



Glenn Livingston, Ph.D. And Howie Overcoming Guilt

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Dr. Glenn: Say hey, it's the very good Dr. Glenn Livingston with NeverBingeAgain.com and I'm here with Howie Jacobson of PlantYourself.com. How are you, sir?

Howie: I'm very well. I'm also from WellstarHealth.com.

Dr. Glenn: Oh, that's new. Okay.

Howie: Throw that in there.

Dr. Glenn: Very nice. I'll remember to say that next time. I wanted Howie on the call today so we can have an interesting talk about a question that one of my clients asked me. She wrote to me and said, "Glenn, do you think that I should feel guilty about having addicted my child to sugar by eating it while she was in the womb?" And the question at first really

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threw me. I would like to know what your answer is on that before I give you my opinion and my thoughts about it 'cause I have some very strong thoughts about it. I don't want to bias you, so I'm curious what you think about that.

Howie: Okay. Well, I think that the minute you ask a question should I feel guilty about dot, dot, dot; the answer is probably no because asking the question means you already feel guilty about it. Right? The people who should feel guilty in this world usually don't.

Dr. Glenn: Yes, that's unfortunately true.

Howie: Right. So, if you think you should feel guilty, then that means you should. You and I have discussed this. Do you think that guilt is more useful than I do? And I think I'm starting to agree with you that it's guilt is like touching a hot stove.

Dr. Glenn: It's an attention-getting mechanism, but that's all.

Howie: Yeah. It says, "Okay, I got to stop doing what I'm doing." If you're feeling guilty for something that you can no longer stop doing, then you're just spinning your wheels. And what's the purpose of it, is it to beat yourself up? Now, if you're feeling the guilt and it motivates you to, okay, so now, I don't know how old the child is now; newborn five, 10, 40.

Dr. Glenn: I think more like 34.

Howie: So the child is 34 and I'm assuming from the question that they're not a swimsuit model or that they have some issues. Maybe they're overweight, maybe they're bulimic, but they're not in great health or

