

The Done Bingeing

PODCAST

EPISODE 9: LOVING THE FACT

What does an up-side, an off ramp, and a tattered map have to do with you and 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 9 of the Done Bingeing Podcast. Thank you for being here with me.

Since Episode 3, we've been considering how building the concept of self-regard into the healing journey makes the journey so much easier. So far, we've talked about how self-regard—a deep form of compassion and love—can help to address six main areas that binge eaters often struggle with:

1. their unhappiness with their weight
2. their attempts to diet to lose that weight and to control their eating
3. their urges to binge
4. the bingeing itself
5. the aftermath of bingeing
6. dealing with their weight after the bingeing has stopped

Episode 4 explored #1: the weight. Episode 5 looked at #2 food restriction. Episodes 6 to 8 examined urges. This week, in Episode 9, we're diving into the fact of your bingeing. Next week, in Episode 10, we're tackling the act of the bingeing itself.

Now, you may be thinking, "Wait a minute. What'd she just say? For sure, she is *not* suggesting that I should love my bingeing."

Before I explain, and before you unsubscribe, let me ask you a few questions.

Right now, when you binge, do you have thoughts like these running through your mind? “This is disgusting.” “I must be broken to eat like this.” “I hate that I can’t stop myself.” “No one can find out that I do this.”

If so, do these thoughts lead to feelings of shame, resignation, sadness, powerlessness, or fear?

And if so, do feelings like these set you up for yet another binge?

If you’re like most of my clients, this is almost the exact cycle you experience.

One more question: What’s the up-side? What’s the up-side to hating your bingeing?

Listen, I get why you hate bingeing. I hated it too. I hated feeling out of control. I hated feeling incompetent. I hated frantically eating food I didn’t even want or like. I hated the rawness in my throat and the cuts in my mouth after bingeing. I hated feeling sick and bloated and gassy. I hated the daily undertow as the sugar crash dragged me deep into mental fog. I hated the constant weight gain. I hated the desperate spending on food to binge on and on approaches to stop. I hated the sinking sadness that seemed to know no bottom. I hated it *all*. I could make an excellent argument that there was a lot to hate.

But here’s the thing. Hating it didn’t help me. I thought that it would. I thought that it made sense that it should. If I hated my bingeing, I’d stop doing it. But if I risked taking a disapproving eye off my bingeing, I was convinced that my bingeing would get so much worse. This wasn’t the time to feel good about any of it. I’d tell myself that I’d feel good once I stopped bingeing. This line of reasoning seems to make so much sense, doesn’t it?

I wasn’t the only one to hold these beliefs. Many of my clients are also pretty convinced that they’ll feel better about themselves, their eating, and their weight after they stop bingeing, not before. Like I did, they believe that once they stop bingeing and their excess weight drops off, their life will be so much easier.

The weight and bingeing are intricately connected for many people. It’s the number one reason people come to me: They can’t release the obsession with food and keep the weight off until they stop bingeing, but they can’t stop bingeing.

The thing is, if you’re like many binge eaters, you’re also a chronic dieter and you’ve probably been able to stop or reduce your binging long enough to have lost a significant amount of weight at least once. Well, how was life? Maybe it resembled mine when I did the same.

I lost almost one hundred pounds about three times in my life. Did I enjoy not having to lug around what felt like a 100-pound backpack? For sure. Was it great to be able to fit into clothing styles that I preferred to wear? You bet. But how was the rest of my life? Well, let’s see.

I lived in abject terror that I'd gain the weight back. Every meal, every bite felt like my executioner. I didn't have a clue how to feel calm around food or how to fuel my body in a way that didn't produce afternoon crashes. Hunger scared the crap out of me. I never felt satisfied by my meals.

My self-esteem hung on my ability to stay on a diet and keep my weight down. Every mirror I faced or passed, every reflection—no matter how peripheral—became a looming judge. The slightest snugness of a waistband was a cause for panic. The numbers on the scale and tape measure determined the quality of my days.

Then there was the reaction of others to my weight loss. Everyone was thrilled, right? After all, they'd been telling me for years to lose the weight. No. Not everyone was thrilled. Comments changed from "You're too fat" to "You're too skinny. Oh, my God, not just skinny, you are *e-ma-ci-a-ted*. Here, eat this." Those who before had served the tiniest piece of dessert to me last, now served the biggest piece of dessert to me first. The glazed apple pie with ice cream would be placed right in front of me, with a spoon held out just before my face. Then came the test for all to hear: "Let's see if Martha can stop herself from eating *this*." The scolding for being fat had morphed in to a taunting for being thin. Rage filled me as it almost never had before. I didn't know how to deal with negative emotions or challenging relationships.

