

**Glenn Livingston, Ph.D.  
and Sally  
Salty Crunchy 001**

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**Dr. Glenn:** Well, hey, it's the very good Dr. Glenn Livingston with Never Binge Again, and I'm here with Sally, who has agreed to talk to us about her struggles past and present with salty snacks. Sally, tell me what's on your mind about salty snacks. Has that been a nemesis of yours?

**Sally:** Yes, it has. That's something that I crave, especially at night.

**Dr. Glenn:** Especially at night?

**Sally:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Glenn:** Since when?

**Sally:** Forever.

**Dr. Glenn:** Forever?

**Sally:** Well, as long as I can remember. I like salty crunchy snacks. I just get cravings, especially salty, for some reason.



**Dr. Glenn:** What are they in particular that you struggle with? Are pretzels or chips?

**Sally:** Yeah. I like pretzels, those peanut butter filled pretzels. I like regular pretzels, chips, anything that's crunchy and salty, especially salty. I did buy some of those a while ago. I had ones that are made out of humus. I like those but now I can't find those anymore.

**Dr. Glenn:** Oh, and that was healthier for you?

**Sally:** Yeah, it was healthier. You could eat more of them, and I would measure them out for my snacks. I don't buy potato chips because -- I don't know, I never used to like potato chips. I don't really know what happened. They used to make me sick because they were too greasy or something. But then I overcame that.

**Dr. Glenn:** Where do you stand with this all now? Are you still troubled by it?

**Sally:** Yes, I am. Well, it's like a kind of a slippery slope. I started out with the ones that were more healthy, but then I couldn't find those anymore, and so then, even pretzels. It's just sort of like a slippery slope because at first, I start out, and I'll eat like maybe 10 of them, count them all and eat them and then pretty soon, I'm eating them out of the jar and then I don't even count them out, I just eat them.

**Dr. Glenn:** What role would you like the salty crunchy snacks to play in your life? What do you want to do with them?

**Sally:** I guess I'd like to be able to control how many I eat, and I guess I can control it, but I don't, for some reason.



**Dr. Glenn:** What would that look like to control your salty crunchy snacks?

**Sally:** Just count them out. That's what I was doing in the beginning, but it seems like you started out and you're doing fine and then pretty soon, you're eating a few more and a few more.

**Dr. Glenn:** So ideally, how many salty crunchy snacks would you like to count out?

**Sally:** Well, whatever I'm going to count as a serving, depending on how many calories they have. Usually, I like to try to limit myself to a serving, which might be 12 or 14 or something.

**Dr. Glenn:** So one serving. How often would you have a serving; every day, 10 times a day, how often?

**Sally:** Maybe once a day at the most.

**Dr. Glenn:** One serving per calendar day. It still sounds a little ambiguous what a serving is. Is it written on the side?

**Sally:** Yeah, it's written on the bag. Regular pretzels are not that wonderful, so I don't have as much trouble controlling those. But those peanut butter pretzels, I could eat a lot more of those because they taste better. So I don't know. Maybe certain ones I shouldn't even buy.

**Dr. Glenn:** So the first thing we know is that you'll never have -- I'm just brainstorming some rules, you don't have to accept these. I'll never have more than one serving per calendar day as written on the bag of salty crunchy snacks.

**Sally:** Yeah. But the thing is that some of them are too high calorie.



**Dr. Glenn:** So how would we define those? Maybe we can make a second rule.

**Sally:** Chips. I don't think I can have chips; potato chips, tortilla chips, any of those because there's way too many calories in the serving of those.

**Dr. Glenn:** So I'll never eat chips again and I'll never have more than one serving per calendar day of any salty crunchy snack as defined a serving on the bag that's written on the label.

**Sally:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Glenn:** If you never had more than one serving per calendar day of salty crunchy snacks as defined on the label and you never had chips again no matter what, could you get in trouble with salty crunchy things?

**Sally:** Probably not.

**Dr. Glenn:** Probably not?

**Sally:** No. If I followed those guidelines, I wouldn't.

**Dr. Glenn:** So I'll never have chips again and I'll never have more than one serving of salty crunchy snacks per calendar day again.

