

The Done Bingeing PODCAST

EPISODE 15: UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS

What does Louisiana Hot Sauce have to do with you living your life on fire? 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 15 of *The Done Bingeing Podcast*. I am delighted that you are here with me.

Let's circle back for a moment and review where we've come from.

The inaugural episode of *The Done Bingeing Podcast* talked about why this might be the perfect podcast for you, about what it's like to live as a binge or compulsive eater—your pain and shame as well as your hopes and dreams. I shared my story, outlined the clinical criteria of binge eating disorder as defined by the DSM-5 (APA, 2013), and discussed where coaching might fit into your healing journey.

Episode 2 asked you to take an emphatic and fiercely loving stand for yourself. And I committed to standing by your side.

In Episode 3, we began applying the concept of self-regard to almost every crevice of binge eating. We've been focused on how self-regard helps to address six key areas that binge eaters often face.

Episode 4 started with the first of those areas: 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 actually 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.

Episode 11, talked about what to do—and what *not* to do—in the aftermath of a binge.

Episode 12 began the discussion of losing weight after you've stopped bingeing—*without* triggering more binges. And, in that episode, we started to explore why we have the desire to overeat in the first place. To understand that, we needed to dig into 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.

Episode 13 started the examination of how we use food to deaden uncomfortable feelings. Episode 14 went even deeper by differentiating between eating a feeling and feeling a feeling.

And now, in Episode 15, I want to take time to understand feelings even more deeply.

Here's what I want you to know. Even though we began asking the question of why we have the desire to overeat in the context of losing weight after you've stopped bingeing, it of course applies to all parts of the healing journey. Learning not to eat a feeling is just as relevant when you're bingeing as when you're not, so I just wanted to clarify that.

Alright, let's get back to where we are now: understanding feelings.

I've been asking you to do some really hard things, like face the reality of your emotional life instead of trying to squash it with a pound cake. And I've been asking you impossibly real questions, like "Are you willing to feeling uncomfortable some of the time?" instead of typical-fare questions, like "Don't you want to feel happy all of the time?"

You're still with me. And I'm *really* proud of you.

Now, you can for sure create more positive emotions. But I didn't play that card first. Why not?

Because I wanted to you to invite you to experience the emotions you're currently feeling fearlessly. I wanted you to welcome them with the compassionate curiosity that flows from self-regard. When you don't fear your feelings, there's nothing to run from. You're free to do the work you need to do to get this monkey off your back and live your best life.

There's another reason why I didn't want to rush into creating more positive emotions. Before you do that, you need to truly understand your current feelings enough to be able to access the *thoughts behind them*—and you can't do that if you keep running from feeling your feelings or if you keep eating your feelings.

So, let's do more work now on understanding your feelings better. Don't worry, we're gonna get to creating more positive emotions soon!

I have to express my deep gratitude to my coach and me teacher, Brooke Castillo, for helping me to understand emotions in the way I'm about to describe.

Many of us are so detached from our emotions that we can't even name them. But I want you to begin to start naming them using one word. According to the prominent psychologist Paul Ekman's original theory (1971), there are six universal emotions: anger, disgust, fear, joy, loneliness, and shock. His later research

(1999) prompted him to expand this list, and of course there are many nuances of emotions that aren't necessarily universally captured by facial expressions around the world.

Here is a list of feelings that sketches out only some of our emotional landscape. Warning: it's a long one, so hang tight: aggravated, agitated, annoyed, anxious, ashamed, bewildered, capable, cheerful, confident, content, crushed, dejected, delighted, dependent, depressed, desperate, determined, disappointed, disgusted, dismayed, disorganized, disoriented, dissatisfied, distressed, drained, elated, embarrassed, energetic, enraged, excited, exhausted, exuberant, frustrated, heartbroken, helpless, hopeless, horrified, hurt, inadequate, insecure, irritated, lazy, lethargic, lonely, lost, mellow, nervous, overwhelmed, panicky, perplexed, powerful, proud, regretful, relieved, remorseful, satisfied, shaky, shy, sneaky, sorrowful, sorry, threatened, touchy, trapped, troubled, uneasy, unhappy, unsatisfied, unsure, upset, uptight, worried, and worthless.

