

The Done Bingeing

PODCAST

EPISODE 18: MENTAL HYGEINE

What does some fresh country air have to do with the thoughts you think? Keep listening!

Welcome to *The Done Bingeing Podcast*. This is the place to hear about how you can pair the 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 18 of *The Done Bingeing Podcast*. I'm so glad you're here with me.

In the last episode, we talked about thinking deliberately. We focused on this because the thoughts we think create the emotions we feel, which inspire the actions we do or don't take. And our actions create the results that we have in our lives.

Deliberate thinking requires four steps:

First, you need to find out what you're currently thinking.

Second, you need to evaluate whether those thoughts are serving you.

Third, if your thoughts aren't serving you, you need to choose new thoughts that will serve you.

And, fourth, you need to practice your new thoughts.

Let's take these steps one at a time. We'll tackle the first three in this episode, and step four in the next one.

One of the best ways I know to tackle the first step of finding out what you're thinking is to do a thought download or, as I sometimes like to call it, a thought jot. To do a thought jot, grab a pen and paper and take five minutes to jot down as many thoughts as you can about whatever you're currently struggling with. The purpose of this exercise is to get your unconscious thoughts down on paper so that you can become more conscious of them.

Now because you're learning about how your thinking creates your reality, you might be tempted to edit your thinking, and omit negative or unhelpful thoughts from your notes as you go. Don't do it! Just keep writing, and get all those thoughts down. Why? Because you want to give them all a full airing. If they're

in there, they're probably wreaking havoc and a simple note-to-self not to think them probably won't suffice.

When I used to visit my grandparents' farm as a young girl, my grandmother often told me, my brother, and my cousins to get outside and blow the stink off. That's what we want to do with your thoughts. We want to pull them outside of your mind. And while they're out, we want to blow the stink off what you think.

Now, my coach, Brooke Castillo, is much more sophisticated than I am, and so you probably won't be surprised to hear, that she uses a much more sophisticated analogy, which I like a lot. She thinks of what we're doing here, which is essentially a form of mental hygiene—in relation to our homes. No matter how beautiful your home is, it gets dirty every week. It needs spot cleaning once a day and deep cleaning once a week.

That's exactly how our minds are. We need to clean them up on our own every day with a thought jot. And then once a week it can be amazing to bring someone in for that deep clean of your mind, whether that's a coach or someone else who can simply see, and get to, what you can't.

Here's an example of a thought jot from Nadia, a 51-year-old woman trying to lose 20 pounds after being a binge eater for 35 years:

Now that I've stopped bingeing, the rest of my weight should just come off. It's not fair that I need to do more. I've already done so much. This is the best I've ever done. I've never eaten so healthy in my life. I hardly ever eat junk food. Even though I sometimes feel self-conscious about eating in front of others, I don't really hide what I eat or feel a strong need to anymore. I've reduced my intake of processed foods. I eat healthy fats and I probably have enough protein. I mostly eat whole foods. I exercise a decent amount. That should be plenty. I don't want to plan my food and track my food and "be conscious" and all that crap. Keeping a food planner and journal would take way too much of my time. I'm way too busy and stressed out to do all that. And I don't want to feel my negative emotions. I feel them way too often. And they hurt. I want a break. I deserve a break. I deserve to be soothed when life is hard because I'm all by myself and no one is helping me and it's hard. I can't do one more thing, for f*ck's sake! It's time for someone to make it easy for me. I shouldn't have to do all this work. And I don't want to have to experience hunger while I wait until my planned meal. I want to eat exactly when I want to eat! I want to be able to do whatever I want around food. That should be enough. It shouldn't be this hard.

In this five-minute thought jot, Nadia uncovered dozens of unhelpful thoughts, many of which she hadn't even been aware of.

Now, we're on to step two, evaluating whether the thoughts are helpful. But before we do that, I want to remind you of the never-ending need to view yourself with dignity. If you do the five-minute thought jot and discover that you have a ton of rotten thoughts, that doesn't mean that you're a rotten person. It just means that you're a human person and that you have a human brain. That's what humans with brains

do—we think rotten thoughts that are easy and unconscious. The point of this exercise to become conscious of them so that we can change them, not so that we can beat ourselves up.

Let's pull out one of Nadia's thoughts. It doesn't matter which one. We just want to see where it leads.

Nadia thinks that keeping a food planner and journal will take up too much of her time. When she thinks this thought, she feels resistant and defiant. When she feels this way, she doesn't keep a food journal. And the result is that she has no way to thoughtfully consider what she's eating and how it's affecting her. She's also unprepared for typical challenges for her like eating out. She's more likely to follow a whim to eat unhealthy food without a prior to commitment eat otherwise, and to eat emotionally given that she's feeling negative emotions.

