gosh, this thought makes me feel awful! I want a better thought right now!" I like to call it, "thought swapping." And it's the reason why I haven't focused on creating feelings with different thoughts until we'd done some of the hard work of first being willing to experience emotions and of staying with the uncomfortable feeling long enough to access the thought causing it.

Rarely is the work ever as straightforward as just trying on a new thought. Sometimes that can work but for the most part, it's best to try to begin by increasing your awareness of the emotion you're currently feeling, what it feels like, and the thought behind it.

Here's why this is so important: Deliberately thinking a different thought can completely change your result. But we don't want to get ahead of ourselves. We first need to understand how our current thought is creating our current emotion, which is leading to our current actions, which is ending up in results that we have in our lives. So, we want to do all of this work with awareness.

So, people often come to my free session wanting to stop binge eating or compulsive eating or emotionally eating or overeating in any form. They also often want to lose weight or, at least, to stop gaining weight. But when we go a layer deeper, we find out that the reason they want to stop overeating and to lose weight, what they really, *really* want are the feelings of peace, freedom, confidence, and competence that they expect will flow from these outcomes.

The good news is that when you know your feelings come from your thoughts, you get to choose those right now. This is a game changer because it means you don't have to wait around anymore for what you want to create in your life.

Now, there's no problem with wanting to stop overeating and to return to your natural weight, but recognizing that what you *really* want is to feel at peace, to have freedom, to be confident and content is a powerful realization. Those feelings are available to you now at any time regardless of your eating and weight. And figuring out how to create those feelings now will help you to get to your goals so much faster because positive emotions are more likely to lead to effective action and desired results.

Now, if you're not too open to this idea yet, I SO get it, I struggled with this one a lot too. So, let's flesh out the power of a thought to create desired emotions and outcomes with an example.

For me, I always thought that once I stopped bingeing and lost weight, *then* I'd feel competent and in control. But that's not the way it went down. When I learned to feel competent and in control, my bingeing diminished radically. It was the opposite of what I expected. Are you with me? Thought and feelings are *that* powerful. When I changed my feelings, I changed my life. And I changed my feelings one thought at a time.

Here's what would happen for me, and I think it's a pretty common experience for a binge eater. I'd be going about my day, minding my own business, and then I'd get an urge to binge. That's what happened, that was *the circumstance*. Those were the facts—the indisputable facts—about what was happening. Here's what I would think about that circumstance: "I can't handle it." A thought like that led me to panic and then to binge to make the urge to away. The result was that I reinforced the bingeing pattern, including the neural connection anchoring it in my brain, and increased my chances of gaining weight.

Now, I used to think that I binged because I got an urge to binge that was totally overpowering. It was a pretty intense urge to be sure, but I *totally* missed the fact that in-between the circumstance of getting

the urge and the action of bingeing that I had both a *thought* and a *feeling*. The thought was that I couldn't handle the urge. The feeling was panic, which then inspired the desperate act of bingeing.

Now, let's take another look at that exact same example with that exact same circumstance: I get an urge to binge. This time, instead of thinking, "I can't handle it," I take the knowledge I've learned about brain science and think, "Oh, that's just my reptile brain again running that old loop again. I don't love the feeling of the urge, but everything's totally fine and if I don't react with a binge, soon my brain will learn a new loop."

A thought like that didn't elicit panic in me. I didn't quite feel like I was relaxing on the beach, but I did feel a sense of curiosity and calm, with a sprinkle of confidence. And these feelings inspired me to observe the urge. I was able to insert what I call "a wedge of awareness" between the urge and the binge, and in time the duration of that wedge grew longer and longer.

As a result, I began to weaken the neural connection behind my habit of automatically bingeing whenever I got the urge by interrupting the pattern—and I continued to do this (to observe the urge and everything that unfolded after) even during the time that I was still bingeing.

The wedge between the circumstance of the urge and the act of the binge taught me so much about what an urge really felt like, about how long it lasted, and about the changes in its intensity. All of that was powerful information to have the next time the urge came. And if I simply stayed with the urge, let it pass, and didn't binge, I accomplished even more—I increased the chances of getting back to my natural weight even sooner.

Now, Georgia came to a free session bingeing on ice cream every morning around 3 a.m. when her boyfriend and kids were asleep. Then she'd diet during the day to make up for the bingeing. She felt totally powerless, like she binged against her own will and like she had no choice but to diet during the day.

So, let's break down what was happening for Georgia. Whenever Georgia got the urge to binge, she thought, "I'm not giving up my ice cream!" That thought made her feel defiant and angry. Georgia regularly ended up bingeing as a result, reinforcing her bingeing pattern, and holding on to excess weight that she didn't want.

Georgia turned this pattern around after we spoke. Here's how:

The next time Georgia got an urge to binge, she reminded herself that she was a mature adult and that she could plan to enjoy ice cream at the time of her choosing. Just because she was going to say no to an urge to binge on an entire two-liter bucket of ice cream didn't mean she was going to deprive herself of one of her favorite foods. There was no need to feel defiant. Instead, she could feel calm and competent. What did she do instead of bingeing on the ice cream? She made a plan to consciously enjoy a reasonable amount of ice cream the next day. When she became proactive about planning to enjoy her ice cream, the urges to binge on it became a thing of the past.

So, what does all of this mean? It means that you are one thought away from shifting your eating and weight loss toward where you want them to be. Can you see that? I changed one thought from “I can’t handle this” to “That’s just my brain” and I changed my life forever. Georgia changed one thought from “I’m not giving up ice cream” to “I can plan to enjoy ice cream” and she ended her nighttime binges.

Like George and me, you don’t need to stop bingeing to feel emotions like calm and competence. You need to feel calm and competent to stop bingeing. And those feelings that are available to you now. All you need is a new thought that feels authentic and believable you.

I hope you can see with these examples that emotional management isn’t a luxury. It’s our responsibility. It determines our actions and reactions. It determines whether or not we end our bingeing. It determines whether or not we honor our dreams.

There’s nothing more important than how we feel when it comes to getting what we want and what we need. We have to commit to staying with an uncomfortable emotion long enough to access and understand the thought behind it. And then, when we’re ready, we have to commit to feeling better by deliberately choosing and practicing a thought that serves us.

The beauty of using the cognitive tools that come from life coaching is that they provide such a powerful meta-skill that will enhance every aspect of your life.

So, it’s paramount that you think about how you want to feel, about the emotion you want to create, the next time an urge to overeat comes. Do you want to feel panicky or do you want to feel confident? Or something else altogether?

Once you know the feeling you want to create, ask yourself what would you need to believe to feel that way? Then I want you to practice that thought day and night until it becomes more automatic than, “I can’t handle it” or whatever your current automatic belief is.

For so long, we thought we had no power. We’d get the urges to binge and we’d just want to make them go away. We blamed the power of the urge. We gave away all our power to the urge. But what we didn’t know was the power of our minds.

With the power of your mind, you can create the feelings you need to create to take the actions you need to take to end your overeating and bingeing.

You have power.

And it’s time to own it.

That’s it for Episode 16. Thank you for listening.

It’s one thing to learn these concepts by listening to them on a podcast, but applying them with the one-on-one guidance of a coach gets you results so much faster. So, if you’re done with bingeing, click the link in the show notes to sign up for a free private session and see how coaching can help.

Thanks for listening to *The Done Bingeing Podcast*. Martha is a certified life and weight loss coach who's available to help you stop bingeing. Book a free session with her at www.holdingthespace.co/book. And stay tuned for next week's episode on freeing yourself from binge eating and creating the life you want.