

# Rebellious Wellness <sup>over</sup> 50

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**Gregory Anne:** [00:00:00] welcome back to another episode of Rebellious Wellness Over 50. Today my guest is Dr. Glenn Livingston, and we are going to be talking about binge eating and recovering from binge eating. He's a psychologist for many, many years, and he came from the world of binge eating himself, the prison that is food addiction.

And so he's now the expert on helping people get outta that no matter. And you, you talk about in your book, no matter what diet plan or meal plan you want to choose for yourself, you can apply the principles that you teach.

**Glenn Livingston:** Yeah. This program is diet agnostic, okay. As long, the one thing I won't work with is the starvation diet.

Regardless of whether it's ketogenic or plant-based or high carb,, low carb. This is just really about if you're eating beyond your own best judgment and it feels like it's out of your control.

Then these are some very concrete steps that you can take to make that stop.

**Gregory Anne:** I love it. Well tell people your story cuz I know we all love to hear how other people have arrived at where they are now.

**Glenn Livingston:** Well if you ever were at the Woodbury Country Deli in Syosset, New York. I know you're from the area.

Have you ever been around there?

**Gregory Anne:** I have not, but I know what a good deli

**Glenn Livingston:** So if you're there in the 1990s and they were out of pizza and Poptarts there's a good chance that I was there before you you can't really tell on the video, but I'm 6'4". And I'm modestly muscular genetically, and the reason I'm saying that is not to brag, but because I got away with an awful lot with eating when I was young.

I was 16 or 17, I figured out that I could eat whatever I wanted to if it worked out two hours a day and I mean, Five, six, 7,000 calories a day. Whole pizzas, boxes of muffins, boxes of chocolate bars, boxes of cookies. whatever wasn't nailed down was fair game. I didn't think it was a problem.

I, I kind of felt like it was a superpower. Doug Graham taught me that word and [00:02:00] I identify with that. And I was basically an eating, sleeping, pooping machine at that point in my life, which worked fine for a 17 year old teenager, but when I was 22 and married and commuting two hours each way to go to graduate school and see patients.

And then I'd come home and have to work on the business a little bit and God forbid my ex-wife wanted to talk to me, I couldn't find two minutes of day to work out, much less two hours a day to work out. And my metabolism had slowed a little bit and I started to gain a little weight, but that wasn't really the issue.

The issue was more that I, I just couldn't stop thinking about food. Being a great psychologist has always been the most important thing to me in my life. I, I grew up in a family of 17 psychotherapists, my mom and my dad, and my sister and her husband, and my stepmom, and my, everybody's a psychologist, a psychotherapist.

The standard joke in the house is that if something breaks, everybody can ask it how it feels that nobody knows how to fix it. Psychology was my life. I really wanted to lend people my soul, be really present for them and be a healer. And I found that my food obsession was interfering with that.

So I'd be sitting with someone who was suicidal and I'd be thinking, when can I go get the next pizza? Right? Or, or a couple that just had uncovered an affair and it was kind of my responsibility to help. You know, figure out if they could stay together and, and I'd be thinking about getting to the deli and dislodging my jaw and emptying the tray into it.

That bothered me more so than the weight. It's just the constant thinking about. What's the next thing I can overeat and how much should I have? How do I hide the evidence? How long is it gonna take me to recover? If we're at home, I gonna make up for the next day, should I do some extra exercise?

And it just wasted so much time and energy thinking about that kind of thing. Being from the family that I was from, I went the psychological [00:04:00] route. I made the assumption, which I later figured out was wrong, but I must have a hole in my heart. And if I could fill that hole in my heart, then I could stop trying to fill the hole in my stomach.

And so I went to the best therapist in and around the New York area cuz my family knew them. I went to see psychiatrists. I took some medication for a little while. I went to Overeaters Anonymous for several years. I went on a spiritual journey. I made amends. I, I did all those things. What happened was everything I would try, I would get a little thinner and a lot fatter, a little thinner, and a lot fatter.

I don't regret the journey because I learned a lot and it was very soulful and it made me part of who I am today. But it didn't really help me with the overeating. There

were a couple of things. This was over the course of decades, and my top weight was probably around close to 300.