Whew! Now there's a list for you, and that's just a start!

So, here's what I want you to do: I want you to pay close attention to your feelings. Practice identifying them throughout your day, whether you're experiencing an urge or a craving to overeat or not, whether they're intense or not. I want you to get more practice in naming them, observing their intensity, and describing how they feel in your body. If you want to transform your eating, your weight, and your life, you must get good at knowing what you're feeling in the present moment.

Most people don't do this on a regular basis. But it's important to begin here, and then to become better at experiencing your feelings when they come.

Notice how you probably won't like the way some emotions feel in your body, and how a lot of your behavior is an attempt to resist the emotion or react to it in some way, or to avoid it or even change it altogether.

I get it. I've done it countless times myself.

Remember, we're not taught to feel our emotions. If anything, we're often taught the opposite. We're conditioned by the media and society to *escape* unpleasant emotions. How? Usually by buying something or eating something. What's more, we're even taught that positive emotions aren't enough. We need to enhance those emotions with a purchase or a sweet treat.

There are three main things we tend to do with uncomfortable emotions. We resist them, react to them, and try to avoid them.

First, let's talk about resisting emotions. Instead of opening the door to an emotion, when we resist, we close the door and try to hold it shut. It's an unpleasant practice that really offers no relief. It might seem productive, but resistance just creates more tension and perpetuates the emotion you're trying to resist.

Reacting to emotions is another tactic we try when faced with a difficult emotion. Sometimes we yell or scream or cry not as a way to feel the emotion but as a way to act out our emotion. You probably can tell

the difference between when you're genuinely releasing or processing or feeling an emotion, and when you're just acting out because of it.

Avoiding emotions is another approach and one that our culture has made pretty accessible *and* pretty acceptable. Common ways to avoid emotions are by overeating (no surprise there!). There's also overdrinking, overworking, over-Facebooking—you get the picture!

Most people don't know the difference between really feeling an emotion and resisting, reacting to, or avoiding one. Truly feeling an emotion can be done sitting on a chair and experiencing sensations in your body without taking any action at all.

When you start to become more conscious of your feelings, you'll spend much more time observing yourself. At first, this may be awkward and might not come easily to you. Remember, feelings are harmless. I know they can feel pretty scary, but when you break them down into a collection of sensations in your body, which you can identify and describe, they start to lose their power and become more of an experience that you can just be with and observe from the witness perspective that comes from self-regard.

If you find yourself struggling to be in your body and experience an emotion, ask yourself these questions:

- What am I feeling now?
- Where are all the places that this feeling located in my body?
- If I had to describe to a Martian what the sensations in each of these places feels like, what would I say?
- If I had to pick a color for the emotion I'm experiencing, what would it be?
- Would I describe this emotion as hard or soft or something in-between?
- Would I describe this emotion as fast or slow or something in-between?
- What does this emotion make me want to do?
- Why might I be feeling this emotion?

Some emotions can be habitual and even serve as distractions from other emotions underneath that need to be addressed. Common habitual emotions are worry, confusion, and overwhelm. These emotions can feel like they really aren't optional and are just a necessary repercussion of your life circumstances. If you feel this way, I want you to ask yourself some questions:

- How often do I feel overwhelmed, confused, or worried? If there's another emotion that you think you might feel habitually, include that emotion in the list.
- Which of these emotions do I feel the most often?
- Think of a specific example of when you feel this emotion.
- Why do you think you feel this emotion?
- Do you think you could go a day, a week, or a month without feeling it? Why or why not?
- Can you see a reason why you might want to keep feeling in this emotion? I know this sounds counter-intuitive, but give it a go anyway. Could there possibly be any benefit to constantly

feeling a certain emotion. For example, does constantly feeling overwhelmed give you license not to take action on the very things you need to take action on?

- What might it cost you to keep feeling this emotion?

Remember, there's no judgment here. We're been exploring everything in this podcast through the lens of self-regard so that we can have the openness and compassion required to do just this kind of deep and probing work. So be gentle and kind to yourself as you open up to your own honesty. And that's an order! I may be a sweet coach, but I demand that you be very kind and very tender to yourself, especially when you're telling yourself the truth.

Let's take this one step further. What is the worst emotion you can ever imagine having to face? For some who come to my free coaching sessions, it's shame or grief or rage.

Here's one of the things I want you to see. When you begin to realize that the worst emotion you can feel is a collection of sensations and vibrations in your body and is something that you can learn to handle, you start to be willing to feel *anything*. And if you are willing to feel anything, then there is nothing you won't be willing to do to create what you want. And if you are willing to feel anything, then there is nothing you won't be willing to do to create the results you want with your eating, with your weight, with your life. You will be *unstoppable*.

So, if you're willing, think about the worst emotion you can imagine facing.

What would that emotion be?

How *exactly* would that emotion feel in your body? Identify the locations in your body where you'd feel this emotion. Describe with precision how this emotion would express itself in each of these locations. Be careful here. Include only descriptions of the *sensations in your body* and not the *thoughts in your head*.

Now, when you watch all of this with the distance afforded by the witness, by the watcher, from the vantage point that gives you a little breathing room and space from the emotion, consider the lengths you've gone to to avoid experiencing this emotion. Is it worth it?

If you try to fight shame—which, for you, might amount to hotness in your face, a quickening heartbeat, aching in your shoulders, and twisting in your stomach—instead of trying to fight those sensations of shame with a tray of apple strudel—which, for you, might result in bloating, acid reflux, mental fog, lethargy, poor sleep, and weight gain—is it worth it?

If you try to burn up your grief by shaking hot sauce over an entire meatloaf, is it worth it?

If you try to crush your rage with rhubarb pie, is it worth it?

We do so many things to avoid experiencing how an emotion feels in our body. There's no judgment here, remember? If you want to keep eating to avoid the emotion, if you're not ready to feel the emotion yet, you can still do really good work by staying aware of what you're doing. By acknowledging to yourself

that you'd rather eat than feel. Then, I want you to ask yourself why you'd rather eat than feel. And then I have another question for you: Do you like your reason?

You don't have to be ready to feel every emotion in its entirety right now. Remember, very little in healing from binge eating, compulsive eating, emotional eating, or overeating of any kind is black-and-white. But I do want you to understand how the unwillingness to feel feelings may be holding you back from the freedom from overeating and excess weight that you so badly want.

What you need to do is stay aware of what you're doing and to be kind to yourself. Here's how I want you to talk to yourself if you choose to eat, rather than feel: "What's the matter, Hun? I know you so don't want to eat this food. You must really be hurting. I hear you and I am here for you. We are going to figure this out." And if you choose to try to feel your emotions and feeling them is pretty intense, here's how I want you to talk to yourself: "Sweetie, I've *got* you. I know this seems really hard. But we can do hard things, and I really want you to try to sit here and simply allow this. You are fine. Yes, you're uncomfortable, but you're just sitting here and you're fine. I'm inviting you to be willing to learn how to feel this. I've got you."

Now, I want you to imagine that you were willing to feel your emotions without fear. How might you show up differently in your life? What results would you create for yourself in your life?

When you begin to realize that the worst emotion you can feel amounts to sensations in your body, you'll start to be willing to feel *anything*.

And, again, if you're willing to feel anything, then there's nothing you won't be willing to do to honor your dreams.

So instead of trying to fight shame, why not fight for you?

Instead of trying to burn up grief, why not live like a girl on fire? Or like a guy on fire, because I have some amazing dudes who listen to this podcast, too.

Instead of trying to crush your rage, why not get out there and live your best life?

And crush it.

That's it for Episode 15. Thank you for listening.

It is one thing to learn these concepts by listening to them on a podcast, but applying them with one-on-one guidance from a coach gets you results so much faster. If you're done with bingeing, with compulsive eating, with overeating, with emotional eating, 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.

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