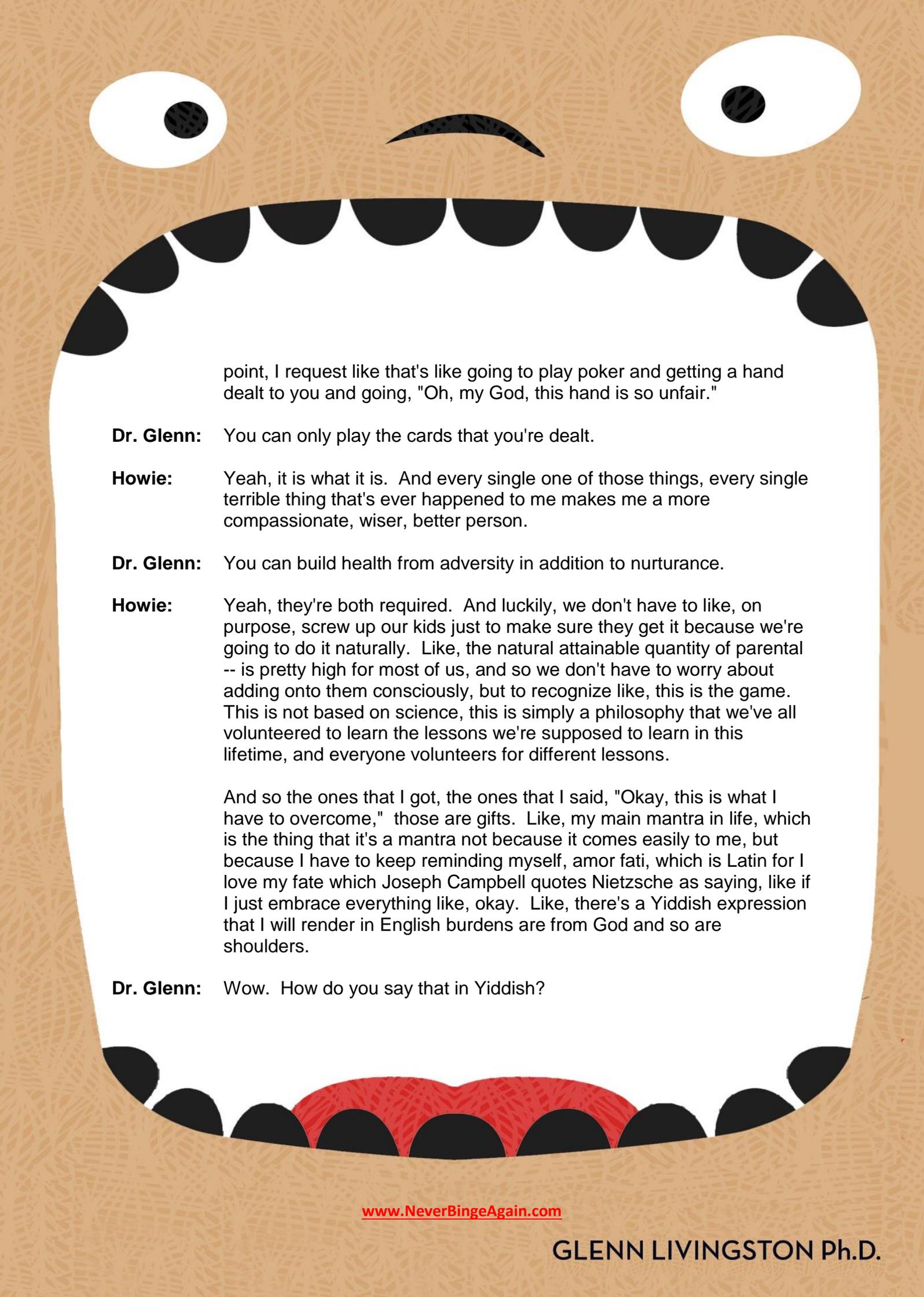


have a great relationship with food and with sweets in particular, so that's the assumption.

Dr. Glenn: The thing is that I think that that's all been corrected and I think that the child is on a very good path. It's kind of an interesting time for the question to arise.

Howie: Yeah. I'm going to answer this a little bit as a question as a parent, which is if I wanted to, I could have a hundred things that I feel guilty about for the ways in which I screwed up as a parent and I let my children down. And I can even argue that even at that point, I knew better, like it was just weakness, it wasn't like, oh, I didn't know. Who knew that sugar was bad for me? Who knew it would affect that, you know. But things like I knew, like I shouldn't be acting this way. I shouldn't be screaming at my 18-month-old for doing something that an 18-month-old would naturally do. I shouldn't be getting upset at their bad behavior in public in a way that reflects on my ego. All these things, like, I look back and I go, "God, what was I thinking?" Yeah I was sleep deprived, yeah I was younger, but you know what, I should have known better. And my kids are not perfect human beings, and they're not perfectly happy and everything hasn't gone their way. And in that, they are the same as every other human being on this planet.

Like, I used to look back on my childhood and was very regretful about things that I did get or didn't get; the fact that my father couldn't show emotion, the fact that -- or he couldn't show negative emotion or tolerate negative emotion, the fact that my mother was a Holocaust survivor and could never trust people. Like those felt like deep wounds and I was really sorry to have them. Like life was unfair. Like if his life had been fair, those things wouldn't have happened. And at a certain



point, I request like that's like going to play poker and getting a hand dealt to you and going, "Oh, my God, this hand is so unfair."

Dr. Glenn: You can only play the cards that you're dealt.

Howie: Yeah, it is what it is. And every single one of those things, every single terrible thing that's ever happened to me makes me a more compassionate, wiser, better person.

Dr. Glenn: You can build health from adversity in addition to nurturance.

Howie: Yeah, they're both required. And luckily, we don't have to like, on purpose, screw up our kids just to make sure they get it because we're going to do it naturally. Like, the natural attainable quantity of parental -- is pretty high for most of us, and so we don't have to worry about adding onto them consciously, but to recognize like, this is the game. This is not based on science, this is simply a philosophy that we've all volunteered to learn the lessons we're supposed to learn in this lifetime, and everyone volunteers for different lessons.