I now know that that rage was optional. But I didn't know that at the time. I didn't have the life coaching skills I have now. We're going to spend at least a full episode talking about how to deal with other people in situations like this. But, for now, I want you to know that there is a way to get your power back when other people's comments or behavior unsettles you.

So, let's get back to my life when I'd stopped bingeing long enough to get to thinness.

I received extra sexual attention. I thought I'd feel sexier when I was thin, and that I'd be happier feeling this way. Some of the new attention I got was lovely and sweet. A few respectful nods and smiles. A few extra door openings. Friendlier store clerks and bus drivers.

But some of the new attention was disconcerting. "Hey, Baby" or "Check out that chick" become more common. For all of my work, my striving, my fighting, my tormented yearnings to eat and binge, my almost constant gnawing hunger, this was my reward: I was now viewed as an infant and a bird.

And then I began to wonder what to do about the new kindness and gentleness extended to me. Should I take it? It was privilege and courtesy accorded to me for being thin, that I wasn't offered when I was fat.

I began to watch how people who'd be perceived as overweight were treated by the same clerks, tellers, bus drivers, passengers and passers-by who'd become so generous to me. Overweight people didn't seem to fare quite so well. Their treatment didn't seem so friendly and open.

Now, had I performed a rigorous scientific examination of this? No. And the research doesn't seem to present a clear-cut case for fat prejudice alone. Interestingly, it seems to suggest that prejudice exists for people on both ends of the weight spectrum—those who are extremely overweight and those who are extremely underweight (Allison & Lee, 2015; Anselmi, Vianello, & Robusto, 2013; Malloy, Lewis, Kinney, &

Murphy, 2012). The literature suggests that prejudice also seems to be influenced by context and culture (McHugh & Kasardo, 2012; Swami, Pietschnig, Stieger, Tovée & Voracek, 2010; van Amsterdam, 2013). In other words, if I'm overweight, I might experience less privilege and courtesy if I'm around people who are thinner than I am. But if, at that very same weight, I'm with people who are heavier than I am, I might enjoy more privilege and courtesy than they do. And different cultures perceive weight differently. In some cultures, thinness isn't nearly as highly prized as it is in mainstream North American culture.

The upshot of all this was that I felt uneasy and uncomfortable being part of a club of kindness that seemed to leave others out simply because they were a different number on the scale.

The perks of ending my binges were fading.

There had been the obsession and anguish that came with the bingeing and an extra 100 or so pounds. And then there was a slightly different flavor of obsession and anguish that came during periods when I was able to stop or reduce my binges long enough to let my weight fall away.

It felt like a life-sentence. It felt like I could never be free. And, before long, the obsession and anguish sent me right back to the cycle of dieting and bingeing, and back up the scale.

Yes, I thought I'd love life after I'd stopped bingeing, after I'd lost the weight. But I didn't. I hated the bingeing, for sure. But, in a way, I also hated what happened when I stopped.

Then a funny thing happened.

One unforgettable day, my partner said to me, "Martha, I think there's something about your bingeing that you love." Now I bet you can guess how that comment went over. I was so incredibly angry. Who did he think he was? What did he know about bingeing? Nothing. He knew absolutely nothing. He didn't struggle with it, and he never had. How could he forget all the things I'd done to try to stop? And yet . . . there he was: the wise, beautiful soul who loved me. The man I'd come to trust so deeply.

At first, it felt unbearable to acknowledge that I might have something invested in my problem. But the moment I was finally willing to consider that my bingeing might actually be benefitting me, it did so much to set me free. I was able to see that I loved what bingeing did for me.

Bingeing helped me to avoid the risk of ever experiencing hunger. How? Bingeing allowed me to eat so much food on a regular basis that it prevented me from ever feeling hungry in the first place. I didn't feel hunger for years.

Bingeing helped me to feel safe in my family. How? Bingeing protected me from comments dropped by family members who seemed annoyed whenever I lost weight.

Bingeing helped me to avoid emotional discomfort. How? By eating enough to cause physical discomfort and a whole lot of excess weight that I could focus on instead.

Bingeing helped me to avoid the awkwardness I sometimes felt around men. How? By preventing the weight loss that seemed to draw more attention from them.

