

**Glenn Livingston, Ph.D.
And Howie Jacobson, Ph.D.
“The Virtues of Sucking at Food”**

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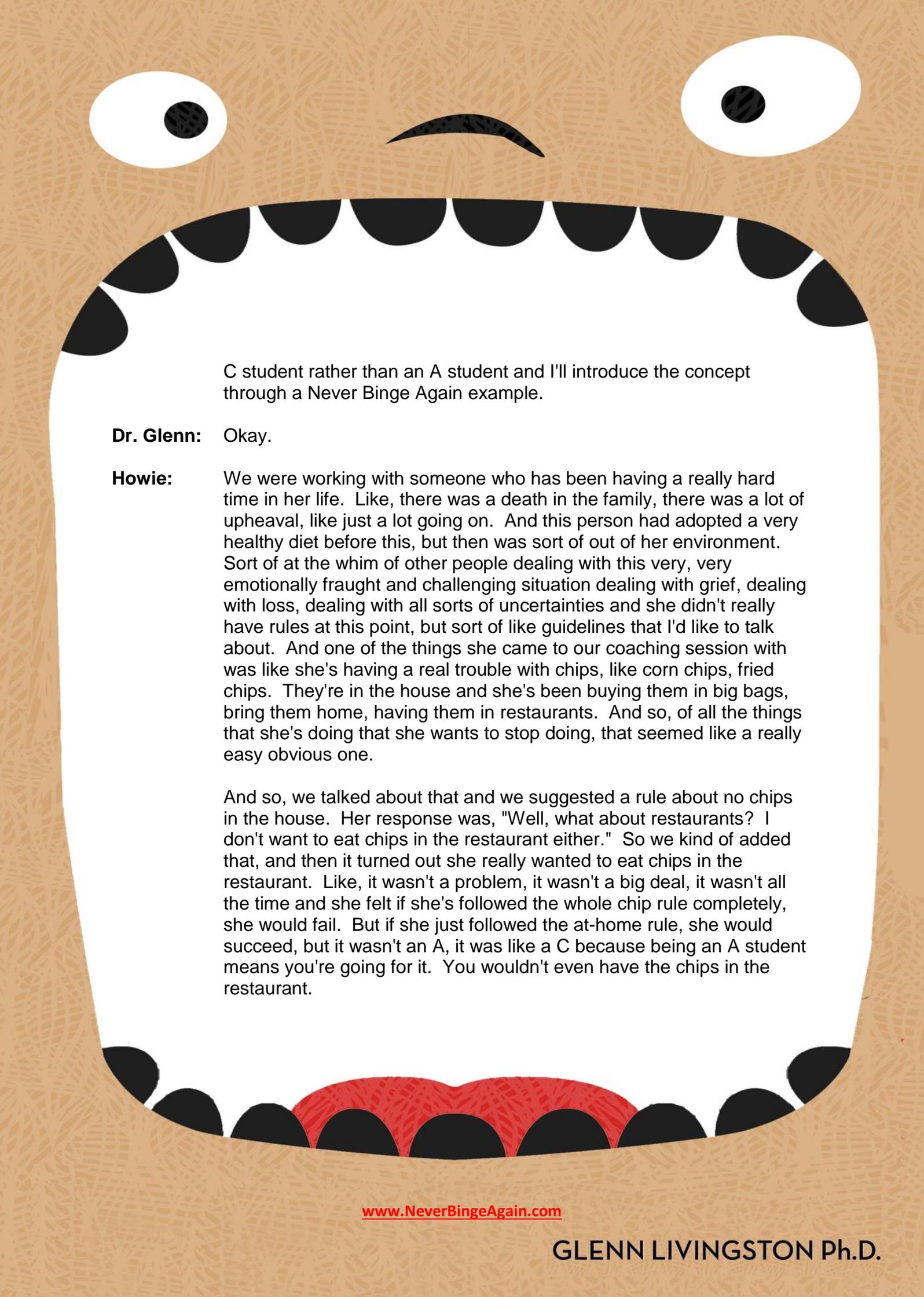
Howie: Hey, this is Howard Jacobson with WellStart Health and I'm joined by the very good Dr. Glenn Livingston of NeverBingeAgain.com. How is it going, Glenn?

Dr. Glenn: It is going so well you wouldn't believe it. It's going well. I'm happy today.

Howie: Good. I would believe it. You deserve all the good things so I totally believe it.

