

The Done Bingeing

PODCAST

EPISODE 36: SPECIAL SERIES—12 KEYS TO END BINGE EATING, PART 2

What do a chain and a feather have to do with 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 36 of *The Done Bingeing Podcast* and to part 2 of this special series, *12 Keys to End Binge Eating*. In this series, we're reviewing the foundations on how to stop bingeing. Last week, we talked about the first key: you have to have your own back. This week, we're talking about the second key: you have to treat yourself with dignity.

One of the reasons I created this special series was because many of you have been asking about my new group coaching program—what we'll be covering in it and what we'll be doing together. So I wanted to offer an outline to give you the central themes that group will be diving into. What we'll be doing is sharing 10 weeks of empowering transformation.

How?

Well, for starters, we'll apply, at a far deeper, level the concepts I'm covering here, so you can do the practice required to train your brain into a new pattern of eating that actually *serves* you.

We'll have weekly coaching calls where you get access to live coaching with me, and where you can stay anonymous if you'd prefer it that way.

You'll also get daily electronic access to me in a members'-only forum. So if you've got questions, you can ask away, every day.

The beauty of working with other awesome people like you trying to stop bingeing is that you can learn so much from the questions they ask and the coaching I offer.

Binge eaters face many of the same struggles. I see it again and again in my practice. So this group is not only an amazing opportunity to learn from one another, but it's also an important reminder that you're

not alone, that many competent, successful people binge and are finding their way out. I work with physicians, psychologists, professors, administrators, bankers, teachers, stay-at-home moms—you name it. No part of our society is immune from problematic eating patterns that undermine quality of life.

So if you don't want to miss out on this opportunity, make sure you go to www.holdingthespace.co/group-programs/ to reserve your spot before the group is full! And, 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!

Now, let's get back to the second key to end binge eating that we're talking about in this episode: you have to treat yourself with dignity.

Why might this be a key to ending bingeing?

Here why:

Shame is such an integral part of binge eating that it's actually included as one of the five behavioral indicators associated with bingeing episodes, as defined by the DSM-5 (APA, 2013)—that's the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.

Shame is a classic trademark of binge eaters. Shame has us eating Turtles on the toilet because that's the only privacy we have at work. Shame has us making sure tonight's grocery store clerk isn't the one who rang through last night's cartons of ice cream. Shame has driving through different drive-thrus so the cashier at the window doesn't wink in recognition. And one of the worst things shame can do is make us afraid to get help.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

Addressing shame even while you're bingeing or overeating is possible *and vital*.

Why is it vital?

Because our emotions inspire our actions.

And this is the part that many other approaches to ending bingeing or overeating miss. With the best of intentions, they dive right into what actions they feel you need to take. Even if they have some of those right, without addressing incredibly intense and negative emotions like shame, those actions predictably unravel in time.

Think of it this way: An emotion like shame can be pretty tough to tolerate, so we often find ourselves trying to soothe it away with Hershey's Kisses and hot chocolate. When we feel shame, we hide and ruminate. When we feel shame, we're also more likely to treat ourselves poorly, which is the last thing we need when we've got to call on our resources to end an ingrained and destructive habit.

When you do these things, you reinforce the pattern of binge eating and deepen the neural groove in your brain that anchors it. And you increase the chances that you'll gain weight or prevent yourself from losing it.

On the other hand, how do you think you'll fare if you're feeling compassion toward yourself? My experience, and the experience of my clients, is that the actions taken out of compassion are very different.

Chances are you'll be more likely to stay connected with people in your life. Chances are you'll be more likely to reach out to a loved one if you could use support. Chances are you'll slow down and be curious about the urge to binge and the thought creating the urge. Chances are you won't be as frantic to binge, and that even if you do end up bingeing, you'll have some space available to carefully consider what you'd really like to eat and then take the time to at least try to enjoy what you're eating.

What many of my clients tell me is that, counter-intuitively, when they do these last two things, they often end up throwing out much of what they'd planned to binge on. Why? Because *it's just not worth it when they see themselves as worth more.*

All of these actions, taken when feeling compassionate, would be next to impossible to take if you were soaked in shame. And yet these are some of the very actions that will help you weaken your pattern of bingeing.

Now, I've got to ask you, what would make it possible for you feel compassionate toward yourself while you're bingeing?

If you've been listening to this podcast for a while, you won't be surprised to hear me say, "self-regard." Self-regard means to honor who you are, where you are. It means to view yourself with dignity, to treat yourself accordingly—and to tolerate nothing less.

You couldn't possibly feel compassion for yourself without a higher-level regard for yourself.

And so self-regard offers the perfect antidote to shame.

Now, interestingly, self-regard is such a tough sell. And it's *so* interesting. My clients who work on developing a high regard for themselves succeed more quickly than those who don't. But even when I share this, there's still often huge resistance to the idea.

Why? Why is it so hard to view and treat ourselves the way we'd want to be treated by someone else and the way we try to treat others?

We'll, you probably don't want to hear my kitty litter story again. If you do, it's in Episode 3; if you don't, I'll spare you. Let's just say that with a decently robust imagination, you probably won't be shocked to hear that the kitty litter incident was my lowest moment as a binge eater. Some of you have told me, "Oh my goodness, Martha, even *I* haven't done anything like *that*."

