



Lesson 11: How to Stop Binging or Using Addictive Foods

Hi, everybody, welcome to day 11 of the Healthy Mindset Masterclass, we are in the home stretch now, and these days, I think are the most crucial ones. Last week, we spent a lot of time kind of building a foundation, thinking about boundaries and habit change and mindset and paradigm shifting, all really important things. And now we're looking at more specifically how to put some of those things into action around our eating and fasting habits. So, let's get started.

Yesterday I talked about some eating disorder information, bingeing and addiction. So today I want to get into what do we do about it? I'm going to start with sugar addiction. There are summits and webinars you can attend. There are 12 week courses you can take. There are six month courses you can do. It's huge and it's really prevalent. So, working on breaking your addiction to sugar, I think is a really good goal for most of us.

I do believe for the majority of us sugar does not stand alone in this because it is usually paired with other things that are problematic for us. And usually those are flour, other sweeteners and other substances that are highly palatable, really fatty things that are combined with sugar, like ice cream, that's kind of the trifecta. It's got salt in it although you might not think that it's got sugar and its high fat, that's kind of the trifecta of addiction right there.

I want you to think about, are there other foods that connect with sugar that you might also need to address that keep your sugar addiction going or substitute in for the sugar if you're just focusing solely on the sugar. I talked yesterday about looking at the ingredients list and seeing how high on the list sugar is, any added sugar. Also knowing that for some people, even fruit would keep this addictive piece going. Some people can manage a little bit of fruit and do okay.

A great book that I put on the book list that I shared with you is a book by an author named Molly Carmel. And she talks about breaking up with sugar, breaking up with dieting. I think the problem for most of us with any food addiction issues or bingeing concerns is that we don't know really how to envision our life without it because it's been such an important part. And someone mentioned this the other day in the forum, and I think it's so important. Many of us have found food is always there for us. It will always be our friend. It will be there when we're struggling, when we're bored, when we're upset, the problem is it's

harming us. And so breaking up in that relationship, it's like breaking up from an unhealthy, abusive, emotional, romantic relationship or friendship or family relationship.

It's really hard because we become dependent on that person and in this case now sugar or food, because it's always been there for us. But what we find is that it's really causing us a lot of difficulty. So that's a hard decision to make. So I do recommend that book. It's really helpful. But today what I wanted to mostly focus on are three books that give a totally different approach to how to let go of some of these behaviors. *Rational Recovery*, and it's written by Jack Trimpey. It's actually about alcohol abuse, but I think this book is so amazing and I think it could be so useful for so many of us here, because if you substitute in bingeing for drinking alcohol, if you substitute in someone who binges instead of alcoholic, or if you substitute in sugar, instead of alcohol, you'll find that the behaviors fit.

Remember yesterday, I talked about substance use disorders. So whatever the substance is, that could also be a behavior. So what he talks about is the fact that much of substance abuse recovery has focused on the underlying causes. What's wrong with you? What trauma have you not healed? What limiting beliefs do you hold, habitual behaviors have you not let go of that cause you to drink, in his book, but here cause you to binge or cause you to eat sugar or whatever the challenge is for you. And he says, this really gets us stuck in a really problematic mindset. And he goes into a lot of detail about that. So instead, he's looking at the fact that it's really about an urge and we need to learn how to identify that urge and not respond to the urge. So ultimately this is what causes the problematic behavior.

Then the next book I want to talk about his *Brain Over Binge* and she borrows heavily from this book in writing her book. She was bulimic and would binge excessively, and did do some purging, but that wasn't her primary feature. And once she really incorporated his way of talking about it from the book *Rational Recovery*, she resolved her binge eating disorder and doesn't binge anymore. And then the third book I want to talk about, and I'm going to kind of mix these together a little bit, is the Book *Never Binge Again* by Glenn Livingston. Now, if you've already been in The Fasting Method community for a while, you know I talk about that book a lot, was introduced to that book from one of our community members, will always appreciate that from her. And then we also have been starting to talk a little bit more in *Brain Over Binge*. So I went back to the book that she based her work on.

So let me tell a little bit about the commonality of these three books and why I think this is so important for us here. The books help you really think about the idea that.. I've talked some about our brain structure. We have an older part of our brain that is responsible for reflexive activities, regulates things in our body, helps us as I described the other day, the amygdala helps us with our fight or flight. So this part of our brain is really only responsible for safety, protection, and getting needs met. And it is tenacious about getting needs met as you probably already know. So, this is kind of like the underside of our brain. And then we

have this newer cortex, this part around it. And you'll probably remember, I talked about the prefrontal cortex, that's the part of the cortex that's up front here.

