

Week 1 Lesson 1

START NOW

How to stop emotional and binge eating

Emotional and binge eating are habits

You learned to use food to anesthetize yourself accidentally through trial and error or from someone else (a parent, sibling, friend, or role model).

It's not your fault; you did the best you could with the knowledge you had.



Habit formation

Through the repetition of this behavior, the corresponding neurological pathways became very strong and an ingrained habit formed.

Now the unconscious brain always offers this solution to make you feel better when you feel uncomfortable because it knows that it works and it wants to make you feel good.

But these pathways can be changed due to neuroplasticity.



Emotional and binge eating are habits

Although originally this habit formed to make you feel better, as your habit becomes more entrenched, **the habit itself becomes the problem**. You soon realize that **the habit itself causes you more pain than the issue it originally helped you with** ever did.

It feels like it's impossible to stop doing your habit.

The reason for this is that a part of your brain is responsible to keep your habits alive, especially if the habit made you feel good when it formed. **As emotional eating made you feel more relaxed, so your brain uses strong urges to keep this habit going.**



Binge eating is often caused by restrictive dieting

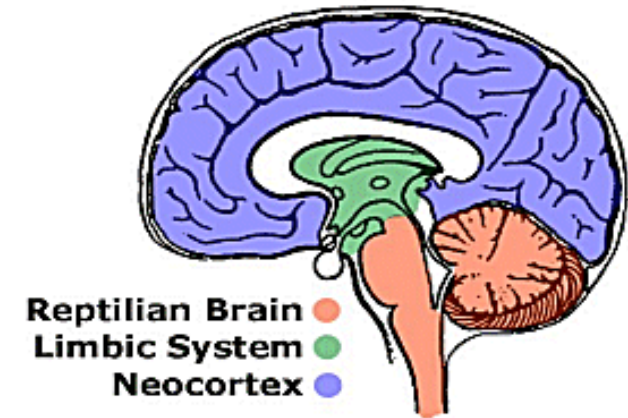
When you don't eat enough food or enough nutrients your "survival" or "reptilian" brain, the oldest part of your brain, freaks out.

It senses a shortage in food supply so it starts to send you **intense hunger signals and increases your appetite** to get more food.

It also **slows down your metabolism** so you don't use that much energy.

It does all this **to keep you alive and healthy**. It doesn't know that your "thinking" brain (neocortex), the newest part of your brain, decided to put you on a diet.

The Evolution-Designed Brain



Binge eating is often caused by restrictive dieting

However, as a result, you are extremely hungry all the time and battle with uncontrollable cravings.

Due to your slow metabolism, you gain weight even from eating an apple.

No wonder you can't bear it anymore and you binge.

Then the next morning you panic and start dieting even harder because now you need to work off all the food you ate last night too. Of course, this makes the situation even worse. **Your brain fights back making your hunger and cravings even stronger, so you binge harder and more frequently.** And this goes on and on...

It is a habit now that your brain wants to keep because it feels so good to finally eat (you remember, your brain wants you to feel good) and this habit also keeps you alive.



As the neurological pathways become stronger, your urges get stronger and more unbearable too

Every time you binge because of your dieting habit (mistake Nr2) or overeat to deal with your emotions (mistake Nr1), the responsible **neurological pathways become stronger, consequently, your urges get stronger and more unbearable too.**

The only way to feel better now is by giving in, which in turn further strengthens the habit.

But don't worry, as I said before, ***neurological pathways can be changed due to neuroplasticity.***



Neuroplasticity

If you don't give in to your urges, the responsible pathways will get weaker and weaker, and eventually, they will disappear.

When your survival brain sees that there is no danger, it will stop sending you signals to eat.

It's like a stray cat; if you keep feeding it, it keeps coming back.

Once you stop feeding it, it will come a few times, but eventually, it will give up and go somewhere else for food.



Neuroplasticity

Or think about a small path in a meadow. If you use it often, it gets wider and more visible. But if you stop using it, the grass takes it back. The same happens with the neurological pathways too.

I know it feels impossible to dismiss urges at the moment, but once you know how to do it's not so difficult. It's not effortless but it's absolutely doable.



Important note: You need to eat enough food to be able to dismiss urges. If you are starving, your survival instinct will overpower you, and **for good reason**. You shouldn't dismiss that urge.