**Sally:** Okay.

**Dr. Glenn:** Take a breath. How does that feel?

**Sally:** That's fine.



**Dr. Glenn:** Would your salty crunchy snack problem be over if you followed those guidelines?

**Sally:** Probably not because I'd still be craving it.

**Dr. Glenn:** So the alternative would be what, to have none at all?

**Sally:** Probably.

**Dr. Glenn:** Well, do you have another alternative in mind?

**Sally:** No. I guess my pig just doesn't want to do that.

**Dr. Glenn:** Well, let's not decide yet, okay?

**Sally:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Glenn:** Let's do a couple of more questions. Just for argument's sake, if you cut them out completely, would you still have enough calories in your diet?

**Sally:** Oh yeah, I'm sure I would.

**Dr. Glenn:** Is there any chance that you would starve?

**Sally:** No.

**Dr. Glenn:** Is there any medical reason that you have to eat salty crunchy snacks because your doctor told you that you're deficient in salty crunchy snacks?



**Sally:** No, not at all.

**Dr. Glenn:** You stand to lose a great deal of money if you don't eat salty crunchy snacks?

**Sally:** No.

**Dr. Glenn:** Okay. Let's look at these two alternatives. One of them is to just blank it, get rid of salty crunchy snacks, boom, they're gone. The other one is to never have more than one serving a day and never eat chips at all.

**Sally:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Glenn:** Let's start out with if you never had them again, and you actually didn't. What would be different in your life in a year?

**Sally:** I'd probably lose weight.

**Dr. Glenn:** How much would you lose?

**Sally:** Well, I don't know. As long as I didn't replace that with something else that's higher calorie.

**Dr. Glenn:** Would you be planning to replace it with something else?

**Sally:** I might. Originally, I put never eat candy, and I haven't eaten candy since January. So I don't eat candy. I haven't eaten any candy. So other things that I probably should reevaluate my list, I originally had that I could only have like cake on somebody's birthday or special occasions. But somehow or other -- I shouldn't say somehow or other, but it sort of creeps back in that I have dessert more often than on



somebody's birthday, not necessarily cake but other desserts. It just sort of creeps back in.

**Dr. Glenn:** Okay. That's a phenomenon we might call symptom substitution. And what the pig says about that is that no matter how many rules you make, it's going to keep finding another loophole, something else that it can get you in trouble with where it can ruin your goals. And so a lot of people conclude from that what's not really worth making these goals. My experience has been that if you persist and the pig substitutes, let's say it's having a different type of candy or a different type of cake that's not really cake, but you know it's just as bad, I remember when I was not having -- I still don't have cake. My rule was that I would not have cake.

At some point, I figured out that if I cooked oatmeal long enough with enough maple syrup, that it was just like eating cake. I was telling myself it was oatmeal. This was like 10 years ago. I have made another rule that I would never cook oatmeal more than three minutes and I would only have such and such sweeteners in it. And what happens is eventually, the pig runs out of things. If you make rules that are broad enough, the pig can't substitute symptoms forever. It says that it can, but you know, maybe three, four, a half a dozen times, it could do it.

So that's one thing. We can go back to the original rules there and fix that, and maybe we won't do that today, or you could do that on your own. We can go back and fix that, because I don't know that we should accept your pig saying that, "Well, just because I managed to substitute one symptom for another before, then I can do that forever," I got you. I know that we have to accept that. That was my Halloween Never Binge Again laugh, by the way.



**Sally:** Okay.

**Dr. Glenn:** Well, how do you feel about that?

**Sally:** I agree with you that I can change that. I've been thinking for a little while that I need to revisit all that. And because I did really well for about the first maybe six months, and then somehow -- I shouldn't say somehow, I know, I've gotten lax in my rules and I haven't done so well for the last maybe, four months.

**Dr. Glenn:** So you go back and tighten them up. That's all you need to do, Sally. Just go back and tighten them up.

**Sally:** I know. I've been thinking that lately that I need to do that. I guess it's easier to fool yourself by a little bit here and a little bit there.

**Dr. Glenn:** That's how the pig does it. Yeah.

**Sally:** Do you think that if you quit eating the salty crunchy snacks altogether; does the urge go away more so than if you limit?