I stopped weighing myself at a certain point cuz I was too depressed about it. And I had rosacea and eczema and my triglycerides were over a thousand. And the doctors were saying, I'm gonna die by the time I'm 40. But it didn't seem to matter. But where I put it together eventually and flipped the paradigm from trying to love myself, love my inner wounded child, to becoming the alpha dog of my own mind, the alpha wolf of my own mind.

It had to do with three things. First of all, because I never commuted after I got my degree. I never commuted and my ex-wife traveled for business, so we never had kids. She was outta town most of the time. I had a lot of time in my hand to develop a second career. And what I did through some of her introductions and then my own my own initiative is I would consult for big food and big pharma. I was on the wrong side of the war. I feel very guilty about it. I'm trying to make up for it at this point in my life, but I was helping to sell sugar in starch and [00:06:00] excitotoxins and I, I saw how many

millions of dollars, maybe billions of dollars. At this point, were going into engineering these hyper palatable concentrations of starch and sugar in oil and salt and excitotoxins and things that were, they were geared toward their engineered at the, the bliss point in the reptilian brain. Without giving us nutrition to feel satisfied, they want to push our evolutionary buttons that says, here's the stuff, this is the stuff you need.

Turn off your rational thinking brain, come after our stuff. Every time you're looking for love at the bottom of a bag or a box or a container, some fat cat in a white suit with a mustache, just laughing all the way to the bank. So I said, wait a minute,

it's really got nothing to do with my personal psychology. It's an outside force and it's targeted at a part of the brain that doesn't know love. This is the lizard brain, when it look at something in the environment, it says, do I eat it? Do I meet with it or do I kill it? It's like a really bad college drinking game, eat, meet, or kill.

It doesn't know love, this is the seat of the survival response. This is the sympathetic nervous system that gets us revved up for fight or flight. Gets us ribbed up for feast or famine. That's the part of our brain that says just hand over the chocolate bars and nobody gets hurt.

We evolved in an environment where food was not as plentiful all the time. And so when food was available, our brain is wired, is hardwired to put everything else aside and go get those calories. And now we're living in a world where an abundance of calories are available in a very small space for not that much.

And the big food industry is fabulous at getting you to want to eat that stuff. The big advertising industry is good at making you think that that's where the good stuff is. We'll talk about that more in a little bit. So it's the mammalian brain that kind of sits on top of that, that says, before you eat, meet, or kill that thing, what impact is that going to have on the people that you love on [00:08:00] your tribe and your family?

And then the neocortex delays that impulse even further and says, before you eat, meet, or kill that thing, what impact is that going to have on the kind of person you're trying to become, on your contribution to society, on your role, at your job, on your spirituality, on your music, on your art, on everything that you think of that makes you human?

That's actually up here in the neocortex. And so the reptilian brain doesn't, doesn't know love, and I'm busy for decades trying to love myself thin. And I thought that's interesting. That's really interesting. I also did a 40,000 person study over the course of many years when clicks were cheap back in the nineties, in very, very early two thousands.

And I asked people, When they were feeling stressed, when they're searching for stress solutions on the internet, I would intercept them and say, would you take this survey? What are you feeling stressed about? And what foods do you have difficulty stopping eating once you start? And that whole list of junk foods and pizza and pasta and everything like that.

And I found three interesting things. First of all, people that struggled with chocolate like I did, tended to be lonely or depressed, maybe brokenhearted. People who struggled with soft, chewy, starchy things like bagels and bread and pasta, and even pizza, they tended to be stressed at home. And people who struggle with crunchy, salty things, they tended to be stressed at work, like, you know, pretzels and chips and things like that.

And I thought this was fascinating, and I figured, okay, now I've got the psychological answer. And before I started to talk about it publicly I went to my mom, who was also a therapist, and I said, mom, I have trouble with chocolate. You have trouble with chocolate. My binges always started with chocolate all the time.

Then they'd progressed to pizza and pasta and all those other things I said, but I really have trouble with chocolate and you know, I'm not super happy in the marriage and I know that [00:10:00] I'm feeling a little depressed about things, but can you tell me. What happened? What is it in my upbringing that would make me want to go to chocolate when I'm when I'm feeling lonely or depressed or brokenhearted?

And my mom gets this horrible look on her face. This was over Skype. She gets this horrible look on her face. She says, I'm so sorry, I'm so, so sorry. I said, mom it was 40 years ago. This is when I was in my forties. I said, it was 40 years ago. I love you. I forgive you. I just want to figure this out.

