

The Done Bingeing

PODCAST

EPISODE 37: SPECIAL SERIES—12 KEYS TO END BINGE EATING, PART 3

What do Einstein and Newton have to do with ending binge eating? 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 37 of *The Done Bingeing Podcast* and to part 3 of this special series, *12 Keys to End Binge Eating*. The time we're spending to review the foundations of how to stop bingeing is so important.

Why?

Because on the journey to end binge eating, you will stumble. And when you do, you will almost definitely think that something has gone terribly wrong. But nothing has.

Now I know that might strike you as incredibly insensitive. And if you'd said that to me after I'd started bingeing again after a temporary reprieve, I'd probably have cursed you to kingdom come, at least in my own mind.

I get that setbacks can feel excruciating. And I know that I'm risking your wrath by saying what I'm about to say, but I'm hoping that you'll hear me out. Setbacks, relapses, failures—whatever you want to call them—don't have to signify something dreadful and they don't have to feel dreadful either. And if you can possibly get a little wiggle room round your belief that they're a really bad thing, it will help you.

Let me give you a non-bingeing example.

Although the focus of my coaching is on helping people to stop bingeing, I coach on everything. I've coached a mother coping with the arrest of her son. I've coached executives dealing with toxic business relationships. I've coached hard-core procrastinators utterly frozen and unable to act, moms in distress over homes that look like war zones, lovers in heartache over breakups, and coaches setting up kickin' businesses. And I recently coached an amazing painter.

Brad had paintings that he believed in. There was no doubt that they'd come from his soul—he'd been painting long enough to know. But no one was buying them. This left him stuck in a pit of anxiety that bordered on despair. His past presented ample evidence that he had failed, that he'd never succeed, that's he'd never be able to leave a job that paid the bills but dulled his mind. Brad was feeling the drama. And he could make a pretty good case for it.

But here's what happened when Brad was open to shifting from drama to math: The self-talk changed from variations of "Nothing's working" to something like this, "So far, I've tried these things and no one's bought my paintings. Maybe I didn't connect with people in the right way, or maybe those aren't my people. I'm going to try a different approach to communicating with them that is less about selling them my work and more about providing beauty to their space. And if, after that, I determine that they're not my people, that's so good to know because then I can focus on *finding* my people."

Here's the overarching thought that moved Brad from drama to math: "Somewhere out there, there is a blank wall waiting to be graced with my paintings—and *I'm going to find that wall*. And once I do, I'm going to find another and then another."

I'm grateful to my teacher coach, Brooke Castillo, for the distinction between drama and math. Math is about brainstorming and taking reasonable and manageable steps to reach a goal. Drama is about all the upheaval that makes a setback or a failure so much more difficult than it needs to be.

When you're trying to stop binge eating, setbacks are common. And that's what this special series is for—so you can have a resource to turn to pull you out of the drama and back to the math.

Why are setbacks on the journey to end binge eating common—to be expected even?

Here's why:

Because you're dealing with your brain, which, I hate to say, can be a little lazy at times. When you think about it, though, it makes total sense that your brain would need to conserve energy for complicated tasks and new projects. Your brain is responsible for so many functions that it needs to automate as much as possible so that it can be efficient and reserve some cognitive real estate for whatever it deems warrants it.

Here's what that means for you and your bingeing: Your bingeing is almost definitely an automated process by now.

Something happens out in the world. Like, this for instance: you head to the grocery store to do the weekly shopping, and at the entrance, kids are selling jumbo-sized chocolate bars to raise money for their camp. You have thoughts about the chocolate that flood your brain automatically before you even know what happened. Maybe they sound like this:

Oh my goodness those chocolate bars look delicious—wow, some even have almonds in them, *my favorite*.

It's rude to say no to a child.

It would taste so good.

I deserve to have at least *one* of these, after all I *never* get a break.

This is all I know how to do to feel better, and I'm feeling so stressed and tired right now that I would *love* to feel better.

I just want it and I don't care.

I blew yesterday anyway so it doesn't really matter.

Do these thoughts sound familiar?

No, I don't have a wire tap into your mind. I hear remarkably similar thoughts from my clients all the time, and I still remember the thoughts that went through my own brain before my binges.

