

**Glenn Livingston, Ph.D.
And Howard Jacobson
Honor Your Ancestors by Thriving_EDITED**

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Dr. Glenn: Hey, it's the very good Dr. Glenn Livingston with
NeverBingeAgain.com.

Howie: And the very good Howard Jacobson of PlantYourself.com and
WellStart Health.

Dr. Glenn: And we are here to have an interesting discussion about psychological
pain and guilt and how they relate to binge eating. And more so than
we've talked about before, we're going to go beyond the traditional
notion that it's impossible to keep bingeing if you refuse to yell at
yourself. We're going to go beyond the idea that you want to feel a
little bit of psychological pain when you touch a hot stove or when you
make a mistake so that you can pay attention and fix the problem,
either fix your rules so you're aiming at a better bull's-eye or fix the
inability to hear the squeal that fooled you, we're going to go beyond



that today. And we're going to talk about how the psychological pain that you carry from your not only family of origin but from your ancestors can weaken you and make you feel like it's difficult to resist the next binge and even how bingeing itself can be pain born from your ancestors.

So with that hopefully interesting introduction, I would like to tell you that I went to a presentation the other day. I was at a spiritual event and there was a man essentially talking about the book *It Didn't Start With You*. I think his name was Mark Wolberg, or at least that was the author's name. It's a very interesting book. And the notion of this book was that we all bear pain from what our ancestors have been through and not just your immediate family or your grandparents, but you can go back to your great-grandparents, your great-great-grandparents and trace their life stories and ask yourself how is it impacting my emotional wellbeing, my financial wellbeing, my psychological wellbeing? And if you do this thoroughly enough, you will see some ways that it's impacting your binge eating.

Now, I don't want to give anybody the impression that they have to do this or solve this to stop binge eating, all of the Never Binge Again methods for very practically, logistically implementing tactics to get the problem solved still apply, but guilt and psychological pain can make you feel too weak and the pig can leverage it to make you feel too weak to resist the next binge. And towards that light in that vein, I wanted to talk about this.

What the presentation was about was the idea that most people walk around thinking that being a good son or a good daughter or a good grandson or a good granddaughter or great-grandson and great-granddaughter involves burying the pain that your ancestors left for