And she said, well, I'm so sorry, but when you were one year old in 1965, your father my husband was a captain in the Army and they were talking about sending him to Vietnam. And I was terrified because we were trying to get pregnant with your sister. And I thought, I'm gonna be an army widow with two small kids.

And you know, I was just terrified. And at the same time, your grandfather was fresh out of prison. He had disappeared for a couple of years. I had no idea where he was and I didn't know that he was guilty. I had idolized him my whole life and he was guilty. And basically I was almost catatonically depressed and anxious, and I spent a lot of time sitting and staring at the wall.

And you would come running up to me, as you know, one year olds do, wanting to be loved or to be played with, and have some healthy food and I didn't have the wherewithal to take care of you. And so I got a big bottle of Bosco chocolate syrup and I put it in a refrigerator on the floor. I'm dating myself with the Bosco Chocolate Bosco.

**Gregory Anne:** Bosco, I loved it.

**Glenn Livingston:** Oh man. Oh man. And I'd go, she'd say, go get your Bosco and I, and I'd go crawling over to the Bosco and I'd open the bottle and, you know, suck on it and go to a chocolate sugar coma. And of course I thought, oh my God. And we had a moment and it, if it were the movies, at that point I'd have a big cry and a big hug, and I'd never eat chocolate again.

Right. I've never had any trouble with chocolate again. But it turned out that my chocolate eating got worse. I mean, we did have a hug and it was a really good

[00:12:00] conversation, and I learned a lot about my mom and I forgave her. I got softer on myself. I didn't hate myself as much after that, and I kind of forgave myself.

So it was a good conversation to have. But my chocolate eating got worse and my binging got worse after that. And the reason is, and this was the pivotal moment for me in kind of flipping the switch to taking more of an Alpha wolf approach than a nurturer inward to child back to health approach.

It's like there was this voice of justification in my head and it went something like this. You know what, Glenn, you're right. Our mama didn't love us enough, and she left a great big chocolate sized hole in your heart. And until you can get out of the marriage and find the love of your life and you know fix your relationships, you are never gonna be able to stop having chocolate.

Let's go get some more yippy. And at that point I said, wait a minute, I thought about a fireplace and I said, If you think about emotion like a fire or even emotional conflict, like a fire a roaring fire in a well contained fireplace is an asset, not a liability. People gather around it, they hug and they laugh, and they cry, and they tell stories and they make memories.

It's only if there's a hole in the fireplace that an ash can get out and burn down the burn down the building. What if I don't have to put out the fire? What if I have to stop looking at the fire so much and look at the fireplace instead? And maybe it's these justifications, these rationalizations, like you know, you worked out hard enough today.

One bar of chocolate isn't going to hurt you. You're not gonna gain any weight. You can start your silly diet tomorrow. And chocolate comes from a cocoa bean and that grows on a plant and therefore it's a vegetable. Blah, blah, blah, blah. What if I had to fix those rationalizations? What if I had to patch up those holes and make a more secure fireplace?

And then I did something which is a little bit crazy and I never thought I [00:14:00] was going to be talking about this. I realized thought this was a private endeavor to you know, to fix my own eating. I'm always a little embarrassed at this point because I'm a sophisticated psychologist with all types of credentials and everything behind me, but what I, what I did was I decided that I needed to know when my reptilian brain was active.

So I'd make a very clear line in the sand with rules, and I'd say I will never have chocolate on a weekday again. That was one of my first rules. And then if I was in Starbucks and I heard what I just told you, you know, You worked out hard enough, you might as well have it. Even though it was a Wednesday, I'd say, wait a minute, that's not me.

That's my inner pig. I decided to call that's my inner pig. My inner pig is squealing for pig slop. Chocolate is pig slop on a weekday. I don't need pig slop and I don't let farm animals tell me what to do. It's very embarrassing, but it would, it would wake me up at the moment of impulse. And give me some extra microseconds to decide if I wanted to make a different choice.

And I wish I could tell you it was a miracle, and everything was better right away. It wasn't. What was better right away is that it was no longer mysterious to me. I didn't feel like I had some chronic progressive, mysterious disease inside of me that was impossible to resist. I suddenly recognized when I was functioning in my higher brain versus my lower brain.