HOW TO DISMISS YOUR URGES TO BINGE OR OVEREAT

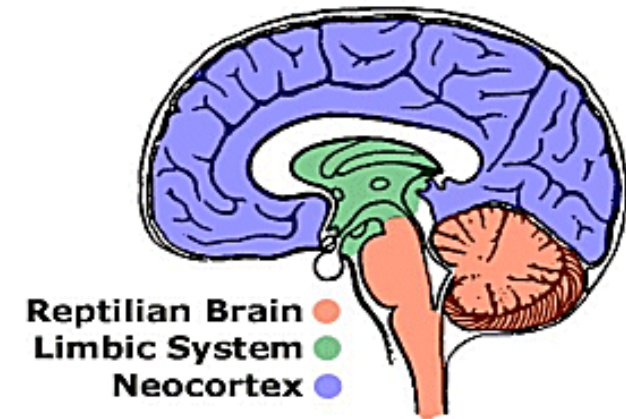
The key is to wake up the “thinking brain” and ignore the “reptilian brain”.

The urge to binge or overeat is only a thought. This thought generates strong emotions and physical feelings in your body but it’s only a thought. It cannot do anything to you.

If I want to really simplify it, you just need to let that thought flow through your brain and let it be replaced by a new thought.

Let me prove to you how powerful your thoughts are.

The Evolution-Designed Brain



The power of your thoughts



Think about a huge dog chasing you. It's barking and running after you. You run as fast as you can but the dog is getting closer. You reach the end of the road and there is nowhere to go. There is a huge brick wall in front of you. You can't get over it, the wild dog is right behind you reaching for your leg

If you imagined this scenario, your heart rate probably went up.

You can also think about watching a horror film. Nothing happens to you, you just sit there, but you feel really scared.

These are only thoughts making you scared. The same way it's only thoughts that make you feel like eating.



The power of your thoughts



Now imagine sitting in traffic and you are already late to work. You have an important presentation, you need to get there in 10 minutes. The cars are not moving in front of you, you are getting extremely impatient and stressed. You are going to lose this important project, your boss is going to be furious, you might even lose your job. Your hands are shaking, your heart is racing, you are so frustrated you want to scream...



The power of your thoughts

Sorry, I didn't want to make you feel stressed, just wanted to illustrate that you can feel uncomfortable from simply having thoughts in your head. **Nothing happened to you, these were just thoughts, but you probably felt physical and emotional changes in your body. You do the same to yourself with your thoughts when you have an urge to binge or overeat.**

Ok, let's calm down a bit.



Wait for the clear blue sky

You have a calm, wise state inside you, where you can always go back when the mind settles down.

Think about it like the clear blue sky that is always there above the clouds.

When you have an urge, and all those thoughts about eating are racing in your head, it's like the weather. Your thoughts are like the clouds, the rain, the wind, or sometimes even like a huge storm. But sooner or later the weather calms down and goes back to the clear blue sky. Even during the biggest storm, the clear blue sky is always above the clouds.



Wait for the clear blue sky

So when an urge comes, the best thing to do is to let the weather do its thing, and **simply wait for the clear blue sky to appear**, i.e. wait for the mind to settle down.

Don't jump in to try to change the weather, you can't.

It will suck you in, spin you around, and you get soaked.

Just look at the weather from the outside and wait for the clear blue sky to appear.

Let your thoughts come and go in your mind and just observe them as they were clouds in the sky or as you were watching a film or listening to someone else's conversation. **Don't get involved.**



Not all of your thoughts are **YOUR** thoughts.

You picked some of them up somewhere at some point in your life and your mind keeps bringing them up.

You aren't consciously creating your thoughts most of the time, they just come from who knows where.



Unimportant and important thoughts

All sorts of thoughts run through your mind all day long, and they create your experience of the outside world.

Some thoughts feel unimportant and you don't pay much attention to them. For example: "What time is it?" "What was that noise?" "Her hair looks nice." You don't hang on to these thoughts, they just come, and you let them go.

But other thoughts feel really significant and we take them very seriously, such as: "Why didn't he call me yet? He doesn't love me." "Why did she say that to me?" "I really want to eat _____."

You keep repeating these thoughts, you keep them tight and don't let them go.