**Dr. Glenn:** That's what I've seen, yeah, but it doesn't mean that you have to do that. You're certainly not reinforcing those reward pathways anymore. And so there is an initial more intense period of cravings that's more uncomfortable but it's over a lot sooner and the cravings diminished like 20 percent of what they were within a month or two and then to five percent of what they were six months or a year later. That would be my best way of describing it.



**Sally:** Well, I know in my heart that that's what I have to do is to rework my plan and to tighten up on my rules because I know that's what happened is everything has just gotten a little loophole.

**Dr. Glenn:** It's not clear to me yet whether the best way is to give it up or do it sometimes for you. It's not really clear. I ask the question and just, is there any reason that your doctor says that you have a salty crunchy snack deficiency? I know there's no doctor out there saying you have to have more potato chips or peanut butter covered pretzels. So I'm always supportive of people if they want to get some of that stuff out of their diet, but I also think that there's a valid argument that says, "Look, I know this is not great for me but I want to have some anyways, the tradeoff I'm willing to make."

Like I always say, I think we fought wars for that freedom, and if people want to make that tradeoff, I support their right to do that because I want to support their autonomy. So let's just take this a little further. You said you might lose some weight if you were never going to have them again, entirely, blank it, give up. If you were never going to have salty snacks again in a year, you might lose some weight unless the pig replaced it with something else. How likely do you think it is that the pig could keep replacing it with something else? Do you believe what I'm telling you or do you feel like, "No, my pig is going to get me anyway"?

**Sally:** No, I believe what you're telling me. I guess I have good intentions and then I let the pig get the best of me, that nagging, nagging craving, you know.

**Dr. Glenn:** In the past, your experience has been that you can keep the pig in the cage for a while that you gave into the nagging craving before. But



now, you're becoming a person who no longer lets that happen. Do you see how we changed that language?

**Sally:** Mm-hmm. In the past, I have gone on a low-carb diet, and it seemed like that we're okay for a while, but then it's just that I got so sick at eating just things that were low-carb. It's like I just can't even eat that any long. Like eggs, I don't like eggs to this day because I was on low-carb and I eat scrambled eggs all the time. Then I get to a point where I don't know what to eat. I guess I don't want to get to that point. I don't want to limit myself and have to eat something that I absolutely hate, like eggs.

**Dr. Glenn:** Let's look at the sometimes rule then. So if you never have more than one serving a day as defined by the label and you never eat regular chips again of any type, then what do you think would happen in one year?

**Sally:** Well, I hope that I'd lose some weight.

**Dr. Glenn:** I'd like you to project yourself into the future. It's one year from now. Did you lose weight or not?

**Sally:** Yes.

**Dr. Glenn:** How much did you lose?

**Sally:** Twenty pounds. It's what I want to lose.

**Dr. Glenn:** Mm-hmm. And why do you want to lose 20 pounds? What would be good about that?



**Sally:** I would think I would look better. I'd fit into a smaller size and I would like the way I look better.

**Dr. Glenn:** I think we've talked about this before. Are there particular dresses or sweaters or something you'd like to wear?

**Sally:** Mm-hmm, yeah.

**Dr. Glenn:** Tell me about them again just for the sake of painting the picture.

**Sally:** Okay. I have kind of a lacey top I really like but it never really fit me right. I bought it just because I liked it so well and it never fit me and it still doesn't. Then my pig says, "Well, I lost 18 pounds and it still didn't fit me right." I guess I was discouraged. They used to say if you lost 10 pounds, that was a size. Well, I lost 18 pounds and I'm like maybe a half a size. I don't know, I guess I was like, "Oh well, what the heck?"

**Dr. Glenn:** The pig says that you'll never fit into it because 18 pounds didn't do it. Is that true? If you lost another 20, would it fit?

**Sally:** I am sure it would.

**Dr. Glenn:** Didn't you tell me something about gardening?

**Sally:** Yeah.

**Dr. Glenn:** You have those wonderful flowers outside?

**Sally:** Mm-hmm, yes.

**Dr. Glenn:** Tell me what type they were again.



**Sally:** Dahlias and hydrangeas.

**Dr. Glenn:** Yeah. We looked at the pictures of them online and they were so beautiful.

**Sally:** Uh-huh, yup.

**Dr. Glenn:** So you could do more of that if you were thinner, if I remember correctly?

**Sally:** Yup, I could. It's going to be a winner, but it doesn't matter. I want to be 20 pounds thinner. I do want to. Sometimes I think to myself, "Oh, what's the difference?" In my heart of hearts, I still want to be 20 pounds thinner.