And so the ones that I got, the ones that I said, "Okay, this is what I have to overcome," those are gifts. Like, my main mantra in life, which is the thing that it's a mantra not because it comes easily to me, but because I have to keep reminding myself, amor fati, which is Latin for I love my fate which Joseph Campbell quotes Nietzsche as saying, like if I just embrace everything like, okay. Like, there's a Yiddish expression that I will render in English burdens are from God and so are shoulders.

Dr. Glenn: Wow. How do you say that in Yiddish?



Howie: I have no idea. Hence, the English.

Dr. Glenn: Can I give you one of the Yiddish expressions that grandmother used to say?

Howie: Sure.

Dr. Glenn: Gay kaken ofn yahm!

Howie: Something about -- today?

Dr. Glenn: It means go crap in the ocean.

Howie: Oh, yahm. Okay.

Dr. Glenn: I don't mean to make light of what you're saying 'cause I don't disagree with anything that you're saying. I'm going to let you finish 'cause I have many thoughts; I'm very excited about everything that you're talking about. So did you say what you wanted to? What else did you want to share about that?

Howie: Well, just that if we decide to accept that view that other human beings are fallible, that we're all going to make mistakes. And some of those mistakes aren't erasable, right? When you see one of your kids suffering and you can look back and pinpoint your own contribution to that, it's very easy to make yourself suffer. That doesn't help your kid, that makes it worse, right? If you take responsibility for them, then you've disempowered them and you've taken away their own agency to heal on their own terms and now you're going to make them take care of you as well 'cause now the issue is not their problem, the issue is



how bad you feel. I think that's what I got, so I'd love to hear your thoughts.

Dr. Glenn: Well, I think that was a fabulous discourse on the necessity of forgiving yourself and moving on for any parental mistake you made including mistakes you made while your child was in the womb. I want to come back to that. Maybe you could remind me because there are things we know in psychology that would help people from research over the last 30, 40 years that would help people to forgive themselves more quickly. I think you said most of them, but I could back it up a little bit. What is more important to me is the whole notion that addiction to sugar is this overwhelming, impossible thing to overcome. And you think of the movie Omega Man and how I think it was Charlton Heston was in a room. I actually read about it, I didn't see the movie, and he was going through detox and he had the shakes and he just can't beat it, it was like heroin.

What I actually see is that when people are willing to go through the first hundred hours, actually talking to a naturopath about some supplements that can help with that and everything like that. But if they get through the first hundred hours, then this ridiculous discomfort that everybody talks about goes away. If they eat enough fruit, it starts to go away. If they keep their fat lower, it starts to go away. And it's not like having this overwhelming look in your back the rest of your life.

I believe that the notion that sugar is an irresistible craving, an irresistible urge over which you are powerless is something that's been promoted by the 12-step programs and it's been enhanced by the engineering of excitotoxins and chemicals in the candy bars and things that we get from industry that do press evolutionary buttons that make you want to forget about your survival needs and just gravitate towards



the bags and boxes and containers. But just like in the matrix, you really can take the right pill and wake up and see what's going on and opt out. You can 100 percent opt out. And so, I don't think it's like this woman was shooting heroin while her child was in the womb. I think it's an addictive substance, yeah, but I don't think it was like shooting heroin. I don't even think heroin is as difficult to beat as the culture makes it out to be, that's part of it.

The other part is that if this woman had not introduced sugar to her child, then society would have. And it's virtually impossible to keep your children entirely sugar-free in this world. I don't have children myself. I've worked with a lot of people who do have children and they tell me this. Howie, maybe you have different opinions about it, but I don't know that a child is going to reach 16 years old without having had an Oreo. I haven't met one yet.

Howie: Yeah. You could do that, but that would be essentially like cult living.

Dr. Glenn: You'd have to raise them in an Amish community.

Howie: Equivalent. The Amish love sugar.

Dr. Glenn: Oh, they do?

Howie: Yeah. But you'd have to do something where it would be the equivalent of wearing bonnets. If you included media, if you let them have Internet and phones and television and radio, then they would realize what they're missing. And the minute they walk out of your door, like the Amish thing where they go off and they are completely unprepared for the world. Even if you keep them sugar-free for 16 years, they have no skills, so they're extremely vulnerable.