I want to note again that this discussion would not be wise for a former binge eater without the lens of self-regard. Self-regard allows you to reflect on what you eat without doing it from a place of shame. With the compassion that flows from self-regard, you can begin to become more and more precise about what you eat without triggering more binges.

So, for example, it's Saturday night and Nadia has been ruminating all day about a run-in she had with her daughter in the morning over un-done homework. She has no food plan for what she wanted to eat today, and no journal tracking what she actually did eat. She's feeling worried and annoyed and she's nibbled for hours on full-fat Greek yogurt and blackberries that she's not remotely hungry for. Even though these are healthy foods, it amounted to almost 700 calories that flew *completely* under Nadia's radar.

This isn't an isolated event. Nadia does this often, and it contributes to her frustration with her current weight. If Nadia we're to keep doing this she'd probably continue to have trouble losing that 20 pounds and might even gain weight especially as she continues to age and her hormones change. In other words, Nadia would be stuck in another unwanted pattern, draining her mental and emotional energy all over again.

Now, the thought we pulled from Nadia's thought jot was fairly obviously unhelpful. The thought was, "A food planner and journal will take up way too much of my time." But did you notice that some of Nadia's thoughts were not so obviously unhelpful. For example, Nadia thought, "This is the best I've ever done." That sounds like an innocent little thought, doesn't it? But let's look at where it takes her. When Nadia thinks, "This is the best I've ever done," she feels entitled and complacent. When she feels entitled and complacent, she tends to eat foods that she's not hungry for—whether they're healthy or not. The result is the same perpetual frustration with 20 pounds that just won't come off, and the risk of more on its way.

Like Nadia, everything you create in your life is an indication of your power. Your thoughts are cascading into unwanted results in your life. And that is amazing news. Why? Because it means that you also have the power to deliberately think new thoughts that can create the results that you actually *do* want.

Now, we're ready for step three: choosing new and helpful thoughts.

So, what is it that Nadia actually does want? Nadia wants to lose those 20 pounds and ditch the chatter in her brain that continues to sap her energy. She wants to be free of the food and weight obsession. She wants to know that the clothes in her closet fit her. She wants to feel confident about the way she looks. She wants to feel like she has her own back when it comes to the food she puts in her mouth. She wants to feel like an adult again around food, with a mature, proactive, and precise approach to eating.

We know that feeling worried, annoyed, entitled, and complacent aren't going to inspire Nadia to take the actions she needs to take to create this result. What are better options? How about commitment and calm? To feel committed and calm, Nadia will need a new thought to take her there. That new thought might be, "Becoming more precise with my eating will help me to evolve into a better version of who I am."

Deliberate thoughts are choices. We can choose to stop thinking thoughts that aren't serving us and instead to think thoughts that will serve us. But we need to do more than just choose a better thought if we want to stop a pattern like binge eating or any other form of overeating. We need to move on to step four: practicing the new thought. And that's the focus of the next episode.

If you've been bingeing or overeating for a long time, you may have given up on your dream of ending this pattern. Why? Because your brain is telling you that you're going to fail. Why would your brain tell you that? Because you've failed in the past. It's familiar. It's nothing new. That's an automatic thought that's efficient for your brain to keep thinking.

You cannot rely on your brain to make your dream of ending your bingeing—or any other dream you have for your life—come true. You have to rely on yourself *supervising* your brain. Your brain is an amazing tool for sure, but, left to its own whims, it will constantly question whether your dream is worth the risk. My coach often jokingly describes our brain as being like a toddler running around with a knife. It's cute and innocent and doing just what it's supposed to do. But it's dangerous without supervision.

Nadia has just supervised her brain, put down the knife, and cleaned up her thinking.

Now she's ready to create what she wants with clarity and precision.

What is it that you want to create?

And what do you need to believe to make it happen?

Whatever that thing is, you need to believe that your dream is worth it.

That's it for Episode 18. Thank you for listening.

The Done Bingeing Podcast is helping so many people to reduce their bingeing and overeating, and to find out who they're truly meant to be when they live their lives fully. The podcast has had about 11,000 downloads, but only about 20 ratings and reviews. Ratings and reviews will help more people find this podcast and get the help they need. So, if you're getting something out of this podcast, I'd be honored if

you would leave me a rating and review. Just go to www.holdingthespace.co/itunes-review for easy-peasy instructions on how to get it done. Thank you so much!

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.