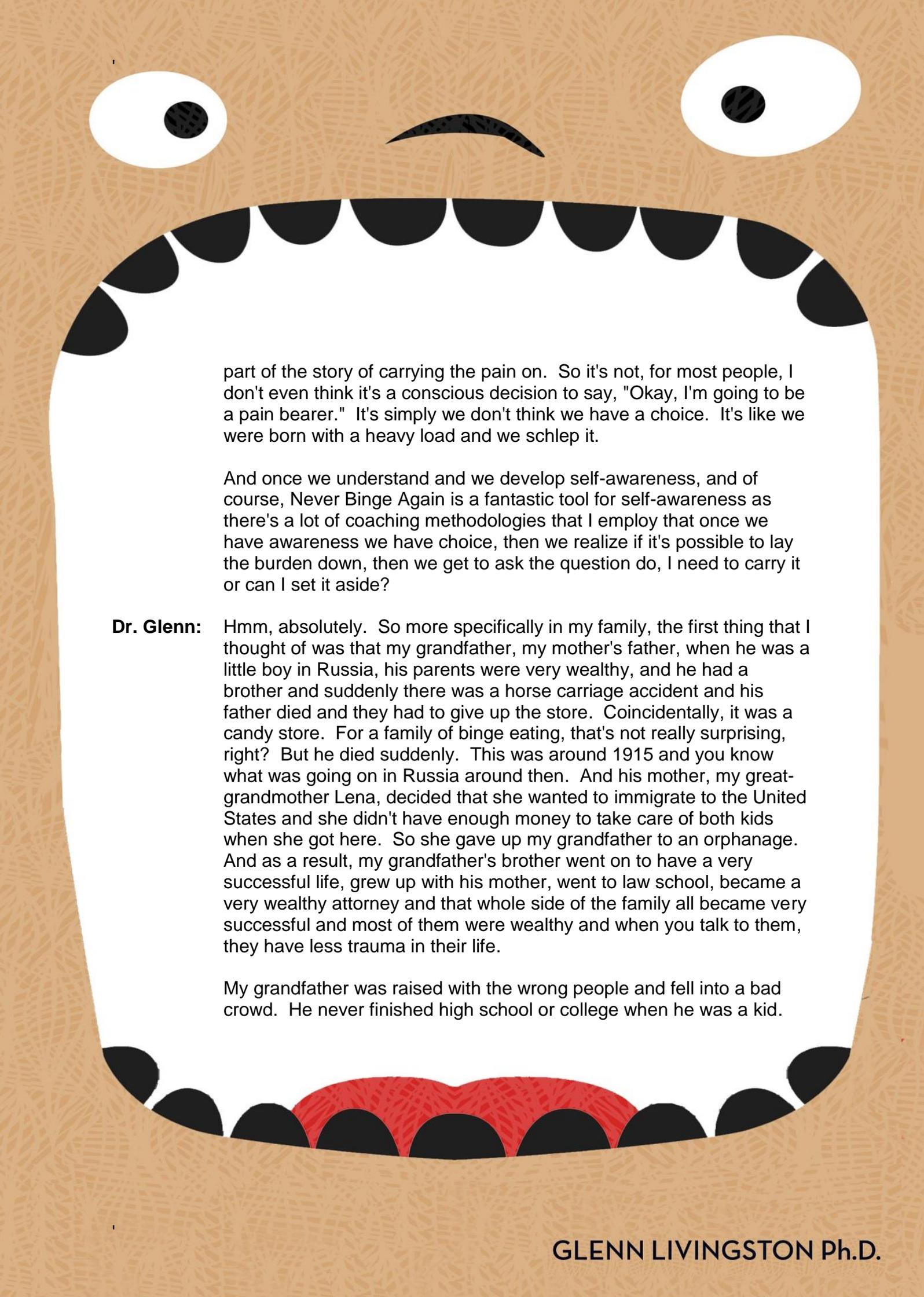


you. It's like we've all got our cross to bear and we need to be pain bearers if we're going to be good people in this life. I'll give some specific examples in a little bit from my own family, but when you look at what your family's been through, you can see that that might be a formula when you line up all the ancestors 'cause it expands exponentially as you go up a generation. Those are a lot of people. Some of them have been through a lot of pain so we could all really get stuck and it becomes a losing formula.

What the presenter said was that if you think about why people have children, people have hopes and dreams for their children. They want them to do better than they did. I know my father wanted me to do better in life than he did. I know that he was the first upwardly mobile person in his family of Lower East Side Jewish immigrants. I think that the immigrants' parents wanted them to do better than they did. My family is from Moscow and [inaudible 00:03:45] and Poland. We're happy that they managed to migrate them over and he coined this phrase. He said, "Honor your ancestors by thriving. Don't honor your ancestors by being a pain bearer, honor your ancestors by thriving." And that was very profound for me because it really rung true. I can give you an example in a minute and before I do, Howie, I want to give you a chance to say what you want to say about the concept or introduce any other ideas to set the context in the frame.

Howie:

What I have discovered in my own life's work, and I've done a lot of work around ancestral pain and around this idea that somehow I got a bum deal, right? Like, so if life is a game of poker, I look at my cards and I'm just resentful like, why did I get all these cards? It would have been so much better if I'd gotten these other cards. And also working with lots of people, it's really clear to me that it's our awareness and making a choice that gives us all this leverage and freedom from being



part of the story of carrying the pain on. So it's not, for most people, I don't even think it's a conscious decision to say, "Okay, I'm going to be a pain bearer." It's simply we don't think we have a choice. It's like we were born with a heavy load and we schlep it.

