

Ep #4: How to Stop Eating Your Emotions



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With Your Host

Pat Beaupre Becker

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Welcome to *It's Never Too Late to Lose Weight*, a podcast for women approaching 60 who have been successful at everything but reaching their weight loss goals. Tune in each week for tools and strategies to help you lose weight, create a strong body, and support a healthy mind. Here's your host, certified weight and life coach, Pat Beaupre Becker.

Happy New Year! It is now 2018. That is crazy, isn't it? I wanted to share something that happened last night at a New Year's Eve celebration. My husband and I for the past 15 years have been getting together with some friends every New Year's, we actually get together with them every month. We have a meditation or a conversation about something and New Year's Eve is usually always about what are you grateful for, for the previous year, and how to set yourself up really for the coming year.

And so, I was asked what is one thing I was grateful for in 2017, and to my surprise, this vision of a photograph I have of my mom came to my head, and it is one where she is hysterical laughing and she has this red lampshade on her head and she was being silly, of course, and we captured it in this photograph. And the thing that was amazing is I realized I have finally given up blaming my mom for all of the problems I have had in my life, because I actually used to blame my mom for everything, right? She was the reason why I couldn't stop eating, she was the reason why I couldn't exercise. Now, isn't that crazy? Can you imagine blaming your mom for not getting off your butt to exercise? But that's what I did, right?

And the thing that I feel now is when I think about her, I think of her, she was very funny, she was incredibly giving, and had so much grace. She suffered a lot, had a hard life, but really, she was an amazing mom and an amazing friend to many of her friends. And the crazy thing was that I really didn't think she loved me, which is like, totally bizarre, because she was always there, as I said, but somehow, I wasn't able to feel her love. Like, somehow, I was expecting her love to pierce my heart and enter into my body, but when I learned that love comes from inside me and that I have to

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experience that love, and by experiencing that love inside me, I could really be electrified and touched by the love that my mother had for me.

So I really look at my past - it's not like I'm rewriting my past, but I'm reinterpreting my past, and you might think I'm delusional, that's okay, because I was delusional all along when I thought she didn't love me. Having freedom from focusing on food has really transformed my life because now, I mean, one of the consequences I'm open to just having this loving memory of my mom, and you know what, when I think of her and I feel that love, I feel that joy, that really works for me. It makes me feel better. So I'm owning it, I'm really on it, and I'm grateful for 2017 giving me this awareness.

So today we're going to talk about one of my favorite topics: emotional eating. This is probably one of the most common symptoms that I hear from women who seek coaching, is that always we'll start the conversation by saying they eat over every emotion. So I want to talk to you today about emotions and what is an emotion and what your opinion of your emotion might be. We're going to talk about what emotional eating really is, and I want to offer that if you don't eat your emotions, there actually is an alternative, and maybe by the end of this episode I will sell you on wanting to learn to feel your feelings. I'm hoping that's where we get to.

So what are emotions? We know that emotions are caused by our thoughts, which are an interpretation of life, of something that happens, sometimes it's a judgment, and if you remember the model and the sequence we talked about at the last episode, we have the CTFAR, which is your circumstance happens, life happens, then you have a thought, that thought creates a feeling, the feeling drives you to take some action, and when you add up all those actions, you have a result. So if you look at this model, a feeling or an emotion is caused by a thought, but it is actually separate from a thought. So feelings are one word. You can express it in one word. I'm hurt, I'm sad, I'm lonely, I'm bored, I'm happy. And before I

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actually understood this, I would jumble all my thoughts and feelings all together.

So like for an example, if you asked me how did I feel, I would say, "My boyfriend just doesn't care. He's emotional unavailable. If he loved me he would plan for us to do things together. He wouldn't show up late and be buzzed on our Friday night together." See, I wouldn't say, "I feel sad, I feel disappointed, I feel angry", but I would give you this story about what I thought I was feeling. And even last week, I had a client and when I asked her how she felt, she started talking about this argument she had with her sister, and she said her sister was disrespectful and that she should know how hard she works. And then when I asked her again, "How do you feel?", she said, "I want my sister to be nicer to me." So this is easier said than done, because when you have this habit of confusing your thoughts and feelings, it makes it difficult to actually understand what a feeling is.

So how can I teach you to learn to identify your feelings? It's actually pretty easy. What you do is you look to your body. Now, we experience emotions in our bodies. Why? Because we have all these physiological changes or responses to our thoughts. I like to call it almost like a vibration in your body. Sometimes it could be a tingling feeling or pressure in your chest, or a tightness in your throat, or sometimes like, it's a lightness in your shoulders, or it could be heat or cold. But what all of this is are messages from our nervous system because our thoughts are sending these hormones through our body that impact our breathing, our digestion, even our vision, our blood flow, and our heartbeat. Now, as a human being, you are going to experience negative emotions and positive emotions. 50% of the time you'll feel good, 50% of the time you'll feel not so great.