You can let your thoughts go without acting on them

When you act on these thoughts, you strengthen the habit and these thoughts will come up more frequently and will generate stronger emotional responses. **If you could just let them come and go like you do with your unimportant thoughts, they wouldn't make you feel the way you feel.**

You don't have to take your thoughts so seriously. You can accept them or let them go. It's your decision. **And if you decide to let them go, as you will with your urge thoughts, you don't really need to manage or change them.** After a while, these thoughts will leave you and new thoughts will come, as they always do.



You don't need willpower to fight your thoughts

I want you to realise that your overeating or binge eating process starts with a series of temporary, impersonal thoughts. No matter how important, valid, and worthy of action they look at that moment, they are just thoughts and they will go away.

You don't need any willpower to fight them.

You don't need to fight them at all. All you need to do is letting them go.

Dismissing an urge using willpower is like standing in a big, raging river and trying to do yoga. It will be extremely difficult, even impossible. The water will take you off your legs and will carry you away.



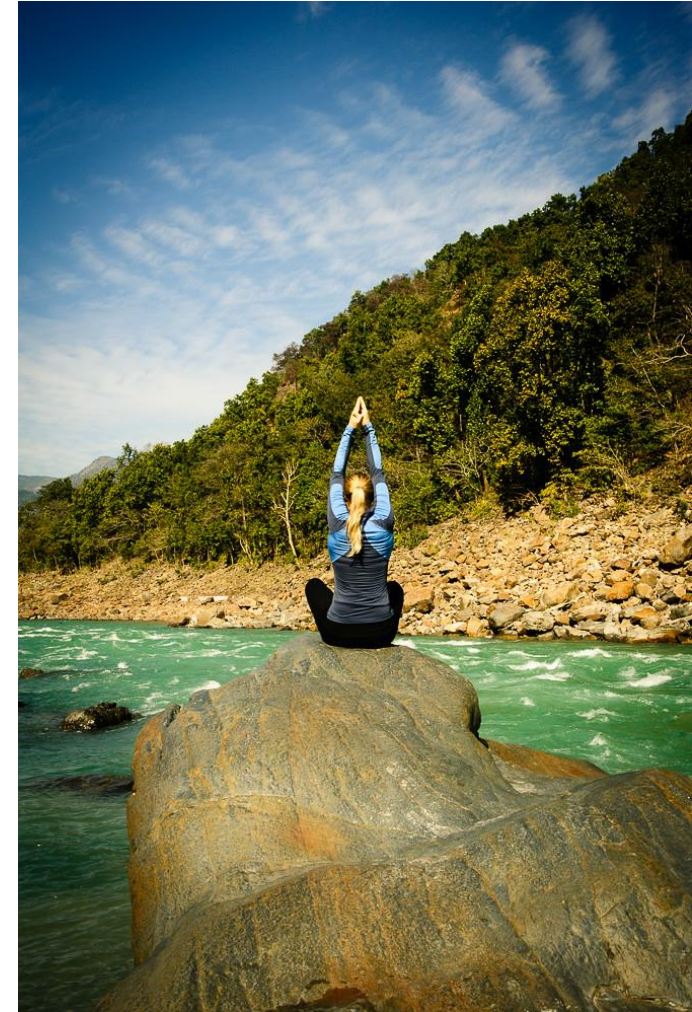
You don't need willpower to fight your thoughts

But if you get out of the river, you can do yoga on the shore easily while watching the raging river from a safe place.

As we can't control the river, we also can't control our thoughts, but we don't need to.

What we need to do is training our emotional tolerance so these thoughts won't affect us anymore.

As we can train our muscles, we can train our brains too.



You don't need willpower to fight your thoughts

When your mind, your thoughts are revved up (during an urge), you cannot think clearly, you are in an unintelligent state.

You probably said to someone something you didn't mean to when you were furious. When you are very angry your mind is also revved up and in an unintelligent state.

Your calm, clear blue sky state is wise and intelligent.

Your goal is to get back to this state.



A wide-angle photograph of a coastal scene at sunset. The sky is filled with soft, golden light, transitioning from a bright orange near the horizon to a pale blue at the top. The sea is calm, reflecting the colors of the sky. In the middle ground, several large, dark rock formations jutting into the water. A small, green boat is visible near the base of the rocks. To the right, a sandy beach curves along the shore. In the far distance, a small white structure and more rocks are visible on the beach. The overall mood is peaceful and tranquil.

So first, take a few deep breaths. Breathing deeply, with slow and steady inhalations and exhalations, signals our parasympathetic nervous system to calm the body and mind down.

Then follow the steps in the next lesson.