Dr. Glenn: Thanks, buddy. What's going on?

Howie: I want to talk to you today about comments I've been having with my business partner and coaching partner, Josh LaJaunie, about being a

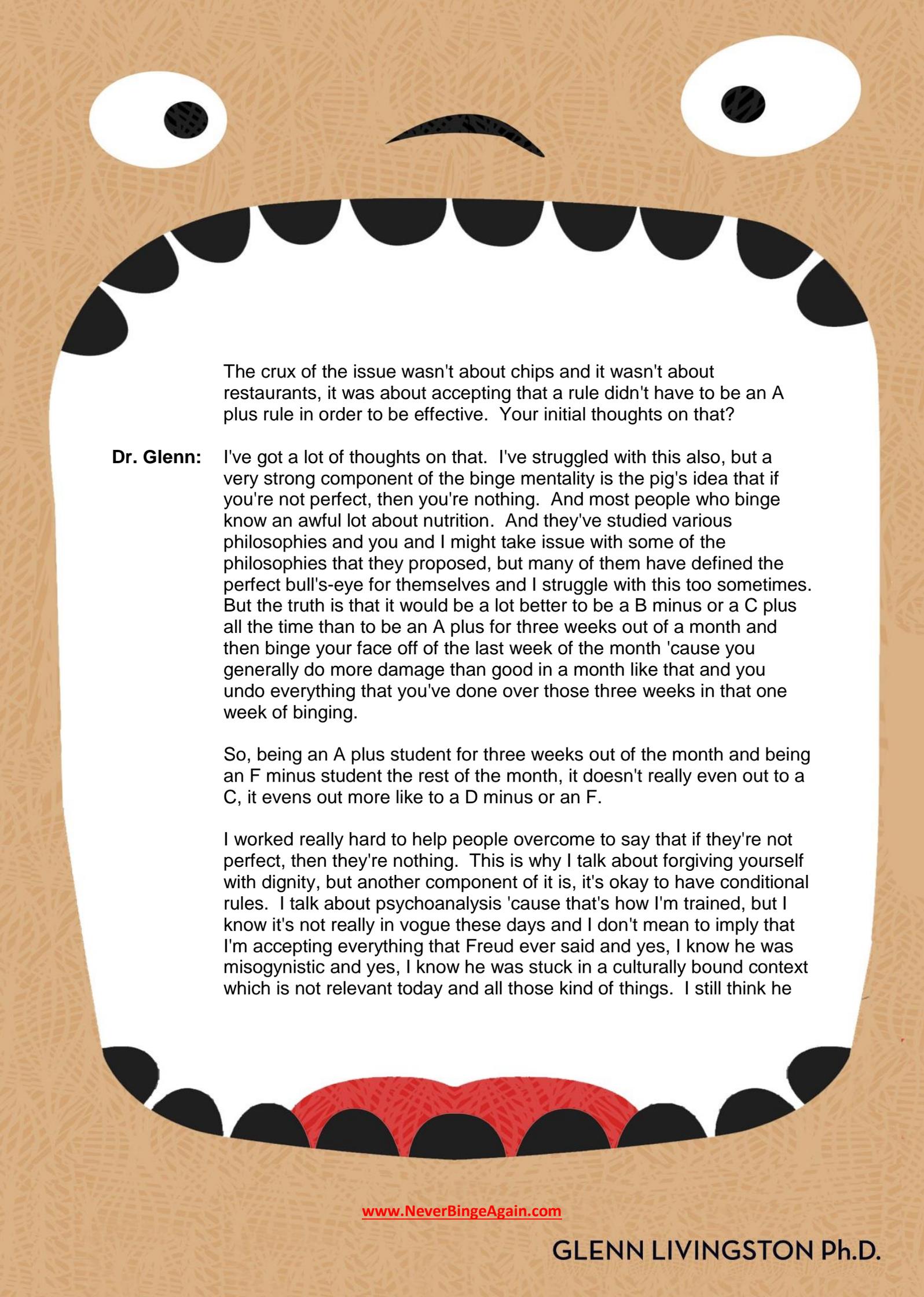


C student rather than an A student and I'll introduce the concept through a Never Binge Again example.

Dr. Glenn: Okay.