And once we understand and we develop self-awareness, and of course, Never Binge Again is a fantastic tool for self-awareness as there's a lot of coaching methodologies that I employ that once we have awareness we have choice, then we realize if it's possible to lay the burden down, then we get to ask the question do, I need to carry it or can I set it aside?

Dr. Glenn: Hmm, absolutely. So more specifically in my family, the first thing that I thought of was that my grandfather, my mother's father, when he was a little boy in Russia, his parents were very wealthy, and he had a brother and suddenly there was a horse carriage accident and his father died and they had to give up the store. Coincidentally, it was a candy store. For a family of binge eating, that's not really surprising, right? But he died suddenly. This was around 1915 and you know what was going on in Russia around then. And his mother, my great-grandmother Lena, decided that she wanted to immigrate to the United States and she didn't have enough money to take care of both kids when she got here. So she gave up my grandfather to an orphanage. And as a result, my grandfather's brother went on to have a very successful life, grew up with his mother, went to law school, became a very wealthy attorney and that whole side of the family all became very successful and most of them were wealthy and when you talk to them, they have less trauma in their life.

My grandfather was raised with the wrong people and fell into a bad crowd. He never finished high school or college when he was a kid.



He started to do petty crimes as far as I know. He finished his master's degree when he was 82 years old and everybody loved him later on, but he went to prison. Just before I was born, he was involved with some type of stock fraud and he was guilty. He was absolutely guilty and he went to prison, which led my mother to be extraordinarily depressed and shocked because she never knew this about him and she adored him.

He married a relatively crazy person who really tortured my mother. When my grandfather was around, he really shone in contrast to her. And so to my mother, he was a hero and suddenly when she found out he went to prison, she was absolutely devastated she didn't know who she was, she didn't feel safe in the world because it was like being left alone with her mother even though she was 23 years old. And as a result of that, I was not fed properly. My mother was very depressed when I was born, 'cause that's right around the time I was born was when he went to prison, and my mother was extremely depressed and she would sit in the stair and she kept a big bottle of chocolate Bosco syrup in the refrigerator because she could just say, "Glenn, go get your Bosco," whenever I came running to her to be fed or held or hugged.

And so if you look at that, there is a psychological pain that I bore at least 50 years after, this is when I was in the world, 50 years after, Lena, my great-grandmother made the decision to come to America and give up my grandfather. And what do I do with that? Do I think about how much my grandfather suffered and say, "Well, I'm cursed to be a binge eater and it's much less bad than having had to go to prison or being brought up in an orphanage and I want to suffer along with my grandfather to feel what he went through? Do I bear his pain for him like that or do I ask myself, well, what would he really want for me?"



During the course of the exercise, I remembered that my grandfather put everything into me. When he got out of jail, I think I was a year and a half old or something like that, and he put everything into me. He spent more time with me than my dad did. He taught me everything he knew. Some of it is responsible for my screwed up sense of humor and some of the bizarre ways that I act because he didn't just teach me to do math, he taught me how to wire a toilet bowl so that it would talk when someone sat down on it. If someone would sit down on it, it would go, "Oh no, don't do it. There's someone down here." But he was wonderful. He was a wonderful man in my life. I didn't know any of this about him until I was 21 years old. And my grandfather really wanted the best for me. I was a form of repentance for him. He wants to be a better grandfather than he was a father. He straightened out when he came into my life and when I came into his life and he built himself a little short-order cooking business and he was reasonably successful and he got into exercise, he got into computers and he did all this for me. I don't think he wants me to suffer the way that he did. I think he wants me to achieve the things that he didn't achieve. I think I need to honor him by thriving.

And when I had that realization, I felt something released. Like there is a level of burden and guilt that I was carrying that I realize I didn't have to carry. I could put down the way that you were saying. I'm walking around with this new mantra now that says, "Honor your ancestors by thriving," and it makes me feel more clear and present and able to hear the pig and even more committed if you can believe that to eating well and being healthy and inspiring other people to do the same thing. What do you think about all that?