Here are some thoughts that probably don't come quite so easily to your mind:

If I eat a jumbo chocolate bar, it may soothe me for about 20 minutes. But then I'll lose about 24 hours of mental clarity and productivity, not to mention the stomach ache and headache I can expect, and the absorption in my distress over my eating and weight that make me want to distance from those I love. It's *so* not worth it.

Although the chocolate bars look delicious, I paid attention last time I ate one, and the quality wasn't actually all that great. I only honestly enjoyed the first two or three bites or so.

It's not rude to say no to a child. In fact, it models to a child how to say no themselves—a critical skill to learn. And if I want, I can donate to the camp without accepting chocolate bars in return.

If I'm already tired, and it's only 11 am, I need to make sure I get a break today. Maybe I'm doing too much on the weekends.

The truth is that I *do* care, and what happened yesterday doesn't determine what happens today.

I am becoming a woman who eats in a way that nourishes her body.

I know it's possible for me to stop bingeing because other people have—like Martha, for instance, and *she* binged for more than 30 years.

Now why aren't *these* thoughts top of mind when you walk by the boxes of chocolate?

Because they're not automatic—*yet*. But they'll become automatic when you take the time to code into your brain with repetition and practice. Your brain will resist that because that gonna take energy and effort, which it wants to conserve for other duties.

When you experience a setback, it's often because automatic and deeply ingrained thought patterns took over again—usually because of a stressor that distracted you from the work you were doing to build your new neural connection.

Maybe you got sick, or one or more of your kids did.

Maybe your workload at the office ramped up a notch or two.

Maybe you lost a few night's sleep over something your partner said or did.

Maybe you travelled and returned without enough time to re-establish routines that had been working for you.

Maybe you've lost weight after decreasing your bingeing and now don't know what to do with the attention you've been getting.

Whatever it was, something took your focus away from what you'd thinking, feeling, and doing, that was starting to turn things around.

But you have a say in what your brain focuses on. And you can direct your brain back to your commitment to end your bingeing and to the strategies that have been helping you to get there. And when you need those strategies, you can turn to this special series.

So let's recap what we've done so far.

In part 1, we talked about the first key: Have Your Own Back.

In part 2, we talked about the second key: Treat Yourself with Dignity.

This week, in part 3, we're talking about the third key: Ease the Pressure to Be Different.

You've heard me talk about psychologist Jordan Peterson before. And it's so fascinating as I read his new book, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*, because so much resonates with these foundational steps to end binge eating and compulsive overeating.

If you've been listening to this special series from the beginning, you'll know that Peterson's first rule for life, Stand Up Straight with Your Shoulders Back, totally inspired the first key in this series, Have Your Own Back.

And I was thinking that his second rule for life, Treat Yourself Like Someone You Are Responsible for Helping, really captures what I was trying to get at in part 2, with the second key, Treat Yourself with Dignity.

Peterson's fourth rule for life, Compare Yourself to Who You Were Yesterday, Not to Who Someone Else Is Today, offers much insight for the third key to end binge eating: Ease the Pressure to Be Different.

You already know the cautionary cliché about comparing yourself to others: “There will always be someone better or worse than you.” Peterson reminds us that in today’s digitally connected world, it’s easy to see that there are thousands, possibly millions, of people who have more of what you want in one way or another. And you, like the rest of us, have an internal critic who won’t let you forget it. But if your internal critic leaves you questioning your accomplishments to date or your very worth, Peterson argues, maybe it’s time to ignore the critic.

I couldn’t agree more. And that’s what’s at the core of easing the pressure to be different.

Here’s an example of something I hear again and again: I want to lose weight—*yesterday*.

And this wish is so *intense*. And the interesting thing is that it doesn’t necessarily matter how much weight people want to lose. I have some clients utterly desperate to lose 15 pounds and others equally desperate to lose 215. And I get it. I was just as desperate at every weigh-in to lose more.

But here’s what happens:

You notice something in your world: Maybe someone at the gym or at work or on a billboard who looks slimmer than you do.

And you think some variation of: “I’m not okay.”

That’s probably putting it politely. You probably say something more along the lines of, “I’m disgusting” or “I hate how I look” or “I can’t believe I’m so fat” or “I look so bad I am not going to that dinner party this weekend.”

