

Hi! Welcome back! I'm so glad you're here for round two and ready to learn more about how you can end your struggle with binge eating and create your ideal eating life. I hope you listened to episode 1 already because I'm going to be expanding on that topic today. So if you haven't listened yet, what the heck? Go do that. If you did, then you know that the reason why you binge is because you feel urges to do it and if you stop those urges, then the bingeing will stop.

In order *to* stop the urges, you have to stop giving in to them. Today I want to show you how it's possible that you can not give in to them by teaching you the basic brain science behind what goes on in your brain before you binge. There is still a lot to be learned about the science of binge eating, but I'm going to explain what I've learned about what is known. And don't worry, I'm going to simplify it a lot so you don't need to be a neuroscientist to understand this.

This information was a huge game changer for me when I learned it.

I had always thought that as soon as I felt an urge to binge, that that was it. The urge was there and now I had no choice but to react to it and binge.

People say the same thing to me often as well. They say that there is no time between feeling an urge and bingeing.

So I'm hoping this explanation about what goes on in your brain will give you some insight into the power you have and what you're capable of doing.

Now, there are many parts of our brain that are involved in binge eating, but to simplify it, I'm just going to focus on two and call them the lower brain and the higher brain.

The lower brain is where your urges comes from.

This part of the brain is also referred to as the primitive brain or the animal brain and the reason why is because this is the first part of our brain that developed. It's the part of our brain that we share with animals. It's main purpose is survival. It's responsible for keeping us safe and alive. It's functions include pleasure seeking, pain avoidance, subconscious processes, emotions, and instincts.

What it does, is take information from your internal and external environments and responds automatically with its own information. This automatic response is the urge and it could also be accompanied by thoughts like, "You need to binge eat now."

If it's the time of day when you normally binge, or you see a store you usually buy your binge foods from, then your lower brain may respond with a thought, or command, telling you that you should binge because it's been conditioned to think that way during that time of day or when you see that store.

The reason why it's been conditioned this way is simply because you've engaged in that behavior many times.

I remember a time in my life when this would happen at the mall near my workplace at the time. When I'd work evenings, I'd sometimes go there before to look around and maybe get food. The first time I went, I found a Mrs. Field's cookies and of course indulged because they're so good. Then the next time I went, I just had to have them again. Same thing happened the next time then it became a regular thing. It was like going to that mall and not getting a Mrs. Field's cookie wasn't an option. What ended up happening was that as soon as I'd walk in, or maybe even before then, maybe once I decided I was going to go to the mall, I'd have Mrs. Field's on my mind.

After consciously deciding to eat those cookies a few times, my automatic response to that mall became "I gotta get a Mrs. Field's cookie." I created this response by habitually eating there and now it was ingrained in my lower brain.

The thought about the cookies that popped up in my mind is a lower brain response and we don't have conscious control over what happens in there or what responses it throws out at us. It's all very automatic.

But thankfully, we have the other part of our brain I mentioned which is the higher brain or what's called the Pre-Frontal Cortex.

This right here, is the money maker. This is what separates us humans from the animals. This is what *makes* us human.

This is where we have the ability to plan, to think rationally, to control our motor movements, and to think about what we're thinking about.

What happens before you binge, is that your lower brain has an automatic response, this response being a thought about bingeing and an urge.

Then here's the important part.

That response is recognized by your higher brain and in there, you get to *decide* what to do with that information.

A decision is made and there is always a decision made.

Your lower brain that creates the urge does not have the ability to make you do anything. Remember, it's your higher brain that controls motor movement. The lower brain can demand that you binge, but no motor movements will happen until you decide what to do and that decision can be to not binge.

When my lower brain spat out thoughts about going to Mrs. Field's, I could have shut it down. But could have chosen otherwise, but I didn't know that I could. I thought my only option was to abide by my craving, to feed my urge, but it wasn't. I always had the option of saying no.

Urge does not equal binge, an urge is a suggestion to binge and then you in your higher brain get to decide whether or not to follow that suggestion.

Every time you binge it's because you choose to do it.

Now, I want to be clear that I'm not saying you chose to be someone who deals with binge eating urges or that you chose to get to where you are right now, but, every time you engage in binge eating it's because you're deciding that you're going to give in to that urge to binge. You make that decision in your higher brain, in your prefrontal cortex, to follow the urge the lower brain presented.

Now, this all may happen very quickly, going from urge to binge, or it may take a few minutes.

Maybe you're going back and forth in your higher brain, negotiating with yourself or trying to justify bingeing, or trying to talk yourself out of it.

Or maybe you're just letting yourself go on autopilot without utilizing the power of your higher brain.

As I look back, I can see that I would do both and a lot of the time I'd be sitting there thinking, "I don't want to be feeling this, go away, I don't want to binge.....okay, I'm going to do it."

Other times I'd think that as soon as I felt that urge that a binge was inevitable so I'd just go for it.

But I want to tell you that a binge is NEVER inevitable.

You always have a choice.

So you may be wondering, if you have a choice, then why the heck would you CHOOSE to binge? Well my friend, that is another topic for another day, but for today I want you to just start noticing when you make that decision.

Start paying attention to how you're feeling before you binge and what you think about when you feel that way. Or if you're not able to do that right now, look back at what you were thinking before you binged so you can gain awareness of what kinds of thoughts lead you to deciding to binge once you feel that urge.

Look at the moment when you decide to give in to that urge. There is a moment when you think that thought that will drive you to that binge. What is it?

Is it like mine where I thought I might as well just do it because it was inevitable anyway? Is it just, "F it, I'm doing this?" "I don't care anymore?" "I can't feel this urge any longer, I need out of this?"

What is the thought that is the deciding factor for you? What are you thinking in your higher brain that gives you the go ahead to follow the suggestion, or demand, from your lower brain?

Take notice of what's going on right before you reach for that food. Recognize that you are deciding to eat it. No one is forcing you and you are not out of control. Your urges do not control your actions, you do.

Urges can't make you do anything, they just signal for you to do something.

Now it's up to you to do what it is you really want to do, which of course is to not give in to it and not binge.

Okay, I hope you found this information as helpful as I did when I first learned about it. I'd love to hear your thoughts on this topic and if you have any questions please go to the show notes at coachkir.com/2 and write them in the comments. Have a wonderful week practicing awareness of your thinking and I will talk to you next week!