So this old primitive part of our brain, all of these authors talk about that in a similar way. They use a little different reference for it. Jack Trimpey talks about it as it's the animal brain. And he encourages us to think of naming it something, giving it a name. He calls it the beast quite a bit, but it's the animal brain. Kathryn Hansen in *Brain Over Binge* also describes it as our animal brain or our lower brain. So it's the underneath primitive brain, this part is the newer brain. Now here's what's so important about this, this newer part of our brain, our cortex is the part of our brain that controls voluntary movement. This lower part of our brain, this animal brain, the beast, or as Glenn Livingston calls it the pig, it cannot cause us to walk to the refrigerator. It cannot grab food. It cannot grab alcohol.

It has no responsibility for voluntary motion. So what it has to do instead, it has to convince this cortex, this newer part of our brain to do action for it. Now, Glenn Livingston, in his book, he refers to this as the pig. I know this reference is offensive to some. So one of these other books might fit better in thinking about this concept. But what he talks about is that the pig squeals, it wants what it wants. And so it makes this loud pig squealing noise that's hard to ignore. We listen to it and we take action. So if the pig says, we need a muffin now, we need to eat, we need to binge, we take the step because we see these parts of our brain as connected. If I'm hearing it coming from inside of me, it must be me.

I must be flawed or broken or wired incorrectly if I'm hearing that, but I don't have any other response. And they all focus on this topic. And I think Jack Trimpey really does a good job with this. He talks about the fact that that beast is what he calls it, the beast works in such a way that it convinces you that you won't survive without obtaining that thing. So in his book, he's saying alcohol. So without obtaining the alcohol, consuming it, that you won't survive and that's what's happening for the urge to drink. So think about it if you have an urge to binge or an urge to eat highly palatable, toxic food, that part of your brain, that beast is telling you, you have to have this. Now, if it learns that you don't respond to that, it learns all different ways to convince you.

It might tell it to you very nicely. It, it might say, look, I know you've had a really rough day. You deserve something that's comforting. Go ahead, eat these cookies, you can worry about fasting tomorrow. So it sounds gentle. It doesn't sound like it's being abusive or misleading or deceiving, but it is. The goal is to learn to separate out these two parts of our brain, the higher brain versus the lower brain, the true self versus this primitive self, and the beast from our human brain and really recognize we are the thoughts and the motivations of things going on in our cortex. We have some information coming from this kind of rudimentary part, but what we have to do is we have to learn to separate them out and recognize, be in our rational brain and be able to see these urges to eat this particular food or to eat a certain amount of food or to eat while we're fasting, it's an urge that is being

communicated to us by this other part of our brain. And this part of our brain cannot make us move to get the food.

So it has to motivate this part of the brain to do that. And most of us have spent 10, 20, 30, 40, 60 years listening to it and doing what it asks and thinking, it's just us, it must be I really don't want to lose weight, or I really don't care that I'm diabetic and I'm getting scared about that. We think there's something wrong with us, that we keep doing these habits and behavior and make these decisions that are so misaligned with our actual goals. So separating it out, you have your rational brain. This is the true you, but it gets messages from this other part of the brain.

This primitive, very instinctively driven part of the brain that wants what it wants right now. And it makes it sound threatening if it doesn't get it and it does not have any care of future consequences. So if your rational brain says, oh, I know that eating that makes my glucose go really high for the next day and a half. This primitive part of the brain says, I don't care, please get us to the kitchen, go get it, go get it now.

This is why all three of these authors write about the importance of figuring out how to separate out this part of our brain, naming it something different, identifying it differently, recognize that if it's telling you to eat the things that are problematic for you, or if it's telling you to binge, if it's looking for the opportunity, let's say, for example, your concern is that you binge and you're waiting until no one else is home. And as soon as everyone's gone, or when you know everyone's going to be gone, you get kind of excited. That's not your rational brain. That is this animal brain that wants you to binge for it. It wants you to go get excessive amounts of problematic food.

So it gets very excited and this can help light up reward pathways in our brain that we've been talking about. So you can see how all of these things just build on each other. I don't think we should totally discount why we get these urges, but in the moment, understanding where the urge came from or why, or do I have to resolve this relationship with my mom in order to change this? I don't think that's our best use of our energy at that time. I do think all of us... And I'm biased about this. I do think we all would benefit from continuing to understand what are our limiting beliefs? Can we work on changing them? But I believe in the power of positive thinking and healing and healing trauma, not just stuffing it down or ignoring it. And I don't think we have to wait to change our eating behaviors until we've resolved those things.

Two of these authors talk about that as one of their concerns with kind of traditional addiction approaches. Therapists and treatment programs often focus on healing the inner wounds first, telling you that you don't have control over this, you're powerless to this and that it is something wrong in you and once you can accept that, then you can work on managing it.

These authors really talk about, it's not about managing it. It's about really separating it out and recognizing that's not me. That's a different part of my brain that needs me to respond this way to get its relief. I don't have to do that. So Glenn Livingston talks not listening to that pig squeal, recognizing it. Recognizing that when I say, oh, those cookies are on sale this would be a good time to get them. That's not my rational brain, that's the pig telling me that. That part of our brain doesn't really care for us to succeed. It wants us to survive and thinks that it needs whatever our substance is to survive.

When we get super stressed out, that part of our brain is getting pretty activated because this is its opportunity while we're super stressed or we haven't slept, it's going to talk us into doing what it wants. So we need to understand this. We need to understand that is not me. That isn't my real self-care need. It's this old faulty message. And I'm the one that can do something about it. That part of our brain just wants to activate us to do what it wants. And if you're struggling with something like, I don't know. I mean, I avoided it this time, but what if I eat sugar again? Or what if I cave and go overboard all day and binge and just overeat? What if I can't do this tomorrow?

One of the things that Jack Trimpey talked about is test it out, test what that part of your brain can actually do. What can it actually make you do? He uses a simple example of hold up your hands and move your fingers and then have that part of your brain do it. It can't. Only our rational, our cortex brain, the part that actually has reasoning ability. And it's the part that controls our motor activity. And so if you say, I don't really know what happened. I just find myself standing in the kitchen with an open cupboard, that's because you've learned to listen to it. It's like this is one voice and Jack Trimpey's book actually calls it AVRT, addiction voice recognition technique.

So recognizing it, that's not me, that is this part of my brain saying that. That's not me. And again, that part of my brain can't make me do the action. I get to decide that. I have control over the voluntary action in my body. So I am way over simplifying these books. They're fabulous books, but I wanted to share something that I think could be a little more invigorating to think about this, because I think oftentimes, we've all been taught that this is going to be really hard.

You're going to have to dig in and do some deep work. Again, I am biased. I think it is helpful for all of us to dig in and do some deep work. I wouldn't have been a psychologist for all those years if I didn't believe that, but I also think this tool can be super helpful. I don't have to have all of my relational patterns worked out to recognize I'm having an urge to eat junk food and I don't have to listen to it. It's plain and simple. I think it would be important later that I might go back and work on some of those relational patterns, but I don't need to have those resolved in order to use this fairly simple strategy to stop myself from engaging in these self-destructive behaviors. But I think using these concepts could be really helpful for all of us. Any of these books, I think would be a great resource. You'll pick

up pretty quickly who you kind of connect with and how they share the concepts. But I think they're amazing.

So I want to talk a little bit more about something that Glenn Livingston talks about in his book. He talks about the idea of giving ourselves some food rules. And I know that oftentimes when I say rules, some people start to tense up. Like, not me, I don't like rules, but these food rules I think are really important. If you think back a few days ago, I talked about making the habits that you're working on part of your identity, make the goals and the things you're working on ways that you want to live your life. So if I see myself and want to see myself as someone who eats whole food, unprocessed food, maybe low carb, whatever it looks like for me, then that has to be my identity and then I build the habits that support that.

So make some rules that make that doable and help me to avoid the things that take me off that path are really important. So let's say for example, I do really well with eating my whole food, natural food, everything that I buy at the grocery store. But most days when I'm on my way home from work, I stop and I get a diet soda, and I'm in the convenience store or a gas station where there are bags of chips and cookies and protein bars and treats. But I don't buy problematic food at the grocery store so my meals are good food. That behavior of buying those food-like substances in those convenience stores or gas stations or whatever, that's really incongruent with my identity as someone who eats whole food, who eats healthy.