And over time I experimented with the rules that I made. I made rules about like, you can only have pretzels at a major league baseball park, or, I have to always start my day with a 16 ounce green smoothie. I came up with rules that I could and would do, and I tried to follow the rules rather than to lose weight. Like rather than getting panicked about the weight loss I decided that I needed rules that I could follow, so I could prove to myself that I was in charge, cuz I'd [00:16:00] gotten to this point that I felt hopeless and despairing and like, I just didn't understand, why am I always eating so much more of my own judgment?

And I thought there was something desperately wrong with me. And over time I came up with a set of rules that worked that I actually could follow. And slowly but surely over the course of several years, I would always journal about what what the pig was saying. So if I made a mistake, let's say I did have the chocolate bar and it had said it would be just as easy to start your silly diet tomorrow and go ahead and get some now.

Well, when I wrote about that and then I remembered what I learned about neurology, which is what fires together wires together. So if you have a craving for chocolate and you have a thought justifying it, like just start tomorrow, you're more likely to have both the craving and the thought tomorrow and the craving's gonna be stronger and so will the thought.



So that's why people cycle down and that tomorrow never comes, cuz you're gonna be more likely to have the thought "just start tomorrow". So the answer to that was you can only use the present moment to be healthy. I will never binge again in the present moment. So we'd always bring things right back to the present moment.

And I said, look there's no cleanup crew coming to get me the next day to fix the problems that I do. This is my moment. It's always, right now it's, it's the future is an infinite string of now as it's always gonna be now. And when I could bring it back into the present.

Most of the time I can make the right decision. I subsequently learned that there were some other things I could do to bring myself out of that emergency response system. That's what causes us to eat beyond our own best judgment. There's this system inside that seems to be firing and saying, you need these calories now.

Even if you're feeling very full it can, I'll tell you the reasons for that in a little bit. And so I learned that I had to get out of the sympathetic nervous system, which is what gets us ribbed up for emergency action and into the parasympathetic system, which is what tells us that it's okay to rest and digest and [00:18:00] plan for tomorrow.

And there's no emergency here. Over the years I learned about something called seven 11 breathing, which is breathing in for a count of 7 and out for count of 11. So as soon as I would wake up and realize my pig was active, wait a minute, that's not me. My pig is squealing for slop. I don't let farm animals tell me what to do.

I would take a breath in for count of seven and then I'd take a long time when I'd breathe out for count of 11. I do that a couple of times and I would feel calmer. The reason that works. Is that if there were an emergency, if I was running from a hungry bear, I'd be going, right?

So this is the opposite. This is telling the brain there's no emergency there. Then I started carrying a pen and paper around with me all the time, and I would write down exactly what the pig said. So I'd ask the pig, okay, why do you want me to get, why do you want me to break my rules and binge? And then I'd write down exactly what it said, just what I was telling you about before.

I'd take another 7-Eleven breath and then I'd write down why the pig was wrong. Like what? Wires together fires together. You can only use the present moment to be healthy. I kept a journal about those things for eight years.

**Gregory Anne:** Wow.

**Glenn Livingston:** I got relatively thin. I always say I, I used to be a big fat guy.

Now I'm a not so fat guy. I don't think I'm a skinny person. And I still like food very much. But I kept a journal for eight years and everything the pig would say and what was wrong with what it was saying. And then as I was getting divorced in 2015 I'd become a minor partner in a publishing company due to my other business dealings.

And the c e o called me up and said, you know what, Glenn We need to publish our own book cuz we need to attract better authors and we need to do some marketing experiments and prove that we know what we're doing. Do you think you could write a book? I said, okay, I'm in the middle of a divorce.

I could write a book. So, I took the journal and over [00:20:00] that summer I turned it into a book and I sent it to him and he calls me back in two weeks and he says, Don't eat your pig slop I don't eat pig slap. I don't let farm animals tell me what to do. He was all excited about it. He proceeds to lose almost a hundred pounds.

And along the way we published the book. Wow. And I'm a good marketer. I spent all those years working as an advertising consultant for marketing agencies and but I had no idea how much it was gonna take off.

And Now we've got more than 16,000 reviews, which is more than the Da Vinci Code and over a million readers. And I have written six more books on overeating and people still don't quite know my name, but sometimes they'll point at me in a bookstore and go, you're the pig guy, aren't you the pig guy?

**Gregory Anne:** What a great way to be known Glenn.

**Glenn Livingston:** It's, it's a great way to be known.

**Gregory Anne:** Yeah. That's funny.

**Glenn Livingston:** That's my story.

**Gregory Anne:** I love that story. And, and I'm guessing that people who work with you or read your books don't have to spend eight years getting through the process?