But when you have a negative emotion, the thing to understand is that nothing has gone wrong. All of your emotions are tolerable, and even though they are emotions you might not like to feel, like you don't want to feel angry, you don't want to feel sad, you don't want to feel lonely, you don't want to feel unloved. But really, I want to teach you today that every

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emotion you have is tolerable. You can withstand feeling it in your body. Now, for many reasons, you might be horrified by your emotions. I know I was. And you're not alone because culturally, we are investigating emotions, we are redefining emotions, emotions that define men, emotions that define women. We used to have a very clear line. You know, men never cry, that was a pretty engrained thought that we had as a society. And when I looked on Amazon, there are 76,000 books written on emotions. That is a lot of books.

So as I said, I was really horrified by my emotions. And so, what did I do? I hid them from everybody. At least I thought I was hiding them. I would say my top three feelings growing up were fear, shame, and being unworthy. And I didn't want to show you that I was afraid, I didn't want to show you that I was shame, I had something to be ashamed of, and I certainly didn't want to show you that I thought so low of myself. And I made all of these feelings mean something terrible about me. I was a scaredy cat, I was shameful and I wasn't worthy. It's crazy. So, hiding it as a child, that was all I could do, so it was kind of sad, there was no one to help me understand my own childish interpretations of what was happening in my life, right? Because I felt shame didn't mean that I was shameful. Because I felt fear didn't mean anything about me except that I was human.

And there's a great cost for hiding your emotions. For me, it was really never being honest with anyone, always putting on a front. I was trying to be sure that you liked me. It was a total disaster because I never learned how to tolerate any feelings, right? And then I used food, I used drugs, I used sex to intervene so that I wouldn't have to feel my feelings. It was just always distracting myself from them, and as an adult, this was a very high cost. And if I continued on this path, you know, where I could see I was going, I had another photo of my mom in mind. You know, my mom died of diabetes, and she really suffered at the end of her life, and I could see that if I continued to overeat, this was what was going to happen to me. So

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there is a high cost of avoiding your feelings and using food to cover them up.

But did anyone teach us what was happening when we felt an emotion? You know, I remember my mom saying, "I'll give you something to cry about", and that was a pretty common response when I was a kid. When we were at the end of the day, my mom would sit in the kitchen and she would try to read and my brothers and I would be in the bedroom and we would be laughing and talking and laughing, and she was so distracted she would just be, "Go to sleep", and we would still be laughing and talking and somehow, we would just get the giggles like even more, and she would be really angry and she'd be like, "Go to sleep". And then she would grab the belt and she would come in and she would start hitting us, not that it hurt because she hit us with the blankets, but the point is is that all of our feelings were not encouraged. Whether you felt sad, whether you felt happy, it was like, as long as your feelings were interfering with someone else's life, you better not have them.

I also remember my own daughter at two years old when I first moved out from her dad and we had our own apartment, and I remember the first morning we went out to the store to get some milk and she was two and so cute and we showed up at this store and she looks at her eye level and she wants to grab this candy. And I'm like, "No, honey, no candy for breakfast." Well, she lay down on the ground and started screaming at the top of her lungs, kicking and screaming, and I was like, "Oh my god, what has taken over my child?" Her emotions were so big they were practically exploding out of her. So now as adults, of course our bodies are much bigger, they are a larger container, so we can safely feel our emotions, whereas children, they just seem to overwhelm us. As adults, we think they are going to overwhelm us but we actually can learn that we have the capacity to feel them.

So I guess the question you might have is, "But, why? Like, why do we need to feel them?" And if you remember in that sequence, your thoughts

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create your feelings, create your actions and your results, feelings are really critical because they are why we do or don't do everything. They motivate us, we are motivated from our guts, from our feeling place. And if you feel good, if you feel energized, you're going to take all kinds of risk, and if you feel sad and you feel depressed, you're going to just sit on the couch and watch TV. So motivation is really important. If you want to learn how to eat healthy, if you want to learn how to exercise, you have to come up with some more positive, motivating emotions, and sometimes you have to be willing to feel the positive and in order to feel the positive, you have to be willing to feel the negative.

So I want you to understand that you can actually manage your feelings, you can generate feelings, and you can actually feel them. And because we are emotional eaters, what we are choosing to do instead is we are eating our emotions. And sometimes it's not even the big ones, the sad ones, right? Like fear, or sadness. Sometimes it's just boredom or just being antsy. We don't want to feel even that because we don't know how, and so we eat for every emotion. And now, the other thing you might say is, "Wait a minute, I feel my feelings, that's my problem. I'm an emotional mess. I feel my feelings all day, every day." But I think as I will teach you is that you are not necessarily feeling your feelings. If you are pushing your feelings away, it feels even worse than just feeling your feeling. There is a great value in feeling your feelings because once you process your feeling, you actually get to the other side, there is a value in it.