Howie: We were working with someone who has been having a really hard time in her life. Like, there was a death in the family, there was a lot of upheaval, like just a lot going on. And this person had adopted a very healthy diet before this, but then was sort of out of her environment. Sort of at the whim of other people dealing with this very, very emotionally fraught and challenging situation dealing with grief, dealing with loss, dealing with all sorts of uncertainties and she didn't really have rules at this point, but sort of like guidelines that I'd like to talk about. And one of the things she came to our coaching session with was like she's having a real trouble with chips, like corn chips, fried chips. They're in the house and she's been buying them in big bags, bring them home, having them in restaurants. And so, of all the things that she's doing that she wants to stop doing, that seemed like a really easy obvious one.

And so, we talked about that and we suggested a rule about no chips in the house. Her response was, "Well, what about restaurants? I don't want to eat chips in the restaurant either." So we kind of added that, and then it turned out she really wanted to eat chips in the restaurant. Like, it wasn't a problem, it wasn't a big deal, it wasn't all the time and she felt if she's followed the whole chip rule completely, she would fail. But if she just followed the at-home rule, she would succeed, but it wasn't an A, it was like a C because being an A student means you're going for it. You wouldn't even have the chips in the restaurant.



The crux of the issue wasn't about chips and it wasn't about restaurants, it was about accepting that a rule didn't have to be an A plus rule in order to be effective. Your initial thoughts on that?

Dr. Glenn: I've got a lot of thoughts on that. I've struggled with this also, but a very strong component of the binge mentality is the pig's idea that if you're not perfect, then you're nothing. And most people who binge know an awful lot about nutrition. And they've studied various philosophies and you and I might take issue with some of the philosophies that they proposed, but many of them have defined the perfect bull's-eye for themselves and I struggle with this too sometimes. But the truth is that it would be a lot better to be a B minus or a C plus all the time than to be an A plus for three weeks out of a month and then binge your face off of the last week of the month 'cause you generally do more damage than good in a month like that and you undo everything that you've done over those three weeks in that one week of bingeing.

So, being an A plus student for three weeks out of the month and being an F minus student the rest of the month, it doesn't really even out to a C, it evens out more like to a D minus or an F.

I worked really hard to help people overcome to say that if they're not perfect, then they're nothing. This is why I talk about forgiving yourself with dignity, but another component of it is, it's okay to have conditional rules. I talk about psychoanalysis 'cause that's how I'm trained, but I know it's not really in vogue these days and I don't mean to imply that I'm accepting everything that Freud ever said and yes, I know he was misogynistic and yes, I know he was stuck in a culturally bound context which is not relevant today and all those kind of things. I still think he



had something to say, but one of the things I do think he had to say was a distinction between the ego and the ego ideal.

Ego ideal is everything that we know that we could be in a perfect world. In a perfect world, personally, I would be nothing but fruits and vegetables. I'll get my omega-3s from avocados and greens, I would get at least 80 percent of my calories from carbohydrates, and that's the perfect world for me. And I'm always aiming towards that bull's-eye, but it's difficult to accept that there are some things that are not perfect that still might be a good compromise. For me for example, I also eat raw. Raw is my bull's-eye. And a lot of people run away screaming if they try to think about having to eat the way that I eat and you really don't have to eat the way that I eat. This is the result of a decade of following Never Binge Again and coming to the conclusion of this is how I feel best.

And I also have a genetic condition called a benign tremor, which is aggravated by heterocyclic amines which are caused by cooking starches. I'm cooking meat also, by the way. Raw food is much better for me. First, an organic corn is not necessarily raw. There are some damage to the cellular structure of the corn in the freezing process and it's not a perfect food, but the rest of my diet is so high water. There are some times when I'll have five hours of appointment straight coming up, or sometimes I just get really tired during the day. I tend to work late at night sometimes and so I'll only have five hours of sleep, and sometimes I just need a nap during the day and it will be after an exercise and I'm really beat and it would be best for my productivity to go lay down for an hour and then get back at it, but I'm hungry.