Bingeing helped me to hold on to what was the familiar. How? By avoiding the unknown that lay waiting beyond my bingeing.

Bingeing helped me to hide inside a time-sucking, resource-draining, brain-depleting problem. How? By leaving me with little energy left to show up fully and responsibly in my life.

I really did love so much about my bingeing. But I didn't know that until someone loved me enough to piss me off and risk tabling the discussion. When I could see how bingeing served me, I could then brainstorm all the things I needed to do to address dynamics in my family, become more assertive in my life, embrace discomfort, step into the unknown, and live my life without apology.

Bingeing had offered so much to me. Once I was willing to see that, I was willing to ask if finding my way out could offer me *more*.

It did. It changed everything. I not only stopped bingeing, I stopped hiding, I stopped living small. I had been living a small life in a big body. And now, I just get to be big in a whole new way.

I spent decades at rock-bottom. I searched low and high for answers for 30 years. Every single step I took on my journey taught me something important about my bingeing and what did and didn't work to help me stop. Some things worked to some degree or for short amounts of time, but nothing worked for long and nothing completely wiped out my bingeing.

When I was in it, I kept trying one thing at a time, and I'd think okay, I just have to exercise more, okay I just have to meditate, okay I just have to watch my thoughts, I just have to eat better, I just have to get inspired, I just have to read another book, I just have to deal with my emotions, I just have to fix my life.

I did eventually resolve my bingeing. But I did it the hard way. I discovered pieces of the answer in multiple places and pulled them together one at a time until they finally made sense. I had to take everything—everything I had learned about my brain and the emerging brain science, everything I had studied in the peer-reviewed literature on binge eating and its treatment; everything I'd discovered about the responsibility I had to choose my thoughts and emotions with intention, everything I'd understood about eating in a way that fuels and sustains me and allows for weight loss, every book I had read, all the massive action I had taken over the decades. I had to take everything and combine it altogether to find something that worked. I had to distill all the information down into key steps. And I found that the most powerful steps to end binge eating were deeply counter-intuitive, yet surprisingly simple. And one of them was loving the binge.

I made it out. But I took a long, circuitous route. I needed to travel it and discover what I did—in the painstaking way that I did—so I could learn it so deeply that I could teach others a more direct route. I truly believe that that is what my life has been for.

I could choose to hate my 30-plus years of bingeing.

But I don't.

What would be the up-side?

There isn't one.

I choose to love those 30 years.

It's what has made me into the coach I am.

My guess is that there is no up-side to hating your bingeing for you, either.

There may a down-side, though. It probably keeps you bingeing.

If you could have hated your way out of bingeing, you would have done it by now. If you could have flailed your way out of bingeing, you would have done it by now.

How do I know? I know the hunt. I know the seeking, the searching, the yearning, the longing for the answer. I know that you've tried about everything under the sun that you could get your hands on or afford. But you haven't been able to stop.

Bingeing is the best you can do right now. Right now, you're bingeing. That's what's happening now. That's what *is*. Hating the bingeing hasn't helped you to stop.

My guess is that there's something you haven't tried. And that's loving the bingeing. Loving the *fact* that you binge. Loving *yourself* for bingeing.

Do you remember the quote from Byron Katie in Episode 3? It went like this: "I am a lover of what is, not because I'm a spiritual person, but because it hurts when I argue with reality. . . . When we stop opposing reality, action becomes simple, fluid, kind, and fearless."

I asked you then, and I'll ask you now: What would you do if you were fearless? And what would you do if you were kind? You know where I'm heading. What concept do I never get enough of? Self-regard.

What if you took the risk and acknowledged and loved what you have offered yourself with your bingeing? What if you took the risk and treated yourself with deep kindness, not *in spite* of the fact that you binge, but *because* of the fact that you binge.

Weird as it sounds, your bingeing may have helped you. Looking back, you may see that bingeing helped you to cope, to avoid despair, to keep going. It may have got you to here.

The way out of the bingeing is through. Love will open the doors and let you pass.

Loving the binge is a whole new paradigm. It's a whole new opportunity. It's a whole new direction on the journey.

Take it. Take the off ramp. Stop the car. Toss the old map. And unfold a new one.

Put an X where you are.

Circle where you want to go.

Start the car.

And let's get you there.

That's it for Episode 9. Thank you for listening.

It's one thing to learn these concepts intellectually, but my clients tell me that applying them with the one-on-one direct 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.

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