**Dr. Glenn:** Pig says, "There's no difference. It doesn't matter. You shouldn't bother."

**Sally:** No, that's not true.

**Dr. Glenn:** You're not ready to give up on that. You still want that other life.

**Sally:** No, I'm not.

**Dr. Glenn:** Sally, when you look at these two futures, it was kind of hard for you to see the future never doing it again, but when you look at the future, if you do it sometimes, you have only one serving a day and you don't have chips anyway, you had a much more vivid future when you did it sometimes.



**Sally:** When I did what?

**Dr. Glenn:** You liked the conditional rule better than the never rule.

**Sally:** Yeah, I do.

**Dr. Glenn:** My experience is that people really know, they usually know what they're going to be capable of maintaining. They usually know how it's going to turn out. I wonder, should we at least start with that rule, the conditional rule, see how it goes, and then you can always tighten up later if you need to?

**Sally:** Yes, I think that's something to start with. But I think I will just allow myself one serving of pretzels but no chips or anything like that.

**Dr. Glenn:** Yeah, that's the way we wrote it. No more than one serving of salty crunchy snacks per day that's written on the label but never eat chips no matter what.

**Sally:** Right, yeah. I'm sure I can do that.

**Dr. Glenn:** What does your pig say? Why does the pig say you can't or won't or shouldn't?

**Sally:** Just because I like the way that it tastes. If I'm a place where they are, then my pig is like, "Oh, it just looks so good to have a couple and so what." It's like, "Oh, life is short. I just want to enjoy life." I know, it's crazy. I can hear that it's crazy, but at the time, it doesn't seem so crazy when it's going on.



**Dr. Glenn:** Well, what else does the pig say out of all the other reasons? Life is short, it doesn't really matter, it looks so good, it tastes so good. What else does the pig say?

**Sally:** "I just don't want to do this anymore." Basically, I think that's what the pig says.

**Dr. Glenn:** And if you were to dispute those things from the part of you that really wants to lose the 20 pounds and spend more time gardening and wear that lacey dress, lacey top, what would you say when the pig says that it tastes so good?

**Sally:** Well, it's only a moment on your lips, forever on your hips.

**Dr. Glenn:** Okay.

**Sally:** Because you eat it. It does tastes good while you're eating it but then afterwards, after it's already eaten, then I feel really guilty about it. It really tastes good while you're chewing it and then it's like, "Oh, why did I even eat that?" I feel so guilty and it's not worth it either to feel so guilty about it.

**Dr. Glenn:** When the pig says, "It looks so good, it looks so good," what's the answer to that?

**Sally:** No, it doesn't really look that good. It's just greasy, and besides that, it's unhealthy.

**Dr. Glenn:** What you're saying here is that there are two ways to look at anything. You can look at it through your eyes or you can look at it through the pig's eyes. And to you, it looks greasy and unhealthy.



**Sally:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Glenn:** When the pig says, "So what? It doesn't matter."

**Sally:** Well, it does matter because I don't really like feeling that way about myself. I hate getting my picture taken because I hate the way I look in pictures. My little fat face.

**Dr. Glenn:** You don't want to live like that anymore?

**Sally:** No, I don't want to. I don't want to be ashamed of my picture.

**Dr. Glenn:** Okay. How about when the pig says, "Life is short, you should enjoy yourself"?

**Sally:** No. Life is short and I should enjoy other things in life, not just eating. Eating should be for nourishment, it shouldn't be for recreation or for boredom or any of that stuff, which is what I use it for a lot of times. Cheer myself up. There are a lot of reasons that I should eat just to nourish myself, not for all kinds of other things.

**Dr. Glenn:** When the pig says, "I just don't want to give it up, I want to eat more," what's the good answer to that, "I just don't want to be good"?

**Sally:** Well, maybe the pig doesn't want to be good but I want to feel good and I want to look good. So I guess that's not me. I can't do both. I can't eat all that stuff and I can't look the way I want to look.