**Glenn Livingston:** No, no. We've really perfected the method . We have a coaching program.

We get a 90% reduction in binge eating on average for people that engage with us, which means they actually talk to their coach and do the assignments we give them. We get a 90% reduction in 30 days. It drops back to 60 or 70 around six months, but that date is not as good because it's harder to get ahold of people.

**Gregory Anne:** So would you, I just wanna clarify, binge eating. Is it like you would have a chocolate bar and that would start you down the road of other foods? Mm-hmm. Or is it like you're watching Netflix and all of a sudden the whole bag of nabisco animal crackers is gone.

**Glenn Livingston:** I've wrote an article about this for psychology today.

Cause I think it's an important question that people ask themselves and what you have to recognize is behind the question people are asking themselves, am I a binge eater? Do I need to get treatment for this? Right? Okay. There is a formal definition of binge eating, but I think it's the wrong question that people are asking themselves.

The formal definition, you could look up DSM five for binge eaters, and [00:22:00] it has to do with the frequency and the level of self-hatred that you experience afterwards, and the degree to which you feel that you've lost control. Those are the essential components. However, between two and a half and 4% of the population will meet those criteria according to the DSM five. However, according to the World Health Organization

diet reversible or preventable diseases are way up, like in the last few decades. There's, you know heart disease has more than doubled and diabetes is up by at least 80% and kidney disease, and even some diet preventable forms of cancer. But the world's heart health organization sees this as an epidemic, and approximately 40% of the US population is obese.

So obviously you don't have to be diagnosed as a formal binge eater to have something you might wanna attend to. And because the approach that I'm recommending is and I'm not recommending this in place of formal treatment or diagnosis, but because what I talk about and write about, it's non-intrusive.

Like you don't have to have your stomach banded or an operation, it's non-pharmaceutical. This is a system of thinking that will help you to stop overeating

beyond your own best judgment. Then if you do ever eat beyond your own best judgment, why wouldn't you want to use this to address it? Mm-hmm.

So I'd like to take people away from the question of, am I a binge eater or not a binge eater to can I teach myself to eat as healthy as I would like to eat? And how do I do that? That's why I'd like to direct people. Excuse me. I have the hiccups.

**Gregory Anne:** Oh gosh, yeah.

Lemon with sugar and bitters on top.

**Glenn Livingston:** Is that what does it,

**Gregory Anne:** I'm telling you every single time. Okay. That's a great distinction that you just made, the wrong question. Right? We're always taught to ask good questions. The right question is the important one, right? So is [00:24:00] this I don't even know how to phrase the question I'm thinking of.

Okay, let's just start with, is it men and women equally showing up for this program? Do you have greater success with women than men?

**Glenn Livingston:** I have equal levels of success. It's really funny, when I published the book I put a big for men only star on it cuz I thought women are gonna hate me. I called myself a pig in this thing.

And your self-esteem actually goes up when you do this, by the way. It doesn't go down. But I thought, women are gonna hate me. They'll never go for it. Do you know that 95% of my clients are women? Yeah, literally 95%

because

**Gregory Anne:** we obsess more about our bodies and our weight, I think, than men do.

**Glenn Livingston:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Gregory Anne:** Got an extra gene in that category. Yeah.

**Glenn Livingston:** Well it's, it's culturally induced.

**Gregory Anne:** Yeah, I would say so. So let's look at the aging process. Metabolism clearly slows down. We slow down in many instances, not always. And hormones for women, estrogen goes down weight because fat has an estrogen component, so the body wants to have a little. Does that, do you think that all of those things in combination can make somebody into a binge eater?

Or are you like a binge eater from way back and you're gonna be a binge eater until you read your book and take your coaching program?

**Glenn Livingston:** I don't think this is the only solution, by the way. I think that the spark that lights the fire of binge beating can develop at any time. I have clients who have told me that they ate reasonably well until there were 55 or so, and their kids left home and they struggled with how to fill that void and then they went to food.

And whenever you go to food beyond a certain level, there's an unnatural pleasure that can kind of spark off a certain pathway. And I tell 'em, the pig can be [00:26:00] born at any point in your life. Most of the stories that people say is they've been binge eaters their whole lives. Right. But you know, if you have a chocolate bar every day and you're not someone who had a chocolate bar every day, pretty soon you're gonna want a chocolate bar every day.

