

Ep #263: The Urge Jar



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With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

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Welcome to *The Life Coach School Podcast*, where it's all about real clients, real problems and real coaching. And now your host, Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Well hello, my friends. Welcome to the podcast today. I'm super excited to share with you my new process, because it is one of the most effective things I have ever used on myself or on a client. It is a brain hack that will blow your mind. And when I teach it, it's so simplistic that nobody thinks it's going to work, but it's execution and success rate is literally off the charts. It's ridiculous.

Now, I am teaching this entire program in detail in Scholars coming up in May. So, if you're interested in joining into the program and having me teach it to you live and going through it for six weeks before summer to lose weight, join Scholars now and you will get access to that. We'll be doing it all through May and the first two weeks of June.

So, I'm going to introduce it to you on the podcast so you can get a sense of what the program is. You can try it on your own, but please promise me that you won't try it on your own. But please promise me that you won't try it on your own and if it doesn't work, that you will believe that it doesn't work because there are some nuances and some things that take some practice that some coaching will really help you with.

So, trust me on this; this is a game-changer. And the reason why it's a game-changer is it takes all of my teachings about weight loss and puts it in a very simple quick start process that you can start using right away and start recognizing anything that isn't in alignment with what you want for the long term.

So, I'm going to start by talking about my concepts of weight loss in the broader sense to make sure that if you haven't done any of my teachings on weight loss, my recent teachings on weight loss, that you're up to speed. So, most of you know that I started teaching weight loss 14 years ago and I had a program that was based on tuning into your body, listening to your body's hunger cues.

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It wasn't intuitive eating in the sense that you weren't just eating whatever you want whenever you felt like it, but it was intuitive eating in the sense that you would listen to how food was in your body and you'd listen to your hunger. And what the crux of that work was, which is still exactly what the work is that I'm doing now is, when you tune into your body and you start really paying attention to your hunger and your fullness and how food feels in your body, you start accessing your emotional life.

And many of us, the reason why we've turned to food is because we don't know how to process emotion. So, my work has always been about tuning into your body so you can process and tune into the emotions and the vibrations in your body and learn how to process and utilize emotion in a way that makes your life better, instead of in a way where you're constantly resisting or avoiding or moving away from emotion.

Now, this program that I taught for many years is very effective. Many people still use that process today. But what I learned as I got older and as I started working with my son who had insulin resistance is that, a lot of times, the signals in our bodies in terms of hunger and fullness are not accurate in the sense that we have completely thrown our bodies off by the food that we have put into them; mainly sugar and flour and refined and processed food that our hormones don't really know what to do with and our brain neurotransmitters don't know what to do with.

So, when we're eating those types of foods and then we start to try and tune into our body, our hunger signals are so off and our bodies are so off that we feel like we're hungry all of the time. So even though we may be eating only when we're hungry, we're eating too much because our body is actually craving food that it doesn't actually need for fuel.

So I changed my program about four years ago to accommodate that, to take that into account, and it has made my program so much better and the effectiveness of the result so much better, which is, of course, what I will continue to do for the rest of my life as I learn more and research more and incorporate more. I'm always studying all the latest research on weight

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loss. I'm always trying and learning all of the latest things to see what makes the most sense for my clientele.

My main focus is always to take our brain off of food and take our brain off of calories and all of that and to focus on what's going on in our brains. And so that hasn't changed. But understanding the science of what's going on with the body is very important.

So, that being said, I want to talk about some concepts that I believe in and that I utilize in my quick start program and utilizing the urge jar that are important for you to understand if you're going to use this process to lose weight.

The first concept is our decision-making process and how important it is to understand how we make decisions. Losing weight is really just a series of decisions. We think that sometimes it's just one big decision. We're going to decide to lose weight and then we're going to go lose weight. But really, there's the decision to lose weight, and then there's the decision every single day of what to eat; so many little decisions that make up our big results.

And we need to make big decisions to get big results, but big results are also an accumulation of little results. So we also have to make those little decisions. So, when you understand that weight loss is really just a series of decisions, you have to understand how the brain makes decisions. And there's two components to consider.