Howie:

That's beautiful. One of the things that sometimes happens at these spiritual events is they'll ask you to have like a little conversation with this person. I remember doing some of this work where I was sort of sitting with my back to a wall and imagining that all my ancestors, my whole lineage was behind me, they were all sort of watching me like a movie and like cheering and shouting things and like, what am I hearing? So I think to be able to have the conversation and to realize how farfetched it would be for them to say, "Hey, you suffer like we suffered." Right? Yay, we're the entire lineage of crap, you know. Like yoo-hoo! But the best metaphor for this comes from my business partner Josh LaJaunie who grew up idolizing his grandfather whom he called Bam-Bam. Bam-Bam was the patriarch of the family. He was a larger than life figure. Everybody's friend, he was the boss of everybody, he was the huge alpha male. And by huge, 380 pounds, 6 foot 3 and Josh wanted to be just like him. And Josh grew to be 420 pounds, so like him and even more. He passed away about a year ago.

Dr. Glenn: Literally carrying his weight?

Howie:

Well, no. Actually, because over the last several years he developed dementia. So he had had terrible problems. He lost his mobility. He wasn't strong anymore. But when he became demented and then Josh discovered a healthy lifestyle, he was able to impose it on his grandfather. So as his grandfather's dementia worsened, he got down to about 170 pounds, he got off almost all his meds, he had a very healthy body although Alzheimer's is currently not reversible. No matter what we do when the brain cells and the neurons and the synapses are damaged, we don't have any way to rejuvenate them.



So he saw this man who was the most powerful force in his life reduced to a shell. They live in Louisiana. Bam-Bam had been in the Navy and was an expert at boating. So they would take their boat out, they'd go fishing. And what Josh said was, if I was following Bam-Bam and he was in a boat and I was in a boat behind him and he ran into a sandbar, and then I decided I was going to honor him by running into the same sandbar. Like, he would turn around and say, "What kind of dumb ass are you? Didn't you see what I just did? How could you waste my suffering and my experience by doing the same damn thing?" You don't honor someone by making the same mistakes they made that cost them their lives and you see it and you go, "Oh. Well, I guess I'll just do the same thing 'cause that's my heritage."

Dr. Glenn: Right, that makes perfect sense. And you know, interestingly, my grandfather did not have a binge eating disorder. He ate really healthy. He always wanted me to eat healthy. In many ways, it might be why I got through because I was so driven -- 'cause a lot of people just give up and say, "I'll be heavy and I'll be an unhappy fat person," but he had it covered and I didn't choose to identify with that. I didn't say, "Well, I will take his successes and carry them forward." You can see how the pig picks and chooses the particular pain that it wants us to bear and ignores the things that would not be good for the pig to allow to go forward, so that's a very interesting story. So when Josh realized that, was that part of his recovery?

Howie: Yeah. It wasn't only this family pain, the way we celebrate as families is for most people the way we deal with our pain, right? We celebrate through our addictions, right, through the ways we get high. So there is a direct link and equivalence between the pain we're carrying and the liquor we drink or the fatty food we eat or any of the other compulsive



behaviors that soothe us and get us high so that we can face the next day. They are sort of mirror images of each other.

Another thing that Josh has talked about a lot is his family's racism. His great-grandfather grew up a white sharecropper in Mississippi and became sort of a boss to a lot of African-American sharecroppers and was very clear about everybody's place in the hierarchy, and Josh growing up being corrected for calling a black man "sir". So there's a lot of ways in which, for me, hearing his stories, I was thinking about like all the ways in which my ancestry has embarrassed me or held views that I now find repugnant and I felt like I had to jettison everything. I wanted to become an orphan so I wouldn't be tainted by that.

Whereas Josh is saying like, "Look, these people lived under certain circumstances. They did the best they could under those circumstances and I have to do the best I can under my circumstances." And if that means coming to a deeper understanding of what it means to be a human being and how to treat people, I don't have to deny my heritage in order to live up to the opportunities that their sacrifice and that their mistakes and that their lives made possible for me.