So it really depends upon what your eating patterns were. I don't think there is a time when you become immune to over eating.. Because our systems are set up to find food. And to find calories. A lot of the manufactured foods that we eat might have chemicals in them that turn off the full sensors in our small intestines, and they prey on the variety impulse in nature.

If you encountered slightly different tasting bananas or slightly different tasting lettuce, you would spend more time searching and eating more because you'd be getting a variety of different nutrients. So we've evolutionarily developed a button that says, A variety and taste is a good thing. So the food manufacturers, when they try to take advantage of that, they'll manufacture, for example, a bag of chips on a multitude of assembly lines.

So that you get very slight variations in flavor and you think you're in nature finding these different things, but you don't really have the nutrition there. The advertising world takes advantage of that by using multicolored, vibrant packaging. In nature, you know, yellow carrots and green lettuce and blueberries and red tomatoes.

You, you'd be getting a variety of different micronutrients, a diversity of micronutrients. But I remember the VP of a major food bar manufacturer telling me as he was leaving the company that he was ashamed that their most profitable insight was to take the vitamins out of the bar and put it into the packaging instead.

He said they were too expensive, they made the bar taste bad. So we took the vitamins out of the bar, we put the money into packaging, so it just looked like it was healthy.

**Gregory Anne:** Wow.

**Glenn Livingston:** And you can't really single out the food manufacturers, cuz this goes on across the whole [00:28:00] industry. They're masters of plausible deniability.

They'll tell you these potato chips are made with avocado oil, therefore they're healthier or healthy for you and I kind of can't blame them because they're in a very competitive market, having to make a profit with, you know, demanding stockholders and stakeholders. And we live in a capitalist society, but people don't know.

They just don't know how our defenses are down and how addictive these things really are. And so that's why I say I don't think people should hate themselves for overeating. We all blame ourselves. Like, I feel like we should be angry at the, the world that says, Let's all tacitly agree to slowly kill ourselves with food and support each other to do it.

You know, ha haha. Little and moderation. I think that we should be angry at the fat cats in industry that are taking advantage of that. I even think we should be angry at some of the treatment industry that says there is no cure in. The best you can hope for is to abstain one day at a time or just eat healthy 90% of the time and indulge 10% of the time.

Which is a good idea and theory, but impossible to do in practice because you don't know which 10% and which is the 90%. So you have to make constant food decision. So I think it's, I think it's better to be angry than to be ashamed. Part of recovery is becoming angry rather than ashamed.

Yeah. And there you may remember David Kessler, former head of the F D a, wrote a couple of books, where he talks about being in rooms with those executives, making

decisions about how to combine sugar and salt, how to make foods the the most addictive possible, which is always a combination of texture and flavor variation you talked about.

It was eye opening. I based a whole entire talk on his, his work.

Really. I might like to hear that.

**Gregory Anne:** Because like you said, people don't know and they do blame themselves, but a lot of these foods are designed to make us want them more to override that top level of our brain. Right?

**Glenn Livingston:** Yep.

**Gregory Anne:** You can't fight against it when goes in your body hormones and neurotransmitters, they're all lighting up. Dopamine is flooding our [00:30:00] system and it just adds to the difficulty is what we're saying, in making these changes. Yeah. And I think the guilt, self-loathing, all that stuff sounds to me like the voice of the pig.

It is the voice of the pig, right?

**Glenn Livingston:** Yeah. It, it's trying to make you feel too weak to resist the next binge. That's a piercing insight in and of itself. Hmm. Because people think they have to punish themselves so they won't do it. But it turns out in our research that the more people try to punish themselves with that self-flagellating talk, the worse that they do.

So I, I tell people, look, it's like touching a hot stove. You want the pain for the moment cuz if you didn't have the pain you wouldn't know where the hot stove was. Right? Right. And there are, there are kids that are born without the ability to feel pain in this world and they don't live very long cuz they dunno where the sharp corners are.

However, once you top touch the hot stove, You wouldn't just put your whole hand down on the stove and say, God damnit, I'm a pathetic hot stove toucher. I might as well put my hole right. And you wouldn't keep flagellating yourself about it. You would turn guilt into responsibility. How did I miss that?