Dr. Glenn: Right. That's part of the other point that I was going to make; that in psychology, we now know that if you don't make mistakes with children, then the impetus for them to develop their own identity and character is not there. Let's go all the way back to feeding. If the bottle over breast is regularly available at the right time, in the right amount, with the right feelings and nurturance and love, then the child never experiences enough distress to have to construct memories that will soothe themselves. Mom is not here with the breast right now, but I remember that she was, and I know that she'll come back again. I know that my lunch will be coming.

So we discovered this in psychotherapy that it was inevitable that there were empathic failures. You strive to be as emphatic as you can to the patient so that they can have a corrective emotional experience and feel like they are being heard like they've never been heard before so they have the courage to think new thoughts and try new behavior patterns and expand into the world as they never could. But inevitably, there are empathic failures. Get a call right before the session and there's some tragedy in your family and it's really, really hard for you to focus. Or you ate something beforehand and your body is at war with food and you're having difficulty thinking about the client and just trying to think about how can you get a salad and some water to make yourself feel better. Whatever it is, there's some reason that you're not a hundred percent mindful and present with the client and they experience an empathic failure.

Well, at that moment the client has to draw on their memory of their good relationship with you and build what we call object constancy; the ability to hold a relationship in mind in the absence of the presence of nurturance from that relationship. And so, thank God that there were



some mistakes in childhood. Thank God that there were empathic failures between the mother and the child. You don't want to make them on purpose, you want to correct them where you can because none of us are ever going to be able to get to a perfect bull's-eye there, and keep going.

When to the extent that you do feel guilty about mistakes that you've made, and I could tell you about mistakes I made in my practice early on. I could tell you about there is a woman that made a suicide attempt that I should have been able to predict, but I was very young and I didn't get supervision in time and I didn't really see what was happening and thankfully didn't damage herself too well, but she hadn't been found at the right time and in all kinds of horrible things happen. And I could perseverate I'm guilty about that forever, or I could use that energy to study the symptoms of suicidality and make sure that I'm asking the right screening questions and make sure that that never happens again. I could go one step further and I could teach that to other therapists. I can use that experience to become motivated to change the world, and that's what I think this woman should do to the extent that she feels any guilt at all, which I don't think she should feel much guilt about that. But the extent that she does feel guilt, I think that she should certainly make it up to her daughter by supporting her daughter with healthy eating in pursuits wherever she can.

I think that she should maybe do a little writing, maybe talk at her church, maybe publish a little video or an audio about her or something like that, whatever she wants to do to spread the word in the community, she can actually take part in our Facebook forum. There are 3,000 people there now that could benefit from hearing her 'cause she's had a lot of success herself and get up on a soapbox. So what if you screwed up the first half of your life, second half of your life, get up



on a soapbox and tell the world so it doesn't happen to them? That's what I think, so those are my thoughts about it.

Howie: I love that. I love that you came out specifically around the issue of sugar and bingeing and also from the therapeutic perspective. I've apologized to my kids for things. And I've explained and told the memories of ways in which, like, I was very confused 'cause I thought I had the perfect childhood for a long time 'cause my parents told me that I did, and so I was very confused like, why I felt the way I felt about things and was internalizing it. So I think it can be empowering to go back to your kid and say, "You know, let me tell you what happened." And to say, "You know what, if I could go back and do it differently now, I would and I apologize."

And to model that kind of self-responsibility without letting it spiral into - which is really the opposite. So when you talk about like go on a soapbox, fix yourself, teach others; that's taking responsibility. And if you were to become mired in guilt and just consumed by it and let that energy drive you, then you're actually giving up responsibility 'cause you're not doing what's in your power now.

Dr. Glenn: Yes, and that's the thing to feel guilty about. You should feel guilty about letting yourself get mired in guilt. That's the only thing you could feel guilty about.

Howie: Right.

Dr. Glenn: Okay. Well, thank you for another very interesting discussion. I will get this up on the blog shortly.

Howie: Cool. Thank you. It's always fun.