So emotional eating is when we look to solve an emotion, a problem with food because any time we eat other than for fuel or nutrition, we are emotionally eating. And if you think about it this way, emotional eating really comes from our need to experience more pleasure than pain or discomfort, which is part of our primitive brain. It makes sense that this is what we do, right? We don't want to feel pain. But what we have to do is we have to learn how to tolerate discomfort so that we can process and feel the feelings that are there. They are there because we're human.

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So if you have a habit of reaching for food when you have any negative feeling, whether it's bored or confused or hurt or sad or lonely, what's happening is you actually are giving your brain a reward because you're probably overeating highly processed or sugary foods and each time you eat them, you are telling your brain, "Here's your reward for not wanting to feel that feeling", and the more you do that, the more important your brain makes it and then the more you do it and the more habit it becomes. Plus, if you look around, everyone else is doing it, right? I mean, who wants to feel bad? Nobody.

When you can accept that discomfort is actually a healthy part of being human, then you don't have to eat your emotions. And maybe you can accept that you know, you want to feel grief when you lose a friend, or maybe you can accept the fact that you want to feel angry when you see injustice. And there you might realize that having negative emotions are part of life. But when I ask you, "What about humiliation? Or shame? Or boredom? Irritation? Frustration and self-loathing?" You probably want to avoid those feelings at all costs. And so what's the problem with avoiding our emotions? Well, we don't develop resilience, right? We are unwilling to accept life as life really is, and if you eat then you are gaining weight, you are turning your lifestyle into an unhealthy one, and you are not going to be able to have a healthy future.

So now I hope that I have sold you on the fact that you can actually learn to feel your feelings, that it's valuable to feel your feelings, that if you are an emotional eater, you're not alone. And emotions are vibrations that you are experiencing in your body, related to your central nervous system, and that emotional eating is any time you put food in your mouth for reasons other than fuel and other than nutrition. I want you to really understand emotions are not dangerous. When you experience them, nothing has gone wrong. And what you make your emotions mean about you, that can be upgraded, that can be changed.

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And the way to stop eating your emotions is to learn how to feel them. And what I've done is created a worksheet for you so you could get started on understanding how to figure out what it is you're feeling. So go to never2late.info/feelings, and you can pick up a copy of that worksheet. And then don't forget to come back next week when I'm going to teach you how to feel your feelings. Feeling your feelings, listen, 1.0, and that's it for today's episode. I hope that you find it useful and that you find the ability to learn how to appreciate and just allow your emotions. No big deal.

So now I want to talk to you about one of my favorite things, and this is actually a valuable tool for dealing with your emotions. And it is doTERRA essential oils. So I know when I'm experiencing emotions, there are times that I really like to self-soothe with essential oils, and I first discovered this - you know, my brother passed away and somebody, I don't even know who at the funeral, cut some lavender and gave all of us who grieving folks twigs of lavender, and I'm telling you, every time I took that lavender to my nose it calmed me down and I was able to just get through another step of feeling the grief and actually being present at my brother's funeral. So I really understand how using the sensory of smell can really help us dealing with our emotions.

And it makes sense because the limbic system is related to our sense of smell, so of course it makes sense if we have a - we're feeling stressed or we're feeling agitated, that essential oils will be able to calm, to motivate, or even to cheer us on, right? So I use the emotional aromatherapy system and this is by doTERRA, and they are actually blends of certified pure therapeutic grade essential oils that I use topically. Like, I have the ones that you can rub in your - it's a little ball and you put it on your - I usually put it on my wrists, and so - and recently I had a friend who lost her partner and I actually sent her the one that was called Console. So I use the Motivate all the time, and we also have one that's Passion. I keep it next to the bed and there's in this little grouping, there is Forgive, there is Console, and there's Peace. I like to use these - it's kind of fun, it's simple, and I even

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have my copaiba oil, which is in my - I'm smelling it now as it's going through my atomizer, which I love, because that's supposedly really good for my immune system as well. So I highly recommend essential oils to be used as part of your self-care and doTERRA is a fantastic company, really high quality oils. And you can go to my kit and I have a link there where you can actually purchase it if you'd like.

So if you've enjoyed this episode and found it valuable, I would love it if you could review it on iTunes. And to celebrate the launch of the show, I'm going to be giving away a motive, which is actually a Fitbit in a ring, to one lucky listener who subscribes, rates, and reviews the show on iTunes. So you can visit www.never2late.info/itunes to learn more about the contest and how to enter, because once you review the show, you're going to have to email me the title of the review so that I know that it's there, and send it to me at pat@beauprecoaching.com and then I will enter you to win. And I'll announce the winner on an upcoming episode. So thank you once again, so happy, I hope that 2018 is just a fantastic year for you guys and I look forward to sharing it with you as we march through learning and knowing that it's never too late to lose weight, no matter how old you are.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *It's Never Too Late to Lose Weight*. If you liked what you heard and want more, head over to never2late.info/guide, to download your quick start guide to jump start your weight loss plan and begin creating an amazing life you love.