

The Done Bingeing PODCAST

EPISODE 30: THE PROBLEM WITH RULES FOR OTHERS

What do a gavel and an echo have to do with how you eat? 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 30 of *The Done Bingeing Podcast*.

If you listened to last week's episode, I shared a manual I'd had for my husband—the set of rules I expected him to live by even though he didn't have a clue that they existed. You probably noticed that I was essentially asking him to police my eating for me. And I'm not alone.

Many of you share with me that you use this tactic too, sometimes with friends, sometimes with children. For example, you may tell your friends when out for dinner not to let you eat anything but salad. Or you may instruct your children not to let you touch those treats in the pantry. The problem, you tell me though, is that the strategy doesn't work.

Perhaps they police you too well. When that happens, you may find yourself bingeing before and/or after those salads out with friends or sneaking around your own home and your own children.

Perhaps they don't police you well enough. When that happens, you may find yourself feeling let down by or disappointed in your friends and children, maybe even wondering if they really care about you and what's important to you.

Last week we also talked about potential manuals for co-workers and neighbors. There's really no limit to the number of manuals out there. If there's a breathing homo sapien in your midst, you can have a manual for them.

Maybe you have a manual that your parents shouldn't keep offering you food if you say no in the first time because that makes you feel panicky, and that feeling makes you want to knock down a couple of bowls of gnocchi.

Maybe you have a manual that your relatives shouldn't comment on your weight because that makes you feel vulnerable, and that feeling makes you want to reach for Reese's Peanut Butter Cups.

Maybe you have a manual that your in-laws shouldn't comment about what you do or don't eat because that makes you feel judged, and that feeling makes you want to grab some gooey butter cake.

Many of us have manuals for others without even realizing it. We assume that our expectations of others are reasonable and that it is therefore reasonable to presume that they should follow them. The only problem is, what *we* think is reasonable often differs from what *others* think is reasonable.

What then? We're in big trouble! That's what!

That's why in this episode, I want us to dig *even deeper* into manuals to understand what the problem is with having rules for others.

Let's start by looking at what all our manuals have in common.

Manuals ask others to take responsibility for our emotions and, by extension, our actions and results. And when others fall short in our estimation, we fall down . . . down into difficult emotions, which lead us to take unhelpful actions, from which we create unwanted results. And in the process, we give all our power away.

Why? Because the only way we can feel better in this scenario is if this other person changes. Although we didn't mean to, we've set ourselves up to feel bad.

But why do we spiral into a well of negative emotions when someone doesn't follow the rules set out in the manual we have for them?

Here's why: Because of what we make it mean.

Let's suppose you ask your roommate not to bring cookies into the apartment. When she does, you make it mean that she doesn't care about you and a thought like that makes you feel sad.

But I want you to notice that you have other interpretations available to you—and we'll talk more about this in the next episode. What if you considered that she had a lot on her mind and just forgot about your request? Or that she's stressed and struggling with an emotional eating challenge of her own? Or that she's actually a perfectly normal and healthy eater who sometimes likes to have cookies in her own home? None of these interpretations mean anything about you and so they're far less likely to trigger disappointment or frustration.

Let's stop for a moment and touch on two exceptions to manuals. One is the parent-child relationship and another is the employer-employee relationship.

If you're a parent, you have a manual for your children. For example, when they come inside, they put their shoes neatly on the shoe mat. They make their bed when they wake up. They help set the table for dinner. If they do these things, you may acknowledge and thank them. If they don't do these things, you

may remind them or have a talk with them, but you don't need to flip out. Flipping out comes from a thought like, "OMG, Sidney will *never* learn!" A calm competence comes from a thought like, "Sidney will learn in time, just like I did, and it's my job to teach her in the best way I can."

If you're an employer, you have a manual for your employees. For example, they come to work on time. They do the tasks required in their job description. They interact professionally with colleagues and customers. If they do these things, you may give them a favorable review and possibly a raise. If they don't do these things, you may meet with them to discuss what's going on or possibly let them go. But you don't need to freak out. Freaking out comes from a thought like, "Jeepers, Harry's the dumbest employee I ever hired." A steady resolve comes from a thought like, "Harry is fine, but he might not be right for my organization; I'm going to figure this out."

Notice that even in these two situations where you do have clear manuals, you're not saying to your child, "If you don't clean your room you're going to hurt mommy's feelings" and you're not saying to your staff, "If you miss the deadline, you're going to ruin my day." That's sounds a lot like emotional blackmail and, once again, you'd be giving all your power away.

So even in these cases where you do have manual for others, they are still not responsible for your emotions and actions.

Now I get that this can feel like a drag. I was pretty bummed about it myself. But believe me, there's so much freedom waiting for you when truly understand the drawbacks of manuals.

When we're in a relationship with someone who expects us to fulfill their needs, we not only have to take care of ourselves, but we have to take care of somebody else too. Not that's the *real* bummer! And if I believe I need someone to behave in a certain way so I can feel and act the way I want, then I'm in a position where I need to constantly try to control them to make sure they follow the rules in my manual. Why? Because my emotional landscape depends on it.

It's exhausting and exasperating and full of blame. And you know what? No one ever wins. Why not? Because you can't control someone else. Like the rest of us humans, you've probably have a hard-enough time trying to control yourself!

I'm telling you, manuals are a recipe for disaster . . . and they often precipitate pulling out a recipe for chocolate chip cookie dough. As much as they may seem like a shortcut to happiness, manuals a long painful road into the heart of dissatisfaction.

We think, if we have a better partner or a better colleague or better relatives, ending our binges would be so much easier, losing weight would be so much faster. I get it.

But after considering all the headaches that come with manuals, I'm wondering if you might be willing to give them up. I realize it may be jarring to think of letting them go. Remember, with some obvious exceptions, adults get to behave however they choose. That includes others. That includes you. You don't have to do things to make others feel better, and they don't have to do things to make you feel better.

And I've gotta tell you, when I had stacks of manuals for all the people in my life, I was a little creepy and needy. And I hate to be the one to break this to you, but if you've got shelves of manuals, you probably come across a little creepy and needy too.

And then you've got to ask yourself, do you want someone to behave a certain way even if they don't want to? Why or why not? May sure you answer these questions. They really matter.

If you're not convinced yet, think about what you could do with all of your time and energy if, instead of squandering it trying to control other people, you invested it in creating the best life you can for yourself from a place of empowerment, not from a place of disempowerment. From a place of independence or interdependence, not from a place of dependence.

The funny thing about manuals is this. We expect the person to know the manual we have for them and we eagerly await signs that they do. Why? Because then we imagine that we get to interpret their knowledge of it as a sign of deep love or respect for us. But someone may be following your manual just to prevent you from shooting dagger looks in their direction. They may be feeling anything but love and respect. Manipulated and annoyed may be closer to the truth.

The beauty of dropping manuals is that you get to be around people who are genuinely doing things they want to do.

I hope you're ready because, coming up in the next episode, we're going step by step through how to let manuals go.

You may have thought that when you crack the gavel, in the echo that follows, others will fall into line and follow your rules.

But you may want to put that gavel down, and in the quiet that follows, give others their freedom.

And give yourself back your power.

That's it for Episode 30. Thank you for listening. If you're ready to take the next step in your journey to end your struggle with bingeing or overeating, I've got exciting news! Starting in the new year, I'm going to be offering a group coaching program. This is going to be a space where we will study and apply the concepts in *The Done Bingeing Podcast* together and so you can take your eating and your life to the next level. Stay tuned for more details next week!

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.