

Eating Sweets: The One Who Can't Lose Control

Session facilitated by Elizabeth Lavine

Pamela: I've been doing so well with the Compulsion Inquiry, and not had any bingeing for over a year. Even better, mischievous eating has been completely gone for the past three months. It was heavenly... to be that free in my life, all that breathing room around food. But over the Easter weekend, I lost it. I started nibbling the dinner treats, then the cookies, and the next day I totally lost control. [crying]

EJ: Okay, let your breath be steady. Let the energy come front and center—the feeling of “I totally lost control.” Not the story... just invite the raw feeling of that.

Pamela: [choking, crying] I'm afraid.

EJ: That's going into the story. Let the story arise, it's pushing it, demanding your attention. Let it clamor, but give your attention to the rise and fall of the breath and the waves of energy.

Pamela: Okay. [pause] It's easier now. It's calming.

EJ: Let's look for the threat, and any command to resist or react. Start with the sound, the words, “I'll totally lose control.” What comes up when you hear those sounds?

Pamela: My father's face. He looks murderous—like he wants to smash and kill someone or something.

EJ: What feeling reaction happens in you when you watch that image?

Pamela: Sick. Shock, freeze.

EJ: Okay, now press the pause button on him. Stop time, and let him be a frozen image. Let your breath be steady, close your eyes and invite the shock.

Pamela: I literally feel a cold vapor, it's shaking.

EJ: Good. Can the breath be steady?

Pamela: Yes. [pause]

EJ: Find the open, neutral space behind that cold shaking. Can you sense that the openness is neither cold or hot? Neither shaking or solid? It's neutral.

Pamela: Yes.

EJ: Turn the energy over. Let the space receive it.

Pamela: It's calming. [pause] There's just a feeling of aliveness now. Steady.

EJ: Is that energy you, a self who's going to lose control?

Pamela: No. but I still feel I'm going to lose control.

EJ: Let's revisit the image of your father. You see his face? The murderous look?

Pamela: Yes.

EJ: Is that image you, a self who's going to lose control?

Pamela: No, but now I'm seeing a memory of a time when he spanked me really hard, and I lost control of my bladder. I felt like I would black out and die when that happened.

EJ: Okay, go to the moment of impact—when you lost control of your bladder.

Pamela: Oh, God, no.

EJ: Well, you have your magic remote control now, which you didn't have then.

Pamela: That's right. I forgot.

EJ: So go to the moment of impact.

Pamela: I got it.

EJ: Press the pause button on him. Let that memory be entirely a frozen image, except for you, your experience and your awareness. That's alive, not frozen.

Pamela: I feel so helpless.

EJ: Describe the energy of that.

Pamela: Like there's no solid ground, like I'm going to slip away on a river of wet pee. Like I'll slip and fall and choke, and there's nothing I can do. [crying]

EJ: Keep breathing. Now as best you can, let yourself simply collapse, in your mind's eye. And energetically, just give up. Let the feeling of "nothing I can do" just have you completely. As best you can. [pause]

Let your breath be steady as you invite that energy to flood your awareness.

Pamela: I don't want to feel it. There's a welling up of a scream and a thrashing of arms and legs.

EJ: Shift your attention to the welling up energy, and the thrashing. As best you can, feel the energy directly without any images.

Pamela: I feel it.

EJ: Let it scream and thrash inside—inside the open, neutral space in which it's already occurring. You sense that?

Pamela: Yes. It feels like the energy is thrashing out in all directions trying to smash barriers.

EJ: Are there any barriers in the openness?

Pamela: No. That's the weird thing. There's nothing to smash.

EJ: Good. Just let it continue.

Pamela: [few minutes pass] It stops thrashing. There's just the soaking wet feeling.

EJ: Invite the soaking wet feeling to flood your awareness. Let it become so wet that it could dissolve you. [pause] Take time and feel the wetness reach a maximum capacity... actually melting you into nothing, or washing you away.

Pamela: [shaking and crying, three minutes pass] I feel like the wetness has reached its limit of saturation. I feel like I AM wetness. I'm liquid.

EJ: Is it a threat?

Pamela: No. It's a wonderful feeling... loving. Connection. It feels very intimate.

EJ: Is there any command to resist it?

Pamela: No. [pause] I feel space. Like a vast softness.

EJ: Take time and allow that feeling space, of softness, to soak into your awareness. [pause] So is that wet, thrashing energy that came to rest you—is that a self who's going to lose control?

Pamela: No, it's not a self. But I still don't want to lose control. I can't lose control.

EJ: Go to the image of your father. You see it?

Pamela: Yes. It doesn't mean anything anymore. It's not a threat, I don't feel any resistance to it.

EJ: Listen to the words, "I can't lose control," letting them have as much command as possible.

Pamela: I feel an all-over clenching and a "grrrrrrr" energy. Grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!

EJ: Okay, Uncensor it. Let it rip.

Pamela: [growling, grrrr-ing and thrashing. Few minutes pass] Okay that's it, it's dissolved.

EJ: Is that energy that came to a peak and passed, actually a threat?

Pamela: No. [sighing] It feels like a relief.

EJ: Is that energy that peaked and dissolved, a command to not lose control?

Pamela: No. Not now.

EJ: Is it a self who can't lose control?

Pamela: No, I see it's just an experience, temporary. It comes and goes, so it can't be me.

