

## Ep #88: Freedom from Compulsive Eating



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*with*  
DR. PRIYANKA VENUGOPAL

### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Priyanka Venugopal

## Ep #88: Freedom from Compulsive Eating

Hey, this is Dr. Priyanka Venugopal. And you're listening to the Unstoppable Mom Brain podcast, freedom from compulsion eating. Welcome back friends today we're going to be talking about a topic that I think is really essential to talk about, and that is compulsion eating. It's really having that not in control feeling, that sense of not being in control of making food decisions that I find especially comes up for the high achieving working mom in the evenings and at night.

Now, let me tell you why this is essential, and I'm so glad we're doing a deep dive on this topic in today's episode. Understanding how and where the feeling of compelling urges come from are essential because you can have the best laid plan, the best strategy, and without this one piece for that understanding where this compelling feeling is coming from, you're not going to be able to consistently execute on your actual plan. So if this is a topic that you know is essential for you and I would say it really is essential as a part of your weight loss journey that I highly, highly encourage you to go and grab my brand new free training over at [theunstoppablemombrain.com/desire](https://theunstoppablemombrain.com/desire). I created this on demand training for you to watch like it's your favorite Netflix episode. Seriously, one of the things that you're going to hear me say time and time again is that yes, a diet will put you into a smaller body, but on its own, it will not take away your desire to eat when you're not hungry. You can see why this topic of over desire to eat when you're not hungry is so closely tied to today's podcast episode.

Now, if you've ever thought that it's absolutely ludicrous to try to lose weight during the holidays, seriously, this one is a must watch because I'm telling you that this is one of those principles. One of those key principles that might be the reason that you find yourself up and down on the roller coaster, where you'll lose a little bit of weight but then get stuck. Don't wait, go grab it right now. You can start feeling confident when you have this one key skill in your back pocket, that it's going to help get you off that rollercoaster. Head over to [theunstoppablemombrain.com/desire](https://theunstoppablemombrain.com/desire). If you want to reach your ideal weight and create lightness for your body, you need to have simplicity, joy, and strategic decisions infused into your life. I'm a physician turned life and weightless coach for ambitious working moms. I've lost over 60 pounds without counting points, calories, or crazy exercise plans. Most importantly, I feel calm and light on the scale and in my life. There's some delicious magic when you learn this work and the skills I'm going to be teaching you. Ready? Let's get to it. Okay. Let's get into today's topic, which marries so well with over desire it's all about compulsion eating. I know it's really, really hard to believe, but the chips, the cookies, the glass of wine or your favorite food is never actually calling to you. I cannot tell you for how long, for years really, I used to think I'm just a foodie. The idea of weight loss while being a foodie used to fill me with this preemptive dread. Not to be dramatic, but that's kind of how I used to think about weight loss. Whether this was when I was just five pounds up on the scale, or when I got to my heaviest, which was a little over 60 pounds, the idea of weight loss was laced with just a little bit of dread. Why? Because I loved food. I still do, but because I believed like maybe many of you believe that to lose the weight you want, you have to. Cut things out, say no to your favorite things, get on a diet plan and just stick with it. Eat less and move more. It's not a surprise that you will likely have some negative thoughts when it comes to weight loss. Now I get it. It's, it's a little bit true, right? There's a kernel of truth to having to change the way you eat, having to say no to things when maybe you want to say yes to them. But the piece for me, and I'm wondering whether this is true for some of you. That really felt hard. The piece that I had a hard time solving, despite being what I like to believe as a smart, high achieving woman is why I couldn't solve the evening and nighttime snacking.

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I used to feel like I would have these really great strategies, these awesome plans that felt like I was able to follow through on during the day. And somehow somewhere in the evening, I just found myself really compelled to nibble snack and eat when I wasn't actually hungry. Now, let me tell you a real story. This happened about five years ago when I was seeing patients in the office and my practice as an OBGYN. I still remember the scene so vividly. The story is really near and dear to my heart because it was kind of an eye opening moment for me. I was in the middle of seeing patients running from room to room. I was thinking about hospital deliveries from the night before because I had been on call the night before. I was thinking about the labs that I had ordered that I had to follow up on, the prescriptions that I was writing. I was thinking about the next patient that I had to see and how it was running behind schedule in the office. In the background of my mind, this was kind of subconscious in my mind, was thinking about all of my home things. I was thinking about the meals that I had to prep if I wanted to lose the weight that I was thinking about the holiday weekends that I had promised my husband that I was going to be the one to plan the nanny debacle friends.