And after you work out really hard, go do a CrossFit workout or something like that. You need to replenish those carbohydrates or



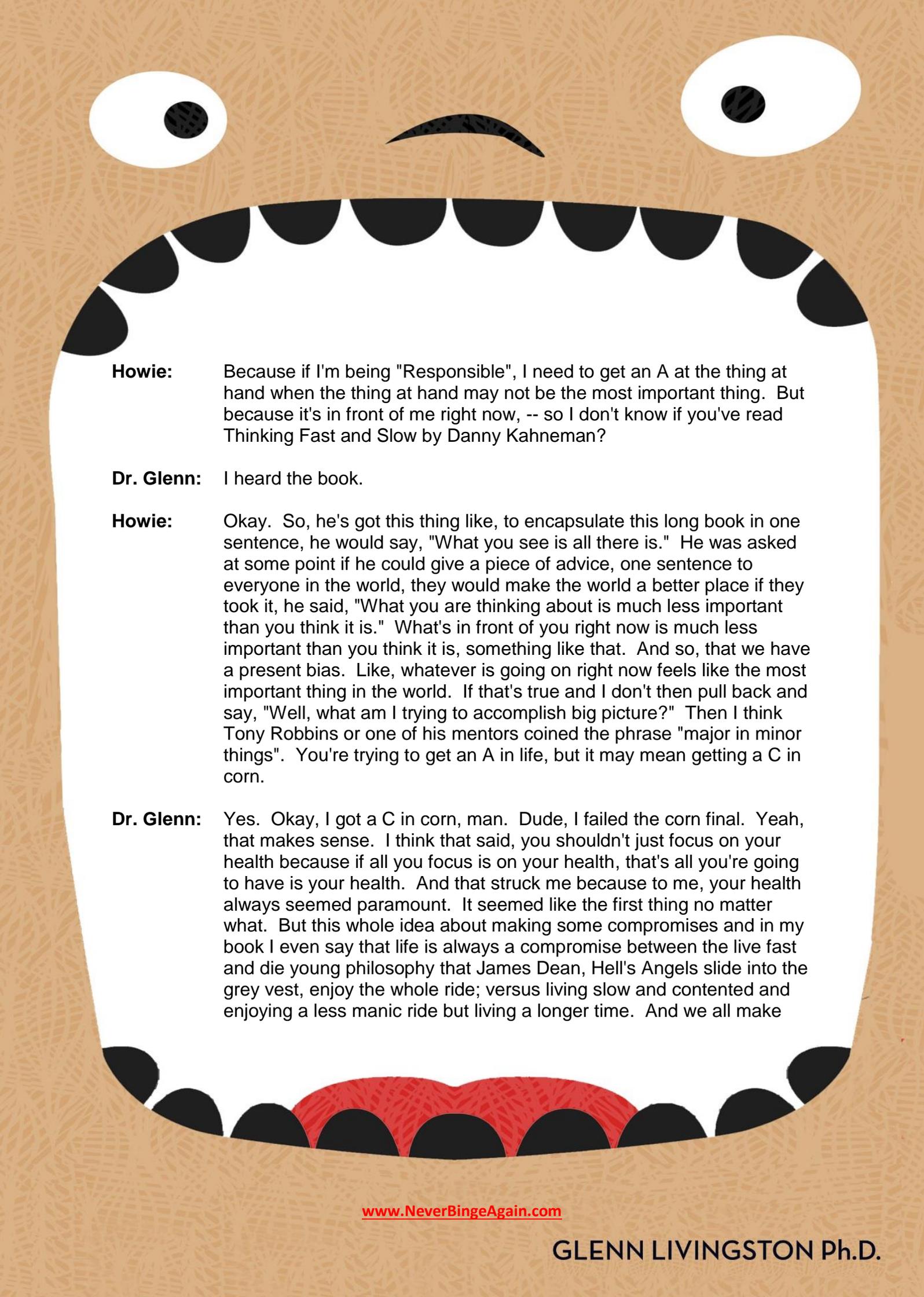
enzymes and some proteins and things and you have a small window in which to do that, otherwise, your body is authentically hungry and it starts to generate cravings and it's uncomfortable. So I have a choice. I could have half a watermelon and that's well within my food plan. And for me, I know a lot of people think that's crazy, but for me, that would be ideal. But if I do that, 15 minutes later, I'm going to be having to go drain the lizard. I'll be peeing for reliably for the next couple of hours.

Howie: I'm glad you didn't make me ask what that meant.

Dr. Glenn: Oh, yeah. I thought it was pretty obvious. It's also very adolescent. It's not very doctor like of me, but I still use that phrase from time to time. Drain the lizard, drain the lizard, drain the lizard. So, I've come to the conclusion that even though it's not perfect, that it's okay to allow up to a pound of raw corn every other day, and there's a part of me that struggles with that. It's not my ego ideal. It's not the ideal bull's-eye for me. If I want to eat perfect in a perfect world, then I would not do that, but it creates enough flexibility and the capacity to get calories and to feel full without having to pee every 15 minutes for a few hours that it's a better compromise for me. And so, if I'm active until I'm 95 instead of a hundred because of that, I make that compromise because my overall life I think is better in the next 40 years doing that. Does that make sense?