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 career, please visit BecomeAWeightLossCoach.com. That's BecomeAWeightLossCoach.com where you can attract high-paying clients by leveraging my credibility and the Never Binge Again brand and help them stop overeating and obsessing about food so they can achieve their health and fitness goals at BecomeAWeightLossCoach.com. That's BecomeAWeightLossCoach.com. Thanks.

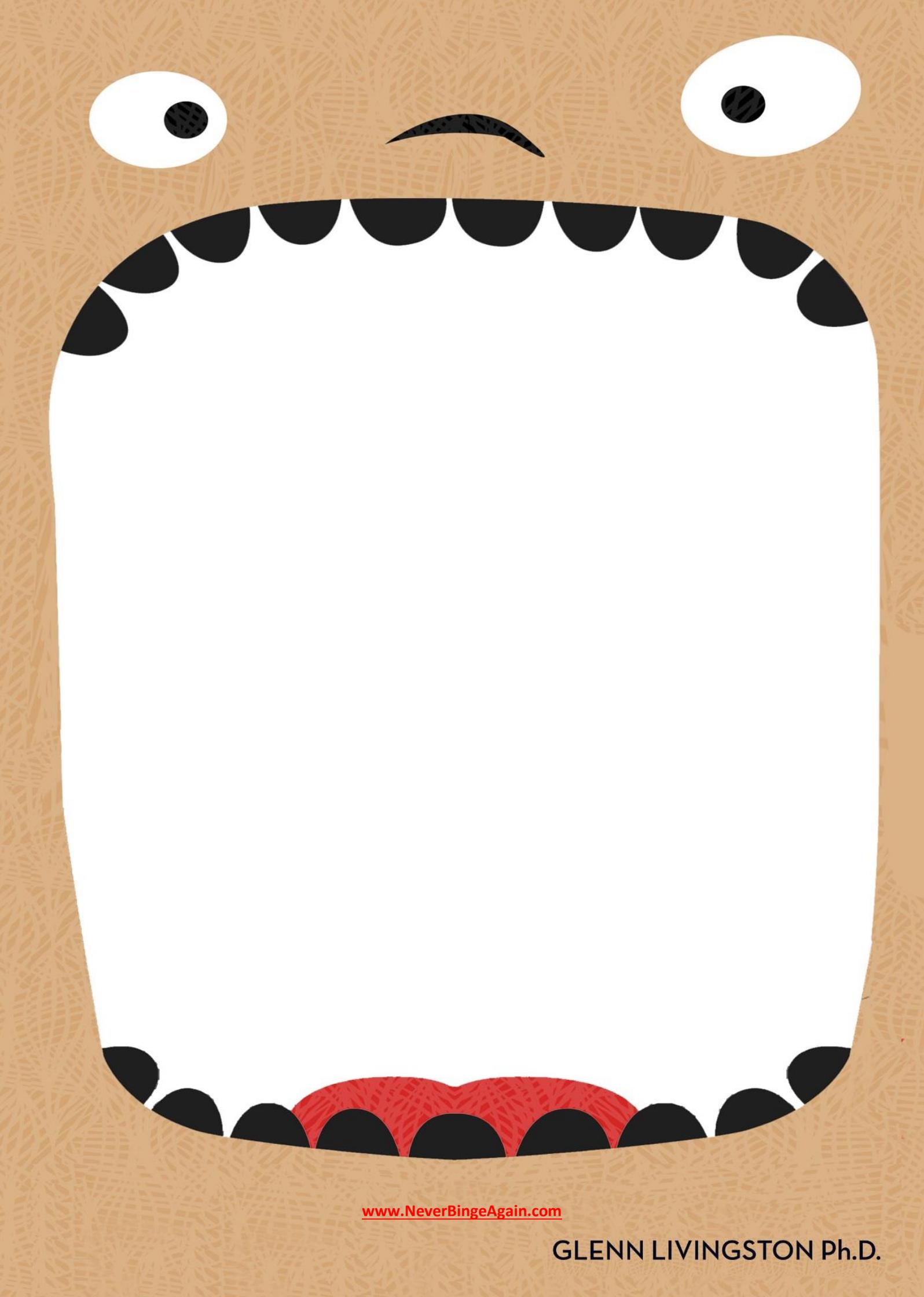
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