



Lesson 3: Your Relationship With Food

Hi, everybody. Welcome to day three of the Healthy Mindset Masterclass. Today, we're going to be talking about our relationship with food. For some of us, this might be when some of the difficult things start to arise in the content that we're covering. But hang in there with me. It'll get easier, so today, I wanted to talk a little bit about how we develop our relationship with food. The first step, really, for most of us begins a very long time ago in infancy. If you think about how we eat when we're infants, we are being held by someone and our needs are being attended to. Food becomes a big factor in our lives of feeling connected, feeling safe, and feeling taken care of. This goes on into toddlerhood, young childhood, and so on. And from there, our relationship with food just continues to grow.

So really, a lot of our relationship with food comes from our familial relationship with food. So again, an initial bonding with our caretakers, but then in the traditions, habits, patterns and things that our family has with food. Any food issues that someone in our family might have or ways that our family approaches food that are deemed healthy at that time or just done out of necessity, we pick up those habits.

In a lot of families, food also can be used as a means of expressing love. You may have been treated to food as a sign of someone's love for you. You may have been punished through food, someone not giving you some things that you wanted, someone withholding food for you, or making you eat certain things against your will, so our relationship with food starts to become more complicated as we age. We leave home and we start being responsible for our food. At some point, this might feel like a great thing because we have complete autonomy, but for many of us, we continue out our familial relationships with food, and sometimes we compensate for those relationships and develop our own difficult relationships with food.

What many of us are focusing on in this community with changing our eating habits and incorporating fasting requires us to make some shifts in our thinking about food and how we relate to it. Going back to the first day's video, our paradigm shifts, this becomes really important here, because we may need to start to look at food differently. What is the purpose of food? Most of us in this day and age have gotten more and more away from the idea that food is for sustenance. It is a necessary thing for survival. And we've gotten much more used to using food in other ways that feel good in the moment, but end up causing us difficulties, such as gaining weight or creating health concerns. So we learn to use food for entertainment and comfort and a way to connect with other people, taking us further and further away from the actual purpose of the food. We also learn messages about what food

is healthy and what food is unhealthy, and oftentimes this has been based on really shotty science or just beliefs.

We also tend to categorize food as good food or bad food, and unfortunately then, we often describe ourselves as good or bad, depending on what we're eating, how we're eating, how frequently, and what patterns we're using. You can see at this point our relationship becomes not only about food, but about how we see ourselves and think about ourselves with others in this world. For a lot of people coming to the fasting method, something that influences their relationship with food is an idea of scarcity, not having enough food. For most of us at this stage in our lives, if we're here in this masterclass or in our community, we probably are not facing an immediate threat to scarcity or lack of food, but we may have experienced it early on in life, or we may even have inherited these responses from our parents or grandparents who lived through times of great scarcity.

Scarcity tends to influence people to have fear of not having enough food, and so we see people who keep an abundance of food available. They may have a refrigerator full, a freezer full, another deep freeze or another freezer out in the garage. All of them are full of food all of the time, and as they start to get a little bit lower in food, there's some tension that seems to arise for people. The idea being that if I'm without food, that's dangerous. That's a physiological response. Of course that makes sense. It's not actually a threat, but it's a perceived threat and our body responds to that. So, we may need to actually work with that perception and remind ourselves that we have food available, and we can access food fairly easily, especially depending on where you live and what access you have.

We develop traditions around food, certain foods that we eat for certain reasons, for certain holidays or celebrations within our family or our friend groups, and also for nostalgic reasons. I had a client before who purchased a particular snack food every time she went through the checkout aisle at her grocery store. The reason being it wasn't because this was her favorite food or she felt any type of addiction to this food or anything, but it was because it brought back a positive memory of her dad. Because when she was growing up, her dad would buy these for her and her siblings and bring them home, and that was such a great way to connect with him and such a meaningful thing. She also carried on this tradition and started buying it for her kids and grandkids. You can see how our relationship with food gets repeated the generations.

We also get some chemical responses from food. In a later video, I'm going to talk more about neurotransmitters and how they are affected by food, but I wanted to touch real briefly today on the idea of dopamine, because dopamine is a reinforcer. It reinforces our need to have food and kind of rewards us for getting food and finding food. For some of us, what happens with dopamine is we tend to rely on that feel-good reinforcement we get from eating, especially eating more problematic food. If we allow this to become too present in our lives, we tend to narrow our focus of other opportunities for joy and satisfaction. And so unfortunately, this leaves food as even more important to have feelings

of joy or positive feelings. If this is the case, what you would want to do is start working on developing other areas in your life where you can experience positive feelings and joy so that you are less reliant on food to create that for you.