Howie: Yeah, it does. One of the ways in which we can get ourselves into trouble by trying to get an A is that we don't ask ourselves, well, what's the opportunity cost of this A? And if I chase this A, what am I by default going to give up or fail at?

Dr. Glenn: Yes.



Howie: Because if I'm being "Responsible", I need to get an A at the thing at hand when the thing at hand may not be the most important thing. But because it's in front of me right now, -- so I don't know if you've read Thinking Fast and Slow by Danny Kahneman?

Dr. Glenn: I heard the book.

Howie: Okay. So, he's got this thing like, to encapsulate this long book in one sentence, he would say, "What you see is all there is." He was asked at some point if he could give a piece of advice, one sentence to everyone in the world, they would make the world a better place if they took it, he said, "What you are thinking about is much less important than you think it is." What's in front of you right now is much less important than you think it is, something like that. And so, that we have a present bias. Like, whatever is going on right now feels like the most important thing in the world. If that's true and I don't then pull back and say, "Well, what am I trying to accomplish big picture?" Then I think Tony Robbins or one of his mentors coined the phrase "major in minor things". You're trying to get an A in life, but it may mean getting a C in corn.

Dr. Glenn: Yes. Okay, I got a C in corn, man. Dude, I failed the corn final. Yeah, that makes sense. I think that said, you shouldn't just focus on your health because if all you focus is on your health, that's all you're going to have is your health. And that struck me because to me, your health always seemed paramount. It seemed like the first thing no matter what. But this whole idea about making some compromises and in my book I even say that life is always a compromise between the live fast and die young philosophy that James Dean, Hell's Angels slide into the grey vest, enjoy the whole ride; versus living slow and contented and enjoying a less manic ride but living a longer time. And we all make



compromises about that. And so, we fought wars for their freedom to be able to do that so I don't want to take that away from anyone. But when it comes to implementing it myself, I'm so far on the live slow and enjoy the ride and of the continuum that sometimes I think it would be helpful if I swung back a little bit. And it's okay if I get a C in corn. It's really okay.

Howie: Mm-hmm.

Dr. Glenn: Because if I just focus on my health, then that's all I'm going to have and I'd rather be able to more easily go to a restaurant and enjoy some social time in the norms of our society. Even though I'm the first person to say that our society has a tacit agreement that we're all going to kill ourselves slowly with food, I think that that agreement is very dangerous. I also think that it can be equally problematic to go so far to the other side that you are not fitting in, and we'll have to figure out where that line is for ourselves.

Howie: I often think of trying to live healthy in the society is like trying to play basketball on an ice skating rink because, on one hand, we have the facts of the food. We have everything we know about sugar, oil, salt, processed food, chemicals, pesticides, antibiotics, like all this unnatural food. And at the same time, the most natural thing in the world is to share food with other people and to be part of a group. We're going to be unnatural and we're going to be fighting an uphill battle in one of those areas at least for a while until we either move to Portland where everybody is vegan, or --

Dr. Glenn: They're not though. It's about 20 percent. They're not all vegan here.



Howie: Right. Yeah, and I remember being there and vegan in Portland means you can get a cupcake at 3:00 in the morning, so it's not exactly my crowd, but just the understanding that everything has tradeoffs. Everything has limits. I remember talking to Perry Marshall about this a long time ago and he was a friend of ours from the old days from the marketing world and he got his start in business designing speaker systems for cars. And like, every decision you made around a speaker was a tradeoff. You either got more of this, but less this, higher cost or better quality. Everything was a tradeoff, and so that was a really useful life lesson. So, I think we want to be careful what we're optimizing.

Dr. Glenn: Yes. Yes, you got to be careful what you're optimizing for it and it's part of softening your superego. To overcome binge eating, you need to lighten up on yourself a bit. It's critical that you learn to forgive yourself after you make mistakes. It's critical that you stop asking why can't I stop eating? And you start asking how can I stop eating? And you start collecting evidence of success. And being willing to set less than perfect goals is part of lightening up yourself a little bit and learning to forgive yourself. It really fits in with the overall mentality of recovering from binge eating. So, that was a good topic, Howie.

Howie: Oh, thank you. Thanks for the thoughts and the elucidations.

Dr. Glenn: Thank you for using the word elucidation.

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