How am I go going to avoid it next time? And then you gotta let it go. You gotta let it go, which is easier said than done. But once you understand that that negative talk is

actually reptilian brain activity, it's easier to let go. And Carol Munter said that it's very difficult to stop bingeing if you refuse to keep yelling at yourself.

And I found that to be true. It's very, it's very difficult to keep bingeing, right, if you refuse to keep yelling at yourself.

Yeah. Interesting.

**Gregory Anne:** And is there an environmental component changing one's environment as a component of what you teach and coach with people?

**Glenn Livingston:** I teach people to develop internal controls so that eventually, [00:32:00] you could fill up my bathtub with liquid chocolate and throw me in it, and I wouldn't have any. Because I've got strong enough internal controls that I don't have to shrink from life in any way.

But in the early days of overcoming something, let's say you're trying to regulate chocolate and have it once a week or something like that, you might want to take a different route home so that you don't pass the food stimulus on the way home. So you might not wanna pass the bakery on the way home. You might wanna have your kids put they're snacks in a different area.

There's a very good book called Mindless Eating that talks about a lot of the things in the environment. So, the behavior itself is stimulus related, but if you remove some of those stimuli and kind of create a cocoon around your new habits until they're ready to fly. You think of it like training wheels, then you can develop the internal controls that make it possible to live your life in any way that you want to.

**Gregory Anne:** Mm-hmm. Yeah, that makes sense.

**Glenn Livingston:** Yeah, and, and there is research with addiction in general that suggests that a richer environment, a stimulating environment will lead to less addictive behavior because we're engaging our brains and we get a certain amount of satisfaction from solving problems and seeing colors and all the things that a stimulating environment might mean,

which was the opposite of Covid lockdown.

My business went through the roof fund when Covid.



I'll bet it. I, I mean, I know plenty of

**Gregory Anne:** people who put on 15 pounds because mm-hmm. There's only so many things they could redo over and over and over again because they couldn't leave the house to get new stimulation.

**Glenn Livingston:** The, the joke was that this is my COVID 19. Yeah. They, they put on the covid 19.

**Gregory Anne:** Exactly.

It's great. Yeah. It's like the college seven only worse. Or was it the college 15? I don't know. I, when I went to culinary school, all I know is when we first get the, every class was two weeks long and. The first class was like vegetable cutting for eight [00:34:00] hours a day.

It was awful. Then there was butchering. For two weeks. That was awful. No way you wanted it. There was nothing to eat. And we got to the bakery and we served the restaurants on the culinary campus, so we had to make tons of rolls and dessert. Everybody, 201 gained about 10 pounds in that two weeks because the rolls would be coming out of the oven and he would grab one and put it in the butter and yeah, it was awesome.

Yeah. It was awesome. Yeah, that was not the kind of environment I knew at that point. I was like, I can't be a baker cuz this is way too tempting for me.

So tell people about what, what can they get a, how can they get a taste of your work?

**Glenn Livingston:** Oh, well, I, I make the book available for free in the electronic formats for Kindle, Nook, and PDF. If you go to [Neverbingeagain.com](http://Neverbingeagain.com) and click on the big red button, sign up for the reader bonuses, you'll get that. You'll also be led to our other free materials like our readers forum where there's a lot of people actively trying to help each other use this method.

And when you sign up for the reader bonuses, I will give you a set of food plan starter templates that are consistent with any dietary philosophy. So whether you are low carb or high carb point counters, or calorie counters or vegan or carnivore.

It, it doesn't really matter. What matters is that you're willing to flood your body with nutrition on a regular basis, that that's how you overcome binge eating. And we've a whole bunch of starter template that you can modify for your own needs to show you the kind of rules that people use to make those work.

And I recorded a whole bunch of full length sessions because I know. You all must be saying, oh my God, Gregory Ann, what, what are you doing with this doctor that has a pig inside of him on, on the show? That sounds really harsh, but it's not. It's a very compassionate process. It's a very soul and enriching process.

Take people from feeling despairing and hopeless about food to and their weight, to feeling confident and optimistic in just one session. And [00:36:00] you find it all at [neverbingeagain.com](http://neverbingeagain.com). Click the big red button.

And there is

**Gregory Anne:** a big giant mouth on your website. When they first went there, I was like, wow, there's a big giant.

It's really adorable.