Dr. Glenn: You don't throw out the baby with the bathwater.

Howie: Right.

Dr. Glenn: The solution to this is to have a more careful evaluation of what your ancestors had to offer with their hopes and dreams really were for you, where they succeeded, where they failed, and how you want to carry it forward.



Howie: Yes. Perfectly said.

Dr. Glenn: Well, is there any other way in particular of that phrase, "Honor your ancestors by thriving" helps you or you think could help clients to never binge again?

Howie: Well, sure. Let's forget about all the whoo stuff. Whoo, what a relief! Like, let's just talk about science and let's talk about the evolution and biological imperatives. Like, what are we doing as a species? What are we doing as individuals? What do organisms do? They're trying to mate well to reproduce well. And because we know that our genes -- so it's not even us, like it's our genes have this program and they're jerking us around to get us to fall in love and have sex and eat food to survive and defend our territory and become alphas and gain priority access to important resources, and it's also that future generations can thrive. Like, that's the whole game from a biological reductionist perspective. So whether you feel like being whoo-who or not, there's a great line from a poem by David White. I'll see if I can get it exactly. It says, "We, meaning humans, are the one terrible part of creation privileged to refuse our flowering."

Dr. Glenn: Hmm.

Howie: Meaning that flowers are going to bloom, wolves are going to be wolves, elephants are going to be elephants, acorns are going to turn into oak trees and humans are the only ones who can kind of get in our own way and say, "No, I'm not going to be who I am. I'm not going to live up to my potential."



Dr. Glenn: Interesting. So the overwhelming biological force inside of us is the result of generations and generations of the evolutionary pressure to produce better and better offsprings and more and more survival value. And so by definition, but the fact that the sperm connected with the egg and survive the perils of contraception and embryology and got through to the birth canal, we have to be, at least in some ways, better than our ancestors. We have to be and that's our biological imperative.

Howie: Yeah. How many sperm in an ejaculation? Like you are so unlikely you won the lottery. Not the \$300 scratch-off lottery, you won the Powerball.

Dr. Glenn: I think there's 500 million sperm in an ejaculation.

Howie: Yeah. So good job, Glenn.

Dr. Glenn: I'm one in 500 million. It's true. All of us are.

Howie: Yeah. If someone out there listening thinks that binging is going to help you live a longer, healthier, stronger, better life, then you should do it.

Dr. Glenn: Right.

Howie: If on the other hand you think it's going to compromise your health, your attractiveness, your ability to honor the evolutionary legacy of better, and not just better by a little bit better by quantum leaps in generations, then we owe it to our ancestry, to our programming, to our spiritual heritage, to however you want to think about it to make ourselves the people that we want to be.



Dr. Glenn: I could not agree more and that's a really good way to look at it. I'm suddenly feeling really confident about myself.

Howies: Yes. Yeah, we should sell T-shirts that have like this sperm with the metal around its neck, "first place".

Dr. Glenn: We have to talk about the triumph of the egg for being so selective in choosing the sperm that it chose also, right?

Howie: Yup. The eggs come from grandmothers, right, so like the female fetus in the womb has all of its eggs before she's born.

Dr. Glenn: Oh, that's interesting. I forgot that.

Howie: Talk about a carefully wrapped present.

Dr. Glenn: Yes. Wow. Is there anything else that we can think of or any other examples we want to use to illustrate how we can honor ancestors by thriving?

Howie: I think that kind of covers it for me. I don't know.

Dr. Glenn: Thank you for another terrific podcast, Howie.

Howie: Oh, thank you.

Dr. Glenn: Thanks for your time and attention. If you need personal coaching to fix your food problem fast, please visit FixYourFoodProblem.com. FixYourFoodProblem.com. If you'd like to become a certified professional Never Binge Again independent coach and turn your passion for Never Binge Again into a lucrative, rewarding and fun



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