I had such a huge nanny debacle that is probably it needs its own whole podcast episode. I had to deal with my whole nanny debacle and plan and figure out childcare for my two little kids who are. Three and a half and six months old at the time, I was thinking about how absent I was feeling like I was with my kids, I was with my husband, but I wasn't really there. You know, I was like there physically, but I was thinking about work, thinking about my to do list, thinking about the next thing that I had to solve. So one of the other things I was thinking about is how can I be more present and connected with my family? I want to tell you that this moment when I had all of these things going on, I got a phone call. I got a phone call from my kid's school. You know that moment where your cell phone rings and like the name of your kid's school pops up? It's the worst feeling for a mom to see that her kid's school's calling. I felt my heart drop because it's that moment where like, okay, is my kid either in trouble or are they hurt? Are they injured? So I answer the phone and it was the assistant principal. And she was like, Dr. Venugopal, hello. Don't worry. Your son is fine. It's like the person would say, your son is perfectly fine. Don't worry. But I would love to set up a time, have a meeting where we can talk about him. Now, guys, at this, at the time of this phone call, the time that this incident happened, he was three years old. So this is a call from his preschool. I'm laughing about this right now because I'm on the other side of this whole entire story. But I want to tell you in that moment, The moment that I got the call, I was sitting down. It was in between patients already running behind. I had so many, many, many thoughts. And at that moment, what felt like a jumbled ball of terrible emotions, you know, those, those rubber band balls that like rubber band after rubber band of rubber band, I had a million emotions that at the moment I probably could not have identified but now I can tell you being on this side of it, I want to tell you what it was that I was really feeling. I felt annoyed at the school for interrupting me, I felt frustrated that they called me and not my husband. I felt overwhelmed that there was one more thing that I had to handle. I felt worried and concerned, like, is my kid okay? Like, is he going to be fine? What's going on for him? I felt a little bit of inadequacy and a little touch of guilt. Like, what am I not doing? What am I not doing enough of that? I'm getting a phone call like this now as working moms do.

I got myself together, put on a brave face and handled my day. I went, I finished seeing my patients for the day. I got back on track. I handled the labs. I followed through on all the things that I had to do. I closed out my work day because again, this is what working moms do. We handle problems like this and we overcome them. But I want to tell you what happened when I got home. I got home and I was snippy with my husband. I was really irritable with my son, who, by the way, at the time was just three, three and a half. And the moment that everyone was tucked away, the kitchen was cleaned. My kids were in bed. I made a beeline to the pantry, making myself my Cool Ranch Dorito Nacho Dinner. With a big, big glass of wine, of course, with a Netflix plop down. Now, obviously, at the moment, this made perfect sense. The moment that I got home, that moment

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that I just felt that jumble of emotions, the moment that I could have that first moment of a break, I took it. And I want to really emphasize that I had a weight loss strategy at this time. This was when I was like really getting started in my personal weight loss journey. I had a plan that I actually liked. It was kind of working. I was actually starting to lose weight, but there was a more primal part of me that was like, no, forget the plan. We need this. We want to feel better. We need a break. Now here's the honest truth. Most high achievers are not properly planning for this moment. Ask me how I know because this was me. This is the whole story. I had not properly planned for this moment. Now, I don't mean that we need to have a crystal ball and we have to know every single obstacle that's going to come our way. I don't, I didn't need to know that the assistant principal is going to call me in the middle of my work and I was going to have this experience. But what high achievers are not doing is we're not properly planning for obstacles like this. And in the evening, after a day of making millions of decisions, our natural willpower reserves, which are really high at the start of your day, at the start of your week are going to be at their all time lowest. This is normal, yet high achievers are not properly planning for this to be the case. So, I want you to just ask yourself for a moment, take a pause, I'm going to pause my story, and I want you to ask yourself, have you properly prepared for this moment? I would say if you struggle with that compelling feeling where you find yourself just in the pantry, not saying no, feeling out of control with snacking and eating at night, likely the answer is no.