You know what comes next: shame, fear, hopelessness, sadness, resentment.

You also know what comes after that: the binge or binges.

The result is that you feel worse in every way, gain a few more pounds, and provide yourself with ample evidence for the thoughts you were thinking.

You have a perfect thought-loop that takes no effort to run—it’s set to auto-play.

Let’s stop for a moment at the original incident that sparked the thoughts that took you down. The person you saw who looks slimmer than you. What do we know about them?

Nothing. We don’t know a thing, even if we think we do. Ask yourself this: how much of your true self do you share with most people in your world? Perhaps not so much. Perhaps you hold back a lot, and maybe others do too.

The woman doing the impossible yoga pose on the mat in the gym may feel famished because she thinks it’s too dangerous to eat.

The man pouring coffee from the office pot may be so slim because his wife left him without warning and he’s been too stunned to eat.

The gal on the billboard may not look anything like that in real life because she her real thighs wouldn't sell the car she's lying on.

We imagine that others are happy and fulfilled and maybe they are, but maybe they're not. And either way, comparing ourselves to others, Peterson argues, is unproductive because other people are working within an *entirely* different set of genes, experiences, and surroundings.

What Peterson suggests instead of comparing yourself to others today is comparing yourself to who you were yesterday.

You might ask yourself, "What am I doing today that's more or less helpful than what I did yesterday?" and "What is one small thing might I do tomorrow that would be more helpful than what I tried today?"

This is the math.

You don't need a drama queen. You need a mathematician.

And I can be your mathematician.

I've writhed on stage in an agonizing private drama, and I've sat at the table and looked at the books.

The latter worked better.

You might fear booking a free session with me for any number of reasons. Maybe I'll try to convince you to stop bingeing and then maybe you won't know how to find joy your life. Maybe I'll gasp at something you share. Maybe it'll be weird.

That's drama.

You might book a free session even if you're feeling a little nervous. Maybe someone like me, who binged for more than 30 years, is not remotely interested in judging you or pressuring you to do anything at all. Maybe you'll discover something worthwhile to help you on your journey. Maybe it'll be fine.

That's math.

If you're ready for some math, go to my website at www.holdingthespace.co, click the Contact tab, and book your free session today. I've opened up extra spots for a limited time because I really want to help you if you're feeling like you're having a relapse or if you are having a setback or if you're feeling like you've failed. That's the whole point behind the special series and I've opened extra spots to help you if this is what you're dealing with or if you want to talk about anything related to binge eating or overeating or compulsive eating or emotional eating.

You might be tempted to blow off a little arithmetic. But before you do, I want you to remember two things.

The first is a quote from Albert Einstein, who mused about this: "Mathematics is, in its way, the poetry of logical ideas."

The second is a note from Bernard Baruch, who reminds us of this: “Millions saw the apple fall, but Newton asked why.”

When you’re embroiled in the drama, you’re too clouded to make much sense of the why or the how.

When you’re free from the drama, you’re clear enough to ask about the why or the how.

Newton formulated his question about a falling apple into a mathematical equation and forever changed the world.

And, I wonder, if you formulated your questions about setbacks into mathematical understandings if you might forever change yours.

That’s it for Episode 37. Thank you for listening. My group coaching program is launching soon and it’s going to be 10 weeks of empowering transformation where we apply, at a far deeper level, the concepts I cover in this podcast, so you can do the practice required to train your brain into a new pattern of eating that actually serves you. You’ll get access to live coaching with me—anonmously if that’s what you’d prefer. You’ll also get electronic access to me in a members’-only forum at any time. So, if you’ve got questions, you can ask away, every day. Working with others in a group gives you the chance to learn from others facing the same struggles and the chance to see that you are not alone. You deserve companionship and success on this journey, and it’s available to you now. Sign up at www.holdingthespace.co/group-programs/ to reserve your spot before the group sells out. Right now, I’m offering a limited-time bonus: If you reserve your spot in the program before February 18, you’ll get a full-length private coaching session with me for free. So, you might want to sign up at www.holdingthespace.co/group-programs/ before the group fills up or this offer ends!

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.