The reason why it's hard to muster up self-regard when we're bingeing or overeating in a way that feels totally out of control is because there's such a profound discord between how we *want* to eat and how we actually *do* eat.

I think so many of us are misunderstood because we have good lives in so many ways. We're successful enough. And so it should follow that, given our competence in many areas of our lives, we should just be able to feed ourselves appropriate amounts of food. Like, what's the problem? It's not rocket science that we don't need to eat a whole cake. And yet sometimes that's exactly what we do. It's not news to anyone that eating 5000 calories in a binge three times a week is going to make us gain weight. And yet there we are staring at another empty box of donuts.

And it sometimes makes no sense to those whom we seek help from either. How often have you been told to just stick to a reasonable diet?

And so we can spend years, sometime decades, constantly hunting for answers to understand why we'd eat so much food that we don't want to eat, and how can we stop. And our sense of feeling trapped in an unhealthy eating pattern often morphs into a kind of "sophisticated suffering." Sometimes this makes things even harder because when people look at the rest of your life, this one thing doesn't make sense to them and they may have little understanding for you because you're doing well otherwise. In fact, you may be the only one to know about your struggle.

So the question again is, how could you, and why would you, still view yourself with self-regard when you're doing something that feels so wrong, so out of alignment with what you really want to be doing? Clients ask me all the time, "Why should I like who I am if I'm doing something I hate?"

Here's why: Because you need self-regard, especially when it seems impossible. Self-regard will bring you a sense of peace—and that's exactly what you need when you're feeling desperate—because it shifts you away from being a harsh judge and into being a neutral, compassionate witness.

Self-regard will help you avoid so much of the pain that you create for yourself and will help you step out of the spin. When you're not dizzy from all the spinning, you can focus on resolving what's happening right now.

So, why should you treat yourself with self-regard, despite the bingeing? Because your bingeing is here. Because hating yourself for bingeing has not helped you stop. Because, 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 hang on.

Letting go of the hatred allows you to begin to let go of the bingeing. Letting go of the shame allows you to see that there's nothing wrong with you. Bingeing was a habit that was wired into your brain with practice. You experienced an urge to binge and you reacted to it by bingeing. The emotional distress caused by the hatred and shame cemented this connection. And you're going to work on wiring a new neural connection away from the bingeing and free from the shame.

For most binge eaters, shame is a before-during-and-after kind of pain. Shame triggers a binge. We binge in shame-filled secrecy. We feel shame that we binged.

How do you step out of the spin? Consider that you are profoundly worthy of regard right now. (Because the truth is that you are.) Consider that your bingeing has zero to do with your competence or moral fiber. (Because the truth is that it doesn't.)

You're not broken or flawed or inept. This isn't about how good you are or how weak you've been. Binge eating isn't a moral issue. It's a wiring issue. Shame isn't relevant or helpful.

I promise you, I get it.

I hated the fact that I binged, too. I hated feeling out of control. I hated feeling incompetent. I hated frantically eating food I didn't want or like. I hated the rawness in my throat and the cuts in my mouth after I binged. I hated feeling sick and bloated. I hated the undertow as the sugar crash dragged me down. I hated the constant weight gain. I hated the desperate spending on food to binge on and then on approaches to stop. I hated the sinking sadness that seemed to have 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 myself or my bingeing didn't help me to stop. I thought that it would. I thought that if I risked taking a disapproving eye off myself, my bingeing would get so much worse. This wasn't the time to feel good about myself. I told myself that I'd feel good once I stopped bingeing.

The funny thing was that when I was temporarily able to stop bingeing, the shame was still there—sometimes as penance for binges gone by, sometimes for a whole new set of reasons I couldn't have predicted. There was just no up-side to hating myself for bingeing. But there *were* upsides to learning to let go of the shame. For one thing it helps me permanently stop my bingeing sooner. And it meant that when I did, shame was just a wispy ghost of the past.

My guess is that there's no up-side for your shame, either.

But there is a down-side: it keeps you bingeing.

If you could have hated 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 for the answer. I know that you've tried everything under the sun that you could to stop. But you haven't been able to.

Perhaps steadfastly treating yourself with dignity is something that you haven't tried.

What if you took the risk and acknowledged that you're doing the best that you can right now?

What if you took the risk and stood unwavering in self-regard, even as you work to resolve your bingeing?

Shame will chain you to your bingeing.

Self-regard will present you with a key.

Shame has the weight of an iron burden.

Self-regard has the lightness of a feather.

But don't doubt the power of a feather.

The feather gives flight to the bird.

I want you to soar—*both* while you're on this journey *and* after it.

As Emily Dickinsen once wrote:

“Hope is the thing with feathers

That perches in the soul,

And sings the tune without the words,

And never stops - at all . . .”

That's it for Episode 36. Thank you for listening. If you want a remote control so you can press "Pause" on your next urge to binge, you've got to check out the Done Bingeing Group Coaching Program. It's your invitation to regain control without the same-old willpower approach that you know doesn't work. Sign up at www.holdingthespace.co/group-programs before the spots are gone. You can take advantage of a free full-length coaching session with me if you sign up before February 18. Soon, you'll be sitting back and looking forward to your next urge. Why? Because you'll be ready.

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.