**Dr. Glenn:** There you go. Okay. How confident do you feel that you're never going to have more than one serving of salty crunchy snacks again as defined on the label and that you're never going to have chips again?

**Sally:** Hundred percent.

**Dr. Glenn:** Do you really?

**Sally:** I do. Yes, I do. If I could give up candy, which candy was my nemesis, and I have not eaten candy since January -- I mean, I would have never thought I could give up candy. So if I can give up candy, I can give up chips and have one serving, that should be plenty for me, one serving, at the most. I would have to eat and have one serving.

**Dr. Glenn:** Well, there's no rule that we made that says you have to have it, right?

**Sally:** No.

**Dr. Glenn:** "I must have at least one serving of salty snacks every day." We didn't say that.

**Sally:** No.

**Dr. Glenn:** Or else you have to call the police on me.

**Sally:** Yeah, right.

**Dr. Glenn:** That's not going to happen. "Eat your salty snacks or I will call the police." That won't happen.

**Sally:** No.



**Dr. Glenn:** Do you have any questions or concerns?

**Sally:** No. I'm going to redo my food plan and take off this other 20 pounds and be happy.

**Dr. Glenn:** It sounds like you need to go back and tighten up the area around the cakes also, right?

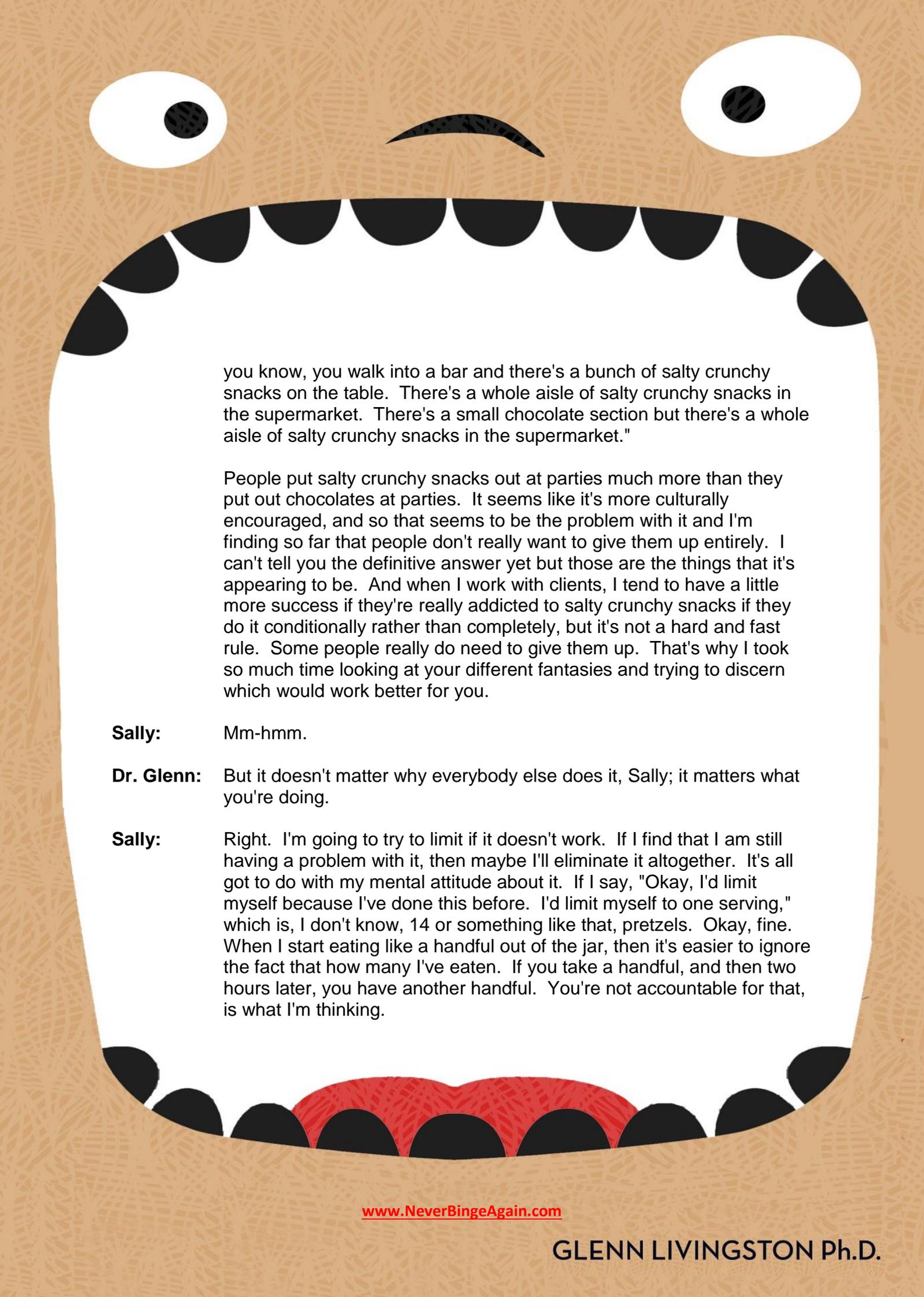
**Sally:** Yup, I need to do that, but what it is about salty crunchy snacks that seem to be a problem for people?