One thing I hear a lot of people in our community struggle with, and it's very common throughout many cultures, the idea of using food as a treat or a reward. For many of us, we use rewards to help us get through something that's difficult, pay ourselves back for putting in the hard work or surviving something that's challenging for us: a long work week, a final exam, a difficult family visit. And so we offer ourselves a reward. And we even tell ourselves heading into this stressor that at the end, if we do it, we will get a reward. If you need to use a reward to help motivate you, that's okay. But what I would encourage you to do is find a reward that does not entail food or beverage. If you are aware that you might be using food as a reward for yourself, I strongly encourage you to start to interrupt that pattern now, otherwise it will keep us tied to those foods, and usually they are problematic foods, highly palatable processed foods. Almost no one I know rewards themselves with an extra serving of broccoli.

The next one would be using food as a means to connect socially. So many of us have our social lives tied to people around food. This isn't any fault of our own. This is a natural thing within our communities. We gather to eat meals. We gather to do a happy hour, to celebrate something. We go to events and eat. We travel and eat in the airport. Whenever we get together with people, we make them food, they make us food, we share food. It's a very social thing. How will I connect with people without using problematic food, or maybe even connect with people while I'm not eating food? What I encourage you to start thinking about with this is what are the patterns around socializing and food, and where can you see yourself changing some of these patterns?

So for example, holidays, birthdays, other social events. Can you eat before you attend that social event? Can you choose foods there that fit your approach to eating and avoid the ones that don't fit your approach, looking at ways that you can make your socializing less about the food that's there and more about the reason you actually came to celebrate. So for example, if you're gathering for a family birthday celebration, focusing on seeing the family members, celebrating the person whose birthday you're gathering for, doing things that bring out joy and connection, without focusing that on having that food with them.

From today's lesson, I'm hoping you'll do a couple of things following up. One is to start exploring what patterns and pieces of information do you hold true about food in your eating approach. Do you still hold onto, "I have to eat when I'm around other people?" Do you have beliefs about certain foods that will harm you if you eat them, or certain foods that you need to avoid, or certain foods that you can't live without? What beliefs and patterns have you developed in your relationship with food? Then I would invite you to think about what path patterns do you now see about your approach to eating that might

be causing you difficulty related to your weight or your overall health? Which patterns actually interfere with you making progress in reaching your health and weight goals?

The next thing I would encourage you to do is identify what that new relationship with food looks like. What are you striving toward? When you're doing well health wise and weight wise, what will your relationship with food look like then? Because then you'll have something to start approximating now, rather than seeing that as some far off opportunity. You're going to start practicing those things now. You're going to start making your relationship, altering your relationship now to be where you want to be when you reach your goal.

What aspects of your current relationship with food might be holding you back and you want to change now? So for example, if you're someone who eats late at night and you've done the research and you know that this is problematic, you listened to us at the fasting method and you know that eating later causes an insulin response that sticks around throughout the night and makes it much harder to reduce our insulin resistance and lose weight. So, is that a habit that you're willing to address? If you are kind of stuck in that belief about yourself, that that's a part of my relationship that I'm not willing to work on, I would encourage you to maybe do some journaling about that. What about letting go of that habit feels threatening to you? What would be the challenge of making this happen?

Sometimes we resist changing these habits because we just don't know anything other than doing this. We've been doing it for so long. We don't even know how to imagine what it would be like to not be doing this anymore. So again, taking some time, doing some reflecting on what are your challenges in your relationship with food? What are your strengths in your relationship with food?

Let's say, for example, you're someone who focuses on eating whole foods. You've worked hard not to eat as much processed food. That's a great part of your relationship with food that you want to strengthen. You want to celebrate that and strengthen it even more. And then again, focusing on what are the areas that you recognize need to change if you're going to make progress in your goals. Many of us have great goals. We have a clear why, where we want to get to and why we want to get there, but we resist making those necessary changes of what it would take, what it would look like to be in that place. So again, imagining what would your relationship with food look like when you're at the weight and the ideal health, the optimal health and weight for your goals? What would your relationship with food look like then, and what steps can you start to take now?

I want to remind you, if you have questions following these videos, please don't hesitate to send them in for the question and answer sessions. We will have those twice each week. I also want to invite you to share in the forum. There's a specific thread just for masterclass participants, so you can get feedback from me and other people in the masterclass. You can ask questions, you can process how you're doing, the challenges that you're running into,

the successes you're having, the awareness's that you're having during this masterclass. Please, get involved in the forum. It's a great way to write about it and to share and to get support. I also hope that you're getting through some of the videos and things on the website and the app, getting more familiar with our community. If you haven't already been in the community, there are so many resources for you here. This masterclass is just one piece of that.

I look forward to seeing you tomorrow. Until then, take good care. Bye-bye.