

Why You Tell Yourself “Just One More Spoon” During a Binge — The Science Explained

Meta Description:

Ever binge and think “just one more bite” or “I’ll start again tomorrow”? Learn the science behind these thoughts, why dieting fuels bingeing, and ways to better understand and navigate your urges.

Disclaimer:

This content is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional medical or psychological care. If you are struggling with eating disorders, please reach out to a qualified healthcare provider.

Introduction

If you’ve ever found yourself bingeing, you may recognize thoughts like:

- “Just one more spoon...”
- “It doesn’t count, it’s the weekend...”
- “I’ll start again tomorrow.”

While these thoughts often feel like excuses, research shows there are **biological and psychological explanations** behind them. Understanding these mechanisms can help you respond with **self-compassion** rather than self-blame. ([Badiani et al., 2023](#))

1. “Just One More Spoon...” — How Dopamine & Reward Systems Influence Bingeing

When food is restricted, your brain’s reward system becomes highly sensitive. Eating can trigger **dopamine surges**, which increase the desire to keep eating. This is a **natural, neurochemical response**, not a sign of weakness. ([Castro et al., 2022](#); [Hajnal et al., 2022](#))

- Over time, repeated cycles of restriction and bingeing can reinforce the brain’s reward pathways, making urges feel automatic ([Vella-Zarb et al., 2025](#)).

Takeaway: Feeling unable to stop at “just one more bite” is a **common biological response**, not a character flaw.

2. “It Doesn’t Count, It’s the Weekend...” — All-or-Nothing Thinking

Dieting often encourages strict rules about “good” vs. “bad” foods. When a rule is broken, the brain can slip into **all-or-nothing thinking**, making it harder to listen to natural cues. ([Cambridge Review, 2022](#))

- This is a predictable **cognitive response** — not a failure of willpower.

Gentle guidance: Allowing yourself permission to pause and notice your hunger and fullness cues can reduce this automatic “permission to binge” mindset.

3. “I’ll Start Again Tomorrow...” — The What-the-Hell Effect & Crashes

After one perceived slip, your brain often seeks **immediate comfort**, promising to “reset” later. This is the **what-the-hell effect**, frequently observed in restrained eaters ([JeatDisord, 2023](#)).

- Physiologically, bingeing can cause **blood sugar spikes and crashes**, which may increase cravings.
- Animal studies show that repeated cycles of restriction + bingeing can alter reward circuitry, reinforcing the urge to binge ([Hajnal et al., 2022](#)).

Gentle guidance: Notice your urges with curiosity, rather than self-blame, and consider small, supportive steps to reconnect with your body’s signals.

4. Understanding Your Brain and Body

Bingeing is a **normal response to dieting, reward sensitivity, and cognitive patterns**. Research highlights that:

- Restrictive dieting fuels binge urges ([Castro et al., 2022](#))
- Dopamine and reward systems influence cravings ([Badiani et al., 2023](#))
- Cognitive rigidity and all-or-nothing thinking can amplify urges ([Cambridge Review, 2022](#))

Takeaway: Binge urges are **neuro-behavioral responses** — understanding them is empowering and reduces shame.

5. Supportive Strategies to Navigate Urges

While this blog is not a substitute for professional treatment, research and coaching experience suggest gentle strategies that may help:

- **Practice intuitive eating:** reconnect with hunger and fullness cues.
- **Reduce rigid “food rules”:** allow flexibility and self-compassion.
- **Seek supportive guidance:** a coach, therapist, or peer support group can help you navigate triggers.

- **Prioritize consistent nourishment:** avoid extreme restriction, which fuels urges.

Remember: Recovery is about learning, noticing patterns, and responding with curiosity and compassion — not willpower alone.

References

1. Badiani, A., et al. (2023). *The neurobiological reward system and binge eating: A critical systematic review of neuroimaging studies*. PubMed. [Link](#)
2. Castro, D., et al. (2022). *A literature review of dopamine in binge eating*. J Eat Disord. [Link](#)
3. Hajnal, A., et al. (2022). *Corticostriatal dynamics underlying components of binge-like consumption of palatable food in mice*. PubMed. [Link](#)
4. Vella-Zarb, R., et al. (2025). *Neuroimaging and machine learning in eating disorders: a systematic review*. Springer. [Link](#)
5. Cambridge Review (2022). *Conceptualising binge eating: a review of theoretical and empirical literature*. [Link](#)
6. JeatDisord (2023). *Emotion regulation and inhibition in binge-eating disorder*. [Link](#)