**Dr. Glenn:** Do you have any guesses about it?

**Sally:** No, not really. The other thing was like, pasta or something like that. See, I can eat that or not. It's all right, but I don't overeat on it.

**Dr. Glenn:** There seems to be something that releases people's oral aggression in the salty crunchy snacks. You know, we go through these days and people irritate us. It's almost like we'd like to bite them. You can't bite them. Please, nobody listening go out and bite someone, but it's almost like we'd like to. And there's something about the crunch and the chewing while you're crunching. That seems to release that aggression, and it's gratifying for people.

The other thing is that it's more ubiquitous. I ran a national survey with -- I think it was 2,800 people, and I asked them to categorize the foods they couldn't stop eating. And I thought people were going to say chocolate and maybe pizza, but salty crunchy snacks were three times more commonly mentioned as the food that people have trouble stopping than chocolate. And when we thought about it, we say, "Well,



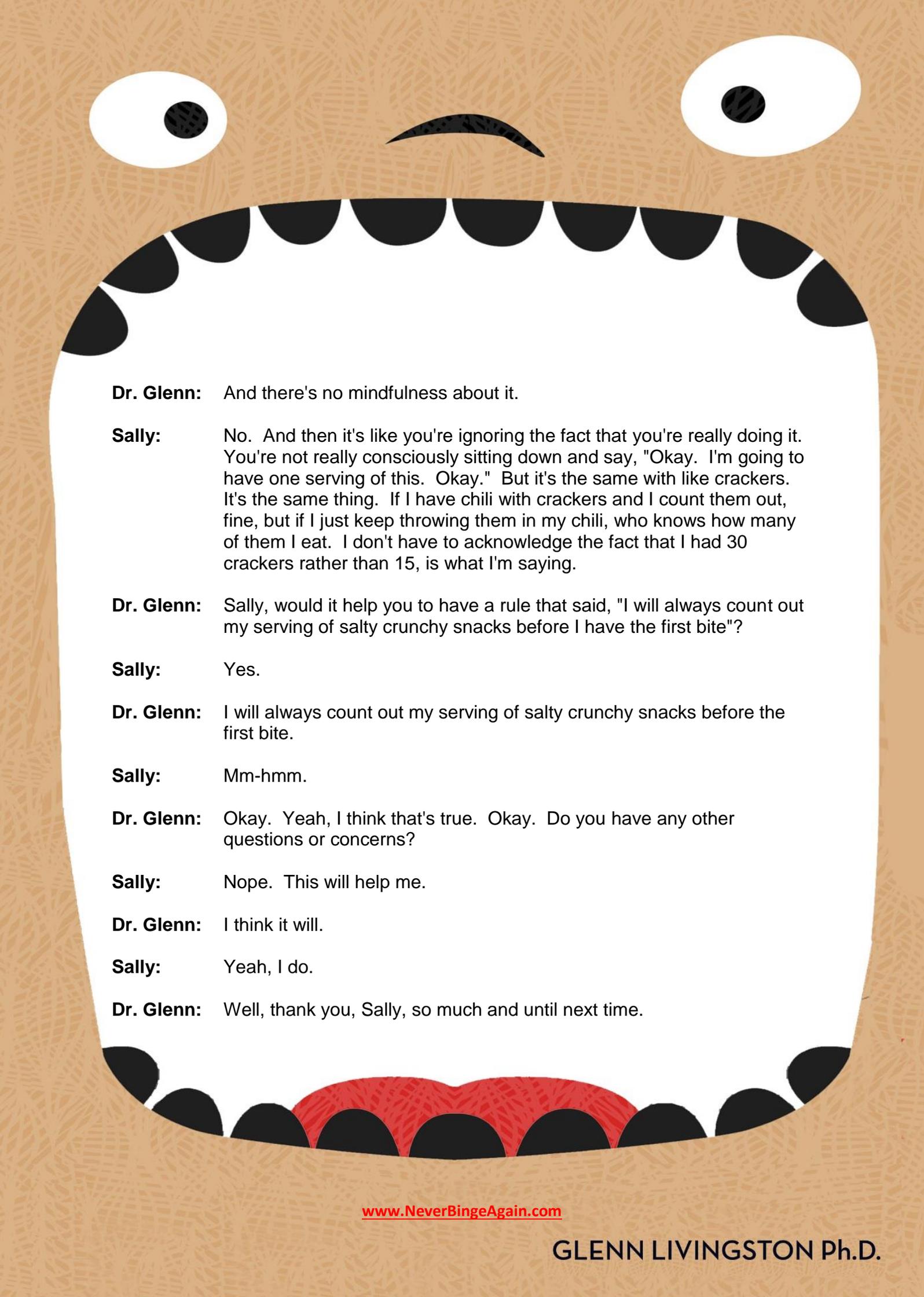
you know, you walk into a bar and there's a bunch of salty crunchy snacks on the table. There's a whole aisle of salty crunchy snacks in the supermarket. There's a small chocolate section but there's a whole aisle of salty crunchy snacks in the supermarket."

