Ep #115: Overcome All-or-Nothing Thinking for Lasting Habit Change

Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Strