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Week 2

Emotional Eating and Why Diets Don't Work

In this video, you learned that . . .

The problem is
emotional eating.
Weight is only a symptom.

Diets don't work because
they create resistance, and it's
the resistance that pushes
you to eat emotionally.

When you diet, you have to make tons of huge changes, all at the same time, and in a limited amount of time. This requires willpower, which essentially means forcing yourself not to do the things you usually do. This creates massive resistance. If you're an emotional eater, you have trained yourself to neutralize resistance with food.

If you usually eat past the point of fullness, if you eat when you're not really hungry -- when you're bored, tired, frustrated, sad, lonely -- and if it's the act of eating rather than the food itself that is filling you up . . . you are an emotional eater.

So you diet, the diet creates resistance, it feels bad, you eat to make yourself feel better, and you fail. And you do it over and over again.

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Goal: Understand your emotional eating patterns.

Your success in losing weight depends on 1) understanding why you eat emotionally, 2) figuring out what your triggers are, and 3) changing your environment (mentally and physically) to modify those triggers.

Exercise: Figure out your emotional eating triggers and change them.

Go way back. What are your earliest memories of using food to make yourself feel better? What were you going through at the time? How did you feel? Did you have anxiety because of a family trauma? Did you feel left out at school? Were you alone a lot and felt sad or bored? Write down specific memories in as much detail as you can -- where you were, what you ate, how you felt.

Your answers will help you figure out what usually precedes a binge as well as the foods you tend to binge on. You'll also get the life-changing awareness that you eat the way you do for very specific reasons that were borne out of emotional survival. This awareness will help you stop shaming yourself when you binge and focus on changing your behaviors instead.

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List 2 or 3 clear memories you have of bingeing when you were growing up (when you did, where you were, what foods you ate, what feelings you had, what was going on in your life). Use a journal if you need more space:

1.

2.

3.

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Based on your answers, list 3 of your primary emotional triggers and why you usually experience them (ex: stress from parenting, boredom from staying home all day):

1.

2.

3.

What could you do to change these triggers so they're less severe or you experience them less often? Could you meditate or stretch 30 minutes every day? Could you walk with a friend 2 days a week? Write down your ideas:

1.

2.

3.

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Now think about your bingeing events. Are there times when you tend to binge more than others? For example, when you eat out, when you eat food straight out of the bag? What types of foods do you usually binge on? Sweets? Crackers? Fried foods? Write down your answers:

Bingeing occasions:

Foods you tend to binge on:

What microchanges could you make to your environment to help you decrease the likelihood of bingeing? For example, have the waiter box up half of your food to go, switch from cookies to dark chocolate, etc. Incorporate these changes as part of your program.

1.

2.

3.

Review: Challenge your negative thoughts so you can change them.

You have to be aware of your negative, self-defeating thoughts before you can change them. Once you start spotting them, then you can challenge them and change them.

Questioning your negative thoughts is the way you challenge them. You have to start with, "Is this true?" Then you keep going -- "Why am I thinking this? When do I usually think it?" -- until you find the truth that lies within the negative thought.

For example, maybe you sometimes think, "I am so disgusting." Question that thought until you figure out what's really going on. Maybe you *feel* disgusting (as opposed to *being* disgusting) when you eat past the point of fullness, and maybe you eat this way when you're not paying attention to what you're eating.

Now you can create an objective statement: "I feel disgusting when I eat too fast, and I usually do this when I'm zoned out, watching TV." And now you can use your microchanges to work on two habits: eating too fast and eating in front of the TV.

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Exercise: Review last week's habit and add more microchanges.

What were 3 insights you gained as a result of making small changes to Habit 1 and modifying the thoughts associated with it? Do you have less of a desire to engage in this habit? Does it seem less appealing? Why? Did modifying this habit alter other behaviors or habits? Which ones? List these insights here:

1.

2.

3.

Add 2 or 3 more microchanges that you'll make to Habit 1 this week:

1.

2.

3.

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Exercise: Pick your next habit and choose the microchanges you'll make to it.

Habit 2:

List the microchanges you'll make to Habit 2 this week and for the remainder of the program:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

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This week you'll continue working on Habit 1 while you start modifying Habit 2. Be patient with yourself. If you need to add only 1 microchange to Habit 2 while you keep going on Habit 1, that's totally fine!

Also, Habit 2 should be one of the easier habits for you to change. Remember, your goal is to give yourself small wins so you can get momentum to continue -- not make it hard on yourself and quit!

Monday: Engage in Habit 2.

You're going to fully engage in Habit 2, just like you did with Habit 1, so you can see what feelings and thoughts come up. (The ones you never spot and learn from because you're so busy shaming yourself for engaging in the habit.)

Write down the thoughts that lead up to the habit (in other words, that push you to do it), the thoughts you have while you're doing it, and the thoughts you have after you do. These are the thoughts you're going to challenge and change.

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Negative thoughts:

1.

2.

3.

4.

Challenge/question them. Write down the truthful statements behind them:

1.

2.

3.

4.

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Tuesday: Add a microchange.

Add one of your microchanges to start modifying the habit, and record the thoughts you have after making the change. You can also record thoughts related to Habit 1 that you can continue challenging and changing.

Microchange:

New thoughts/truths behind them:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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Wednesday: Keep going!

Stay with the first microchange. Continue writing down your thoughts, so you can see how you're improving. If there are any negative thoughts that creep in, challenge them and write down what's really going on.

New thoughts:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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Thursday: Add another microchange.

Keep the first microchange, and add another. Keep track of your thoughts.

Next microchange:

Thoughts:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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Friday: Continue and prep for the weekend.

Stay with your 2 microchanges and keep building your confidence. Write down your thoughts and feelings now that you're making progress. Add another microchange if you feel ready for it.

Next microchange:

Thoughts/feelings:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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Exercise: Pick Habit 3.

Pick the habit you'll work on changing during Week 3 and the 4 to 6 microchanges you will make to it for the next few weeks.

Habit 3:

Microchanges:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

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Congratulations! You completed another week and now have two habits you're making changes to. Hopefully, you're gaining momentum and your confidence is building.

You are taking charge of things and making your own changes. Doesn't that feel good? You're in complete control, and you're proving to yourself that you don't need a diet to spell it all out for you -- and then actually prevent you from succeeding.

Keep up the good work this weekend, and again, go easy on yourself. Remember that this is a lifelong journey. There's no pressure, and there's no number on a scale that determines whether you win or lose.

Just the willingness to do it differently and being committed to get in there and do the challenging work it takes change not only your body but also how you see yourself and how you live means you've already won.

Our theme next week is the psychology behind making changes, which will give you a deeper understanding of how what you're doing really works -- and why it's the only thing that will.

Have a great weekend!