A plan will put you into a smaller body. But without proper planning is not going to take away that feeling that you have that desire, that urge to eat when you're not hungry. And so if we don't plan for it properly, if we don't really anticipate and expect it coming, it is going to be. Extremely compelling in the moment, simply because it is going to be something that blindsides you when you don't have a plan. Now, before we go any further, if you haven't been properly planning for this moment, I want you to know that it's not your fault. You simply thought that the cookies and the chips and the wine and your favorite foods were calling to you. And you have been told for years and decades, just make a plan, just be disciplined, eat less, move more, eat under your calorie or points allotment. When we have come into our diet strategies and our weight loss strategies with years of what I like to call diet brain thinking, it makes a lot of sense that we haven't planned for our normal, the normal, most primal parts of our brain to offer us food, to distract us from our real life stresses. So I want you to know that you're not alone, and it's not intuitive because of all of this BS that you have been learning for the past many years. Now, high achievers have very specific tendencies and some very habitual characteristics that help you hit goals in school and at the workplace. But I want you to know that some of these ninja skills that you have in your real life, that's like driving you to do more and achieve more both at work and maybe at school and even at home is not going to necessarily work with weight loss. Why? Because weight loss. Losing the weight that you want to lose and then maintaining it is a long game. I know for me, for years, and I see this with my clients and the *Unstoppable* group all the time, that high achieving women are brilliant at pushing themselves really hard. You're able to push yourself at school and for that work project in short burst and even with weight loss, you'll create these really lofty goals and a really intense strategy because you're able to grind through it for short periods of time. But when we come into weight loss strategies in this way, we're not number one, we're not thinking about our real life. We're not treating ourselves like a human who deserves some more simple sustainability. You're going to eventually at some point along the way, not be able to sustain it. So what I want to do in this episode, and what I want to plant the seed for is to help you plan properly. So you can step off of this roller coaster. Just being smart is not enough to solve this. So if you've ever thought I'm so smart, I can, you know, solve, solve so many other problems in my life.

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I can hit so many goals. I can get the A and get the promotion and do really well at work and multitask like a Ninja. I want you to know that just being smart is not the criteria to solve the weight loss struggle. So if that's been you, I see you and I want you to know that it's not going to be how you solve the problem and we're going to get into it in today's episode.

So step one, I want you to drop that self judgment. If you've ever thought I should have figured this out by now, I'm so smart in all these other areas. Why haven't I figured this out? Just Drop that self critical self judgment thoughts because it's going to get in the way for the next step that we're going to talk about in this episode, telling yourself that you should have saw this already or you should have figured this out right now is a painful story to tell yourself and it's simply not true. Once you've dropped the self critical thoughts, the self judgy thoughts that you should have supposedly figured this out by now, I want to help you see where compulsion eating is actually coming from. That urge that you feel that compelling sensation in your body to eat when you're not hungry is coming from what I call food driving thoughts. Now let's go to science class for just a minute. Every single time that you have a thought, which by the way is not even in your consciousness, most of the time creates a firing between two neurons in your brain. Every time these neurons fire, every time you have a thought, it releases a chemical cascade in your body. And at a chemical level, your body experiences a sensation. This is really what an emotion is. A vibration in your body created by the firing of two neurons. That urge, that compelling desire, that craving that you're experiencing, that sensation on its own can never harm you. And it's never coming from your favorite foods, that favorite food of yours, the chips, cookie, the glass of wine, insert any flavor of your favorite food into the sentence is just sitting there. It's completely neutral. It's why multiple people can look at the same food and have a totally different sensation in their body.