There is that primal instant gratification brain that likes to make decisions for instant gratification right this second, right now. Most of us make 90% of our decisions with our primal brain, which means we are always giving in to instant gratification and reward and pleasure in the moment.

Now, before we evolved to the place we are now, that would be fine. Avoid pain, seek out pleasure, when you're in a cave is a good idea because it leads you towards nourishing your body, warming your body, comforting your body, taking care of yourself.

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Now, letting the primal brain make decision is a tragedy. It leads to weight gain and overindulgence and buffering in a way that causes us tons of results that we don't want. So, what you need to do is look at the brain decision-making process and utilize the most powerful part of your human brain, which is your prefrontal cortex.

That is the part of your brain that separates you from animalistic behavior, primal behavior. That is the part of the brain where you can look ahead and you can plan and you can make decisions as an emotional adult. I like to compare it to the difference between a toddler and an adult. You can look into the future, delay gratification, give up what you want now for what you want most. You can take care of yourself even though you may not feel the immediate gratification from it.

For example, brushing your teeth is not immediately gratifying for most of us, although it does feel good, but most of us take care of ourselves in terms of showering and paying our bills and brushing our teeth because of the long-term effects of those consistent habits that we have over time. And we need to apply those same decisions to our eating and to our food.

And so, if we're not planning ahead in terms of what we're going to eat and what we're going to put in our body, that means relying on our primal brain to make those decisions in the moment and it's completely unfair to our future self because the primal brain will always choose immediate pleasure. That is its job. And if you don't override it with your prefrontal, human, higher level brain, you will be always at the effect of instant gratification. And because there's so much pleasure available and there's so much instant gratification available, you will over-consume, which will create undesirable effect in the way you feel and probably in the way you carry your weight.

So, step one is going to really be about utilizing that prefrontal. The concept is, losing weight is a series of decisions. Those decisions need to be made from your higher brain.

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Concept two is about feeling and about understanding that we need to learn how to process emotion. We need to learn how to process urges. We need to learn how to be present with the vibrations in our body and not be reactive. So, when you have an urge to eat something or you have the feeling of hunger, there is no need to comply with that urge, with that feeling.

There is time. We're not in a hurry. The feeling of hunger will not kill us. The craving or urge to eat a certain kind of food will not kill us if we don't answer it. But so many of us are in the pattern and the habit of denying our genuine emotion, pushing away and resisting emotion, that we then apply that to urges, which that type of restriction that requires willpower is never a long-term solution for managing emotion because it doesn't work. It's like trying to push a really large beach ball under water. It doesn't work for long and it takes a lot of effort, so it's not sustainable.

So, if you're trying to manage urges and emotions by resisting them, you are going to lose that battle. You have to learn how to let emotions process through you, let urges flow through you, let cravings and hunger be there, especially in the beginning so you aren't constantly resisting or reacting to them, you aren't exhausting yourself by using willpower to push those away.

And then the third concept is really about how to plan to lose weight without a lot of drama. And what that means is, if you're not losing weight, you have to evaluate that from a very factual evaluation instead of the self-hate and the self-punishment that so many of us do. We need to be able to look at, "Hey, I've chosen this to eat and I'm either eating it or I'm not."

So problem number one is, if you're not eating what you've chosen to eat, that's the problem that needs to be solved. Problem number two is if you are eating what you planned to eat and you aren't losing weight then you need to change what you're planning to eat. It's very simple. It's very logical. But we don't do it.

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We don't understand these three concepts. We don't make decisions ahead of time. We don't allow our emotions to be there. And we don't interpret the data on the scale in a non-emotional way. We interpret it in a way that causes us to hate ourselves and to beat up on ourselves and treat ourselves terribly, which puts us right back into the motion of repeating the instant gratification, the denying of emotion, and the not getting results.

So, what I have done is I've created a process, a six-step process, that utilizes what we know about the brain, what we know about neurotransmitters, and what we know about the body in a very simplistic way that literally hacks our reward system. It literally hacks our brain and our decision-making system.

So, I'm going to give you the overview of those steps here on the podcast, but I want to warn you that if you're really serious about doing this, that you please join Scholars and let me help you. Let me coach you. Let me give you feedback because, here's the truth, I've given these steps to people before and sent them off on their way and they come back to me sometimes and say that they don't work.

Some people come back and say it was amazing and they figured it out, but some people need additional help. And here's what most people need help with; they need help with processing emotion and allowing urges. And that is the part that does not come naturally to us and that may require some deeper processing and some deeper practice. So, if this doesn't work immediately for you, I want you to consider joining Scholars and letting me help you.

Here are the steps. By the way, I want to tell you this before I get started; if you join Scholars next month, you will get an urge jar – and I'm going to tell you about that in a minute – in the mail and a *Life Coach School* food journal in the mail, absolutely for free, as part of your Scholars membership. If you are already in Scholars, you can request to get one of these absolutely free as well.

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I want you to be able to use the jar. I want you to be able to use the journal to follow this process exactly. There's no skipping steps. There's no, "Oh that doesn't apply to me." You have to do everything exactly.

So, step number one is, write down exactly what you will eat tomorrow in your journal. It must be 24 hours ahead of time. You don't want to be writing down what you're going to eat in the next hour, because you're already into instant gratification if it's that close.

You need to be able to plan ahead of time. Now, here's why; you can't plan ahead of time with your primal brain. You can only plan ahead of time with your prefrontal. And your prefrontal cortex has your higher interest in mind. It's always thinking about the best version of you. It's not thinking about the reactive version of you.

So you notice, we always talk about best laid plans, we always have great plans for ourselves ahead of time, we always know what we want, we plan great ideas of how we want our life to turn out, and then in the moment is when we make those negative decisions that are about instant gratification and instant pleasure. So, you're really setting yourself up if you don't have a plan.

So, you're going to set up your plan and you're going to write down exactly what you're going to eat. You are going to pick the best possible foods for your body 24 hours ahead of time. Now, if you want to know exactly what those foods should be, there's a whole section in Scholars where we talk about what you should put in your protocol.

But for now, let me suggest that you eliminate sugar and flour for the purpose of this, because sugar and flour will completely throw off your ability to manage cravings. Sugar and flour create a lot of cravings for food and a lot of false hunger signals and a lot of extra urges. So the goal is to try to eliminate those to make the planning and the execution of that plan easier.

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Step one, write down exactly what you will eat 24 hours ahead of time. Step number two is eat only and exactly what you've planned. So, if you've planned to eat a salad with chicken, eat a salad with chicken. Don't eat vegetables with steak. This is super important in terms of developing the integrity between your plan and your execution.

So, when you decide what you are going to eat ahead of time, it will require you to think ahead and it will require you to plan, it will require you to shop, it may require you to pick a restaurant or know where you're going to be tomorrow. This is all part of the brain hack. The more you practice thinking ahead of time, the better. And then you must follow exactly what you have planned. Here's why' when you do exactly what your prefrontal has told you to do, you will be consistently ignoring your primal brain.

Your primal brain will tell you it doesn't matter if you switch, it doesn't matter if you eat crackers, it doesn't, matter if you eat bread, just go ahead and eat what's available. Just go ahead and have a hotdog, just a bite of this, just a bite of that. It is very tricky. It will have you eating things and justifying eating things that you don't want to eat.

So if you just make it super clean and you eat only what you wanted to eat – you're not following some diet. You're not following someone else's regime. You're choosing what you're going to eat and then you're eating it.

Now, if you have a lot of issues with this in the beginning, it's probably because you're planning too stringent of food. You might need to soften up in the beginning and offer yourself some different types of foods, just until you can consistently honor what you plan to eat. So you might need to include exceptions. You might need to include some things that you don't want to eat for the very long-term, but for now, you will plan on eating them, just so you can start staying consistent with your word to yourself.

Once you start doing this, once you start writing down what you're going to eat and then eating only and exactly that for a couple of weeks, you will start developing a relationship with yourself of trust, and that's where most of us are in trouble as it applies to doing what we say we're going to do.

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Now, some of you will say to me, “That’s too hard, I can’t eat only what I’ve written down because I’ll have all these urges to eat all these other things.” Now, here’s where the urge jar comes in. Step number three, any time you want or have an urge to eat anything you haven’t written down, you are going to allow the urge to be there without reacting to it.

For each urge, you’re going to allow 10 minutes to experience that. So here’s what that would look like. You go into the kitchen, it’s time for lunch. You’ve decided that you are going to eat, let’s say, chicken salad with lettuce and dressing. That was your plan for lunch. But you go in there and there’s cake in the fridge. You open the fridge and there is cake.

And you’re like, “Well I’m just going to have a bite of the cake. I’m just going to have a taste. It was my birthday. I deserve it. I want some cake.” As soon as you notice that urge, you’re just going to take a deep breath and you’re just going to allow that urge to be there. It’s going to feel compelling. It’s going to feel important. It’s going to feel justified. You’re going to think it’s fine, it’s not that big of a deal, it’s just one bite, all of that.

Let it be there. Don’t push it away, don’t distract from it, don’t resist it. Let it be there. And then as you allow the urge to be there and you don’t react to it, step four is you’re going to put a glass bead in the urge jar. It is very important that you actually put it in there and you create a visual.

The glass jar is see-through on purpose. There is something in the brain that likes to have something to do and completion. And the goal for us is to fill up that jar with those glass beads with all of the allowed urges that we’re going to allow. So, when we want the cake and we don’t have the cake and we allow the urge to be there unanswered, we are de-conditioning ourselves and we’re rewarding ourselves by putting that glass bead in the jar.

Now, some of you will be like, “Well I don’t find that very rewarding. I find cake more rewarding.” But here’s the thing that’s so crazy about it; as you stick with this process, that jar is going to start filling up. You’re going to add more and more beads and your brain is going to love that. Your primal

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brain loves accumulation. And you have now offered a contrast to just the one reward that's available.

So, what we used to do is we would go into the kitchen and we would say, "I want cake," and we would say, "No cake, bad cake, you can't have cake." And we would resist it and then we would get no reward. It was like get the reward of the cake or just get deprivation and no reward. And it's important to allow the deprivation to be there. It's important to allow the urge to be there. But now you are offering a reward to your brain which is an accumulation of glass beads in a jar and the filling up of that jar.

It doesn't make sense logically to your prefrontal brain that this would work, but the accumulation and the reward of seeing that jar filling up is way more powerful than you can even imagine. So when you have that jar, and you'll get it delivered to you in the mail, it's important to put it somewhere where you can visually see those beautiful blue beads start filling up that jar.

And I want you to imagine that as that jar fills up with 100 beads, every single bead that's in that jar is food that you would have eaten. It's weight that you would have accumulated. And so you start getting excited. It's the weirdest thing. You start getting excited by that jar filling up. You start noticing it. It starts becoming important. It starts feeling real and right that that jar filling up is more important than you eating in that moment. And it gives that primal brain just enough satisfaction to take the edge off that other habitual reward of overeating.

And the rules are, it has to be visible and you have to do it every time. Now, the only question I get is, what about when I'm out? What about when I'm not home? So, what I recommend is that you always have some of those beads in your purse and you move it to another pocket in the purse and then immediately upon getting home, you put it in the urge jar. The goal is to fill it up.

Now, once you've filled that jar up with 100 allowed urges, with 100 beads, I promise you, your brain will not be in the same state as it was when you started. One question that I get about this a lot is what if I mess up? What if

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I go to the fridge and I have this jar that's filled with urges and I give in and I have the cake? You want to be super careful to try not to do that because then your brain will readjust to the other reward, which is the cake. So you want to try not to do that because you're de-conditioning your brain.

But if you do, there's no reason to restart your whole urge jar. You just don't get to add a bead to the jar that time. They don't start completely over at that point. You're still actually just going to wait until the next time you allow an urge. The goal is to allow 100 urges.

For some people, 100 allowed urges is worth 20 pounds. That's 100 times that you didn't overeat when you wanted to. Think about it. Think about how much weight that is worth. And what's crazy is the satisfaction you get from the jar filling up will correlate with the satisfaction you get from losing weight.

Now, one of the things I have to warn you about is that this process does not work if you're hating your body. The process has to go along with – any kind of restriction, any kind of allowing urges has to come from a place of self-love. Any time you introduce self-hate into it, you're going to be restricting, which isn't the same as allowing an urge. When you restrict an urge or you push against an urge, you will have to use willpower and willpower isn't sustainable.

The goal with allowing 100 urges is to make it so you de-condition that urge desire reward pattern in order to lower your desire for overeating. Think about it, if your desire for overeating was lower, it would be much easier to lose weight. If you go to a party and you look at a big tray of food and you have very low desire for it because you've de-conditioned your urges, you will have a much easier time not overeating. So this first 100 urges with the urge jar is how we do that.

Step number five is to track your weight each morning. Make sure you note anything you've eaten off your written list, any urges that you didn't allow that you gave into need to be listed in that food journal under the plan that you had. And then you write your weight right there.

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What you will do is notice when you have lost weight and when- you haven't, and when you give yourself a couple of weeks of eating the same food and you haven't lost weight and you've been following through 100% on not giving into urges, then you know that all you need to do is adjust the food that you're eating until you get to a solution that helps you lose weight, until you get to a place where the protocol, the foods you've chosen helps you lose weight.

Step number six is repeat until you get 100 urges in the jar. If you still have weight to lose, repeat.

Okay, I'm going to go through those steps again. Step one, write down exactly what you will eat tomorrow in your journal. It must be 24 hours ahead of time. Step number two, eat exactly and only what you've planned. Step number three, any time you want or have an urge to eat anything you haven't written down, allow the urge. Do not give into it. Give yourself 10 minutes to fully experience it.

Once you've allowed the urge, step four, put a glass bead in the jar. Make sure you keep it somewhere visible. I know this seems like a crazy little hack. I know this seems like a gimmick, but don't knock it until you try it, my friends.

Track your weight each morning in your food journal is step five. Note anything eaten off your written list. Any urges that you didn't allow, make a note of them. And step six, repeat until you get 100 urges in the jar and your protocol is working and you're losing weight. Rinse and repeat until you get to your goal weight.

There are a lot more details, a lot more information. The science behind this is explained a lot more in scholars. But if you start this process with me, starting in May, we're going to start May one and we're going to do it all the way for six weeks, you will, my friends, lose weight. You will if you pick a protocol that makes sense, you write down food that makes sense, that you know will help you lose weight, if you allow urges and your emotions to be there and you use this jar to have a visual reward

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representation for that primal brain – it's primal brain. It's not very sophisticated. It likes jars and pretty beads, which I think is so awesome – you will be able to have a counter to the reward of food.

It is a very powerful process that teaches you some really important things. It teaches you how to utilize decisions ahead of time in your prefrontal cortex. It helps you evaluate what foods work in your body to help you lose weight, not some external diet telling you what to do. It helps you learn how to process and feel and utilize your own emotions without resisting them or trying to use willpower. And ultimately, it builds up integrity with yourself where you follow through and you do what you say you're going to do.

I've had a lot of people make fun of me about my urge jar. A lot of people say to me, "What, that's silly. That's a gimmick. That's a hack." And I just laugh. I say, "This works more effectively than anything else I have done." And yes, it has the science to back it up. And yes, it talks about hormones and it bases everything on the hormones and the neurotransmitters and how the body works.

But really, it treats the problem, which is the primal instant gratification brain with a very simplistic jar and a hack that is visual to the brain and just satisfying enough to counteract the need to be overeating all the time. Do not knock it until you try it.

If you want to use the urge jar and you want to do the journal and you want to go through this process with me for six weeks, make sure you go to Self-Coaching Scholars right now, sign up for May, and we will lose weight by the middle of June, just when summer is getting started. I can't wait to see you inside. Talk soon.

Hey, if you enjoy listening to this podcast, you have to come check out Self-Coaching Scholars. It's my monthly coaching program where we take all this material and we apply it. We take it to the next level and we study it. Join me over at the TheLifeCoachSchool.com/join. Make sure you type in the TheLifeCoachSchool.com/join. I'd love to have you join me in Self-Coaching Scholars. See you there.

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