

The Done Bingeing

PODCAST

EPISODE 24: IDENTIFYING HUNGER

What do a bird and an extraterrestrial have to do with identifying hunger? 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 24 of *The Done Bingeing Podcast*.

At the end of the last episode, I asked you to notice when you eat when you're not hungry.

So often we eat because of the time or because others are eating or because others are encouraging us to eat or because we're afraid of what others will think of us if we don't eat. Many times, we eat because we see an ad or pass something that looks good or smells enticing. Sometimes we eat because we've been told that eating at certain times is good for us. Sometimes we eat because food is in front of us or because someone has said that we shouldn't waste food. Sometimes we eat just by virtue of location—we're in a theatre, or in a stadium, or on vacation. Sometimes we eat because of the day of the week—it's Tuesday night and the local buffet is half-price, or it's Thursday Happy Hour and an entrée is on the house. Sometimes we eat because of the season or occasion—it's a special holiday or celebration, or it's a summer treat or a winter tradition. Sometimes we eat because something's on special at the checkout or caught our eye down the aisle. Sometimes it's because someone you love and who loves you baked something fresh. Sometimes we eat as a form of rebellion for all the times we've been told we can't. Sometimes we eat prophylactically—a kind of pre-eating—so that we don't ever have to get hungry in the first place.

So, we eat when we're not hungry for a number of reasons:

- because we mistake psychological hunger for physiological hunger
- because we're not in tune with our hunger signals
- because we're afraid to feel hungry
- because we're afraid to miss an opportunity to eat
- because we don't want waste food
- because we want to look normal

- because we're afraid of what others will think of us
- because food offers something positive to us and we want to keep that feeling going
- because we've been told to eat by a so-called trusted source
- because we want to flip the bird for all the times we've been told not to eat on a diet that swore no deprivation was involved

I want to explore some of these in more depth in upcoming episodes. In this episode, we're going to focus on identifying hunger.

I find it helpful to distinguish between physiological hunger and psychological hunger.

Physiological hunger is a collection of physical sensations in your body. Its onset is often gradual, and the sensations tend to come in waves. With all of our social conditioning to eat when we're not hungry, it's no wonder that many don't have a clue what physical hunger feels like. So, let's take some time to figure it out.

Many tend to notice physical hunger in their abdomen. People experience it differently, but some fairly typical initial signs of hunger include a gnawing or rumbling or empty feeling in the belly, or an audible stomach growl. Some people experience lightheadedness, mental fog, decreased energy, or a slight weakness.

Psychological hunger, on the other hand, often comes in the form of instant urges and cravings. Urges and cravings tend to present as an urgent emotional desire for a specific food or a specific type of food, even if you're not physically hungry.

One way that some people find helpful to distinguish between physiological and psychological hunger is to imagine what would satisfy the hunger. If a hard-boiled egg or a warmed-up can of beans or a steamed chicken breast would take care of the hunger, then there's a good chance that we're talking about physiological hunger. But if *only* a double-scoop of double-chocolate chunk Häagen-Dazs on-the-double would do, then there's a good chance that we're talking about psychological hunger.

Psychological hunger is sometimes called emotional hunger—it's a hunger to soothe a psychological or emotional need. The urgent emotional desire for food that is the hallmark of psychological hunger is often caused by thoughts. Here are some of the more common thoughts I hear from clients: "F' it," "I want it," "I deserve this," "This is all I ever get to do just for myself," "It's no use anyway," or "I'll start again tomorrow."

Ultimately, we want to eat when we experience physiological hunger and use other strategies when we experience psychological hunger. To achieve this, we need to know the difference between what psychological and physiological hunger feel like.

We've spent several episodes talking about urges—the form that psychological hunger often takes. We talked about what urges feel like, what their qualities and textures are like, and what it would be like to allow them to unfold on their own. We also spent several episodes talking about emotional eating—the act of using food to make uncomfortable emotions go away. You may want to go back and re-listen to

some of these episodes if you need to understand how you experience psychological hunger in more depth.

Earlier in this episode, I gave examples of how some people experience physiological hunger. Did any of them resonate for you? If not, tune in to your body and find out what your own physical hunger feels like.

Imagine ET, the gentle, cute, and curious extraterrestrial who got stranded on Earth in the 1982 movie. How would you explain to him what physical hunger feels like for you in your body?

For right now, I just want you to begin to tune into your hunger and to become crystal clear on the difference between physical and emotional hunger. In upcoming episodes, we're going to talk about the intensity of hunger and about the fear of hunger—which is a reality for many people.

When my son was born, he would cry when he was hungry. I'd nurse him, and off he'd drift back to sleep once more. There was a clear connection between being hungry and being fed. I trusted his signal, he trusted my response.

Somewhere along the way from infancy, many of us lose the connection between hunger and eating. Maybe it was years of emotional eating. Maybe it was the myriad of external cues to eat that had nothing to do with physical hunger. Maybe it was the countless "deprivation-free" diets that demanded that you *didn't* eat even when you *were* hungry.

Whatever the reason, it's time to tune into your internal, physiological cues to eat.

Waiting until you're hungry to eat will require you to re-establish a connection to yourself and to honor a signal that you need to be nourished. It is a primitive and powerful act of self-care.

Now, I know that you know where I'm going with this. Fueling your body with nourishing food demonstrates a profound act of self-regard.

You may have an ache in your heart.

And you may have a rumble in your belly.

Both are forms of hunger.

And both can yearn for food.

But only one of them can ever truly be resolved with food.

You are learning tools to tend to the ache in your heart.

And you are learning tools to respond to the rumble in your belly.

Choosing the right tool for the job will set you free.

That's it for Episode 24. Thank you for listening. *The Done Bingeing Podcast* is helping people to reduce their bingeing and overeating, and to find out who they're truly meant to be when they live their lives

fully. 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 would be honored if you'd be willing to take the time to 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.