EJ: Good. So what I'm hearing from you, is if you actually have the experience again called "losing control," the worst that could happen is some words, and a flare-up of grrrr-ing and thrashing, that if it's uncensored, it resolves itself in 2.5 minutes. Where, if anywhere, is the self who can't lose control?

Pamela: I can't find it.

EJ: Go to the moment of impact yesterday when you had the thought, "I've lost control of eating."

Pamela: Oh, God, I was in a bakery with a bag of cookies, shoveling them into my mouth.

EJ: So press the pause button. Turn the entire scene, and the entire world, into a frozen image, and it's not going to thaw until you say so. You have the magic remote control. Let me know when you're there.

Pamela: Yes. I'm there.

EJ: Let your breath be steady. Describe the impact.

Pamela: A blow, a blow to my chest, tears, and a collapse and shaking energy in my legs and stomach.

EJ: Good. Can the breath be steady, even though that energy is present?

Pamela: Yes. [Breathing]

EJ: Zoom out from the collapse, from the blow, to the open neutral space. Can you sense that openness that's not collapsing, not shaking?

Pamela: Yes. [crying] It's just open. [few minutes pass] It's just soft. Even with all this yucky vibration.

EJ: Don't touch it mentally. Feel the intimacy of the openness, receiving the yucky energy. Like a tender mother, receiving her child, no matter how he is or what he is. [pause] is it easy or hard?

Pamela: It's easy. [pause] It dies down. I just feel the tender space. All the energy has turned to bright little stars.

EJ: Is that energy you, a self who can't lose control?

Pamela: No.

EJ: Rest with that no. Taking time, let the breath be steady. Relax the attention. Sense the openness. [pause] Where is the actual self who can't lose control?

Pamela: This body. [pointing to body]

EJ: What part of what you're pointing to—be specific. Where is the self who could lose control?

Pamela: It's my mouth. My mouth and my face and a tight feeling in my head.

EJ: That's you, a self who can't lose control?

Pamela: Yes.

EJ: So I want you to imagine a horror movie, of that self---the face, the tight feeling in the head and the mouth—losing control. See it in a movie, on a giant movie screen. Just the face, the mouth and the tight feeling inside the head.

Pamela: I see a weird small animal-like creature---it's the head, the tight feeling and the face and mouth on top of a pile of sweets, ice cream, a mountain. And it's gorging.

EJ: Is that image you, the self who can't lose control?

Pamela: No. it's an image. [laughter]

EJ: Is the tight feeling inside a head, you, a threatened self?

Pamela: I have been believing it.

EJ: Let's look. Invite the tight feeling to get as tight as it possibly can. Letting the breath be steady. Feel it as clenched as possible, tight, tight, tight.

Pamela: Yes.

EJ: Now, see if you can sense the total relaxation in which it's occurring. [pause] What is soooooo relaxed, that makes possible by contrast, the experience of clenching? Take time to sense that.

Pamela: Yes. [long exhale]

EJ: Good. See that the openness is open in all directions. Is it tight?

Pamela: No.

EJ: Is it panicking?

Pamela: No. That's funny. It's like, Ho-hum. Laid back.

EJ: Is that tight energy, you a self who can't lose control?

Pamela: No. It's gone.

EJ: Rest for a moment. Let your breath be steady. Stay tuned into the relaxation.
[pause] Now, see if the image is still hanging around... the image of the pile of sweets.
You see it?

Pamela: Yes.

EJ: Now watch the image as if it's happening on a giant movie screen. And zoom out.
Be the perceiving presence, zoomed out, out, out. See if you can sense the space,
that's open in all directions. Is the image a threat to the space?

Pamela: No.

EJ: Now give your attention to the image, the screen. Allow yourself to be as
fascinated, involved with that movie as much as you possibly can. Be thrilled by the
horror movie. Yes? Just for a moment, let yourself be interested, engaged, stirred up by
the drama, the horror.

Pamela: Yes, I feel it. The horror.

EJ: Now shift your attention to the space.... The vast, empty, alive, serene space on
which that images occurs. Be as interested in that openness, that serenity, as much as
you possibly can. Breathe.

Pamela: Yes. [30 seconds of silence] It's so peaceful.

EJ: Now go back to the movie screen, the horror images, and be as interested as you possibly can, as involved. [pause] What happens?

Pamela: It's dissolves. I'm not interested, and it just turns into nothing.

EJ: So just rest for a few moments. [pause] Now check: Is there any command to be interested in that image of gorging again? Is there any command to be interested in the tight feeling of “me, a someone who can't lose control”—again?

Pamela: No command.

EJ: So where is the self who can't lose control?

Pamela: I can't find it.

EJ: Good. And if that identity auditions for your attention again, could you completely have zero interest in it—if you really, really wanted to?

Pamela: Hmm. I felt a twinge of anxiety—that it might come around again and audition for my attention.

EJ: Yeah, for your rapt attention. For your conscious power, since it has no life of its own except if it can steal yours. And could you simply refuse to give it your attention ever again—if you really, really, decided to?

Pamela: Yes!

EJ: Would you?

Pamela: Yes

EJ: When?

Pamela: Now. Now. That feels really strong. And a sense of wonder.

EJ: “A sense of wonder”... Like the song. Is this a good place to rest for now?

Pamela: Yes. Thank you.

EJ: You're welcome.