People put salty crunchy snacks out at parties much more than they put out chocolates at parties. It seems like it's more culturally encouraged, and so that seems to be the problem with it and I'm finding so far that people don't really want to give them up entirely. I can't tell you the definitive answer yet but those are the things that it's appearing to be. And when I work with clients, I tend to have a little more success if they're really addicted to salty crunchy snacks if they do it conditionally rather than completely, but it's not a hard and fast rule. Some people really do need to give them up. That's why I took so much time looking at your different fantasies and trying to discern which would work better for you.

**Sally:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Glenn:** But it doesn't matter why everybody else does it, Sally; it matters what you're doing.

**Sally:** Right. I'm going to try to limit if it doesn't work. If I find that I am still having a problem with it, then maybe I'll eliminate it altogether. It's all got to do with my mental attitude about it. If I say, "Okay, I'd limit myself because I've done this before. I'd limit myself to one serving," which is, I don't know, 14 or something like that, pretzels. Okay, fine. When I start eating like a handful out of the jar, then it's easier to ignore the fact that how many I've eaten. If you take a handful, and then two hours later, you have another handful. You're not accountable for that, is what I'm thinking.



**Dr. Glenn:** And there's no mindfulness about it.

**Sally:** No. And then it's like you're ignoring the fact that you're really doing it. You're not really consciously sitting down and say, "Okay. I'm going to have one serving of this. Okay." But it's the same with like crackers. It's the same thing. If I have chili with crackers and I count them out, fine, but if I just keep throwing them in my chili, who knows how many of them I eat. I don't have to acknowledge the fact that I had 30 crackers rather than 15, is what I'm saying.

**Dr. Glenn:** Sally, would it help you to have a rule that said, "I will always count out my serving of salty crunchy snacks before I have the first bite"?

**Sally:** Yes.

**Dr. Glenn:** I will always count out my serving of salty crunchy snacks before the first bite.

**Sally:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Glenn:** Okay. Yeah, I think that's true. Okay. Do you have any other questions or concerns?

**Sally:** Nope. This will help me.

**Dr. Glenn:** I think it will.

**Sally:** Yeah, I do.

**Dr. Glenn:** Well, thank you, Sally, so much and until next time.



**Sally:**      Okay. Thank you.

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