I've made reasons why it's okay. It's convenient, I have to stop to get gas anyway. So making a food rule, I never buy food outside of the grocery store. Or making it more specific, I don't buy food like substances when I go to gas stations, convenience stores. But setting some food rules that set parameters for you that makes it really clear. If I say, "Hmm, I really think I want to eat this right now." I know right away that's the pig voice because my rule is I don't eat that. So the pig is going to try and convince me it's okay, this would be a good time to do this. I never eat that or I never eat past 8:00. He talks about always. I always start my day with a glass of water. So those are fairly common. And then some of our rules need to be something or could be something that we have a framework for it.

So for example, I only eat two meals a day, unless I'm on vacation and then I can eat three, but no snacks. So maybe I need to have kind of a contingency plan for special events. Or if I say something like I fast three days a week, unless I'm on vacation or visiting and then I make adaptations to my schedule that are still on plan. Being specific enough to recognize I can't just make the rules loosey goosey. I always do this... Well, unless I don't want to. That's not going to help us.

So thinking about, are there some rules that you could put in place for yourself. Some people might make a rule like I don't eat anything out of a package or a bag. Now for me,

that's a little confusing. Do you mean you don't eat anything that comes out of a package or bag, or you don't physically eat it out of the package or the bag? So coming up with your specific food rules. Glenn Livingston talks about this in a lot of his podcasts and things. And he really helps people to narrow down their rules because some of us say things like, "I won't eat sweet things." Well, sweet things is a really big category. Do you mean sugar laden desserts? Do you mean fruit? Do you mean sodas? What do you mean when you say, "I'm not going to eat sweet things?"

So narrowing it down and being really clear. Because I guarantee you, if you have some general rules that you make for yourself, the pig, the animal, the lower brain, the beast, whatever you want to call it, it is going to thank you for making those rules really unclear, because it will say, what I mean, you said you weren't going to eat sweet things, this is just fruit. It's going to find the loops, the workarounds. It's going to find ways to wiggle out of the rules.

And it's going to look for ways to catch you up in your rules and convince you otherwise. It's a little bit like a teenager, they know what they want and they know to keep asking and pestering you and keep kind of upping the ante on how annoying their request can be. And they come up with all kinds of ways to convince you it's okay, all kinds of promises of what they'll do over the weekend to make up for it. This is what that part of the brain does. It works really hard to convince you, to take action, to give it the thing that it wants right then. But those things are almost always things that go against your best interest, your goals. And recognize, ah, it's actually kind of a simple concept.

I'm having an urge to do so something I've learned to do this, I've gotten reinforcement for doing this. I get some relief when I do this, but then I feel bad afterward. I don't like the consequences, but I don't feel like I can do anything to change it. This changes all of that. We absolutely can change it. The cool thing that Kathryn Hansen talks about is she doesn't even have urges to binge anymore. So it's not as though she has to keep fighting the urge forever. It gets kind of extinguished when you're not reactivating. Habits extinguish, when we're not reinforcing them. The best way to get a habit going is to repeat the behavior over and over again. And so the best way to stop a habit is to stop the behavior. Stop reinforcing it. The problem with addiction and as I talked about yesterday, withdrawal for example, we choose to use that substance again, to avoid the feeling of miserable with the withdrawal from it.

But if we can go through that for a few days, maybe a few weeks, we won't keep having those same responses and the urges quiet down. Eventually they go away. Now they can come back, especially during times of severe stress or other kind of triggers. And people often get nervous about that. They say, "Look, I've been doing great, but what about when something bad happens?" When something bad happens, if you remember, I am separate from that want, that urge is coming from a separate part. This is me, I control the steps I take. Super important. I hope that you can tell by how I'm saying this today, I think this is

life changing. Three books, life changing. I hope all of you can embrace this in some way. So many good things in these books, in this concept.

First and foremost, I think it helps with not pathologizing yourself. I think so many of us struggle with these things because we feel like we're to blame. We're smart people. Why do I keep doing this same thing? Try this theory, dig into one of these books, or even just start practicing what I've talked about today and see if you can feel that difference. I think you're going to find it really empowering.

Next two days, we're going to talk about self-sabotage and then the last video of the class is going to be what I'm calling right now catch as catch can. It's anything that I haven't talked about yet, things that I talk about a lot in our community that I couldn't put somewhere in one of the videos I hope you're doing well. I hope I get to see you in our last Q and A session. Don't forget if you have questions, please submit those to masterclass@thefastingmethod.com. Take good care, everybody. Bye-bye.