Let's say that you're like me and you absolutely love pizza. Now, the way that I love pizza is with onions and jalapenos and peppers. I love eating the garlic. I love all those toppings. So if I look at a pizza like that, and if you love toppings like me, you might have a thought like this is going to be so good. I want it. I want more. It's going to be so delicious. Now, someone else that hates onion and garlic and jalapenos and peppers might look at this pizza and think that this is the worst thing. They will look at the exact same food and think, uh, yuck, no thanks. That compelling feeling in your body, that desire, that urge isn't coming from your foods. It's coming from a thought that you're having about the foods. Thoughts like, I want it. I deserve it. Just a bite, a lick, a taste. It's going to be so good. Now here's the kicker. For the high achieving working mom especially, these thoughts will be very justified. Remember my story and how many things that I was handling and juggling. I was thinking about my call of the hospital the night before, my patients, the labs that I had ordered, the pendencies that I had to remember, my schedule for the next week, the next patient that I had to see, I was thinking about my household, and my kid and the assistant principal's phone call and my vacation and the next trip that I had to take.

I mean, if I really looked at, if I zoomed out and really looked at all of the things that I had been handling and I asked myself, Where was I on the list? Now, let's just honestly take a moment and do a quick inventory on this. Where are you on your own calendar? Look at the last week, the last month, the last year. Are you even actually on there? If you have been squeezing yourself in or giving yourself the crumbs at the end of the day, you might find that those urges are The desire to eat when you're not very hungry is going to be extremely compelling. Hear me when I say this, that your brain, which is simply brilliant, is going to try to force you to take a break. All that has happened over many years and decades is we have married food and alcohol and scrolling with taking a break. But you and I both know when you overeat, over drink and over scroll, you don't actually feel rested afterwards. So what would it be like if we stopped marrying food and alcohol with our desire for rest and we did slightly deeper work to solve this problem at the root?

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We can actually use science to totally hack this. And it's actually one of the core principles that I help my clients within the *Unstoppable* group in detail. I help my clients in the *Unstoppable* group create personalized custom fat burning action plans that really will get science on your side. It teaches your body how to burn fat for fuel so that you can lose weight with more ease. But this is just one piece of planning properly to lose the weight that you want to lose. The other piece that is so essential is planning properly for having our normal food loving thoughts. Listen, your desire that I want it's the yum, the it's going to be so good thoughts are normal. Let's imagine that these really primal thoughts of, Ooh, I want it, it's gonna be so good, are simply primal, primitive thoughts driven by the most primitive parts of our brain, desiring that we seek pleasure and we maybe distract from momentary discomfort. Imagine that we stopped going to battle with these thoughts every evening. When you learn how to properly plan for that compelling feeling, imagine that you could put your battle weapons down and actually respond with some more authority. I'm not here to tell you to just change your thoughts, though that is one tool and a very, very effective strategy. Being aware that the food on its own is never calling to you and that you have a lot of food driving thoughts on its own is a game changer. And yes, while these thoughts are habitual and practiced, they're absolutely changeable, which is going to create a lot more food freedom for you in any scenario. What I'm here to talk about. The perspective that I'm bringing to you in today's episode is to ask you, how might that feeling, that compelling urge, that desire to eat when you're not hungry, really just be a signal for you. I want you to imagine that you stopped battling that emotion and instead got curious. There are going to be many moments that you're in front of your favorite things, especially during the holidays. You're going to see other people eating and drinking and Other people having fun and after a long year, a very long month and an especially long week, it is going to be very compelling and very justified for you, I wanted thoughts to take over. I want you to imagine that you could plan for this in advance to never be surprised that your evening. I wanted thoughts are coming to visit you and instead of battling them and forcing yourself to ignore those thoughts, imagine that you got curious. Have you been bulldozing over your own needs? Have you been pushing too hard in some area of your life? Have you been ignoring your need for rest or play? Listen, I can hear you being like, Priyanka, come on. I'm a busy working mom and I don't have time for that nonsense. I know. And I see you. And also, here is what I want to tell you. Not answering these questions is an expensive mistake that I have made myself for years, not planning properly, not investing in yourself at the start, not planning in rest and pleasure and play properly is going to waste you more time, cost you more effort and more energy later.