**Glenn Livingston:** We, we did a lot of consumer testing on that and the idea with that, and that was the image that was head and shoulders above all the others in the testing. It was because it helped people to feel a little lighter about what feels like a really serious problem. Yet we knew it was really serious cuz the mouth was so big.

But it helped them to say, well, okay, I don't have to be so ashamed.

**Gregory Anne:** Yeah. It's, it is light. It's like a childlike approach almost. The word binge in this kind of cartoon face. I love it. And I will have to say in defensive pigs. The pig inside doesn't mean to be mean. Piggies are so sweet.

**Glenn Livingston:** Mm-hmm.

Oh no, I, I say that these are, the pig is a pig with a capital P.

It's a psychological construct. All of your destructive thinking about food. Pigs in the real Word world with a small P, they're adorable. They're really need our help actually. We're, we're persecuting them.

**Gregory Anne:** Yes. Yes, that is true. So, I'm glad,

like-minded on that one. Yes. So what would you leave people with?

Give us something to take with us wherever they are in the binge eating scale. They may be binges, they may not, they may know somebody. What do you say to those people?

**Glenn Livingston:** Wherever you are, what would happen if you chose one simple rule that you could and would do that wouldn't be too onerous, but would make you feel like you're moving your life in a more positive direction?

Maybe it's, I will always drink one glass of water before I brush my teeth in the morning, right? So you're starting your day by flushing your system. Maybe it's, I'll never go back for seconds again, maybe it's only chocolate on a Saturday afternoon and only two ounces a day or something.

Whatever it's, is, there one simple thing that will make a really big difference in your [00:38:00] life. Draw that line in the sand and then start listening for your inner reptilian brain. You can call it your food demon or your junkyard dog, or whatever you wanna call it. Listen for the reptilian brain to squeal, to come up with a rationalization for why you should reverse your previous best intent, why you should cross the line and do other than you decided you were gonna do.

And when that happens, take that 7-Eleven breath and then write down why the pig wants you to. If that's all you do, you'll be doing a lot better. Cuz now you're engaging in what we call separation. You're pulling your destructive and constructive thoughts apart, which is the first step in being able to choose the constructive pathway.

Then you can ask why is it wrong? Try to come up with a logical reason that the pig is lying to you. And usually the pig wins with a half truth and a bigger lie. So it seduces you with a half tripe. Like it'll just be so easy to start tomorrow, but it's not. And then remember that free will sits on top of discipline.

People think that discipline and free will are antagonistic to one another. But it's by discipline that you create freedom. So when I was younger, I was a jazz pianist, and it was only by exhaustively studying the scales and the structure of music that I knew how to express my soul when I wanted to improvise and go away from the structure of music. When I get in my car.

I thank goodness for the discipline of the engineers who set it up so that the wheels turn further degrees when I turn the steering wheel to the right. Because if it wasn't for them, it wouldn't have the freedom to drive all through the town. Right. Discipline creates freedom. So when Jim Rhon said, A life of discipline is better than a life of regret I think he had it right.

And Peter McWilliams said you could have anything you want, but you can't have everything you [00:40:00] want. So if you want to have anything you want, then decide what you want and what's the discipline you're willing to engage in to make that happen?

**Gregory Anne:** Excellent. And I wish somebody had said this to me when I was a teenager.

I just had that thing about like, if I want freedom, nobody's gonna discipline me or set up rules.

**Glenn Livingston:** Right. I wish someone told me to step away from the Poptarts when I was a teenager.

Oh, Poptarts.

I was just talking to my husband about, he's English and they don't have Poptarts over there. And we were in some store, we did not buy any. I was really tempted. I just wanted to have, the memory of them is wonderful. Yeah. But I didn't wanna go there because then I thought, well now we'll have a box of Poptarts in the house. What's gonna happen?

But poptarts were a thing.

Once you're out of prison, you don't want to climb the wall in reverse. You don't wanna climb back in.

**Gregory Anne:** I like that, you have so many good one-liners.

**Glenn Livingston:** I've seen over 2000 clients over many years.

We had to come up with things that they'd remember.

**Gregory Anne:** Well, you certainly have cuz I'll, I've got some in my brain that I will remember. Thank you so much for your time, Glenn. It was really, thank you, really

great. Interesting. Your story is wonderful and to me a unique approach to this whole problem of punishing ourself with food.

Thank you Gregory. Yeah, this is delightful.

You're most welcome, everybody. I'll be back next week. Be well till next time.