Ask me how I know because I did this. I used to have the best laid plans and feel really excited at the start of my week. But no surprise by the end of the day, after a long day at the hospital, a call from the principal's office, or simply just being a busy working mom, the evenings felt like I just didn't have control. What I didn't know for so many years that I am bringing to you in this podcast episode is that my brain was simply trying to get my attention. That desire, the urge of, ooh, I want it, and just one more, and I deserve a break was true. My brain was wanting a break from me going so hard for me, bulldozing over my own needs. And what if it was possible that yes, you're a busy mom. And also we gave ourselves permission to slow down and put ourselves in our own life on purpose. And if there's one lesson I learned a few years ago, it is that I had worked really hard my whole life only to be feeling a little bit not taken care of. What if it wasn't food's job or alcohol's job to take care of you? And we started doing that piece for ourselves. You deserve to not get the tail end, the crumbs of what's left over. Seriously, you deserved all of this yesterday. So this episode is an invitation to take that action that you find yourself in, where you find yourself compelled to eat. You find yourself not in control of walking into the pantry or nibbling or snacking when you said you wouldn't. And instead of judging it or fighting it or getting mad about it, get really curious. What is that feeling that's coming up for you right before

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you walk into the pantry? What is that desire, that urge, trying to tell you? And if you were honest, how have you been bulldozing over your own needs? And how might you want to start making a change? I hope that you enjoy this perspective on where compulsion eating might be coming for you. And I hope that you leave this episode with one small shift in your perspective. When you find yourself meandering into the pantry or eating when you're not actually hungry, drop the fight and take a pause. And just get curious friends.

This is exactly what I do in detail with my clients in the *Unstoppable* group. This is my six month intimate small group coaching program for high achieving working moms want to lose weight while living their real life and have fun doing it. I help my clients create custom strategies that will teach their body to burn fat while also planning properly to account for their real lives and your most primitive thoughts that you are going to have habitually forever. We have live weekly coaching calls, daily written coaching and personal mentorship, and the best brand new on demand video curriculum to teach you the tools, frameworks, and concepts to lose the weight you want and actually keep it off. Why am I telling you all about this at the end of today's episode? Because for the first time ever, I have decided to open Early Access to the January *Unstoppable* group just this week. That's right. Right now, this week, early enrollment is open for the January *Unstoppable* group. I want to share with you that I have had clients get Early Access to the *Unstoppable* curriculum during the month of December through all of the holiday celebrations while on vacation and have come to our first coaching call in January, 10 pounds lighter, this is available for anyone who wants it and I wanted to make it available for you to bots in the *Unstoppable* group are limited on purpose. So once they fill the group is going to be closed until late spring. If you have felt the desire to join the *Unstoppable* group, I highly encourage that you grab a consult spot with me so that we can talk about you, your unique goals, your personal journey, and we'll decide if we're a best fit.

You can grab your consult spot over at [theunstoppablemombrain.com/connect](https://theunstoppablemombrain.com/connect) on the consult call. We will really walk through what your journey has been so far. And if we decide on the console call that we would be a great fit to work together, I will send you a link to make payment. And the moment that you join the group, you're going to unlock immediate access to the whole entire curriculum. I really think about Netflix for weight loss. The best part about early enrollment is twofold. First is early enrollment allows you to make a decision right now that guarantees success for you in 2024. If you want to have that feeling like this is just done and decided you have a plan in place for you starting 2024 early enrollment is a great opportunity and it guarantees you a spot. Plus I have a really special bonus. If you join the *Unstoppable* group during early Access Enrollment, and that is a live workshop just with my clients happening in December called Fabulous Fun and Five Pounds Down by January 1st. I'm going to be teaching you a process for you to lose weight during the month of December while having fun and feeling fabulous. It's not too good to be true when you have the right strategy in place and you plan properly for your real human working mom life. I walk you through exactly how we're going to do this in detail in this workshop. I want you to imagine that you can wake up on New Year's Day feeling so grateful for this decision that you're going to have the support you deserve and your goals are going to be it's done results for you in 2024. High achieving working moms deserve a coach in their corner, and I hope to see your name on my calendar.

Go grab your consult spot over at [theunstoppablemombrain.com/connect](https://theunstoppablemombrain.com/connect), and I cannot wait to meet you really soon. Have an amazing week, my friends. Bye. Thanks for listening to The Unstoppable Mom Brain Podcast. It's been an honor spending this time with you and your brilliant brain. If you want more resources or information from the show, head on over to [theunstoppablemombrain.com](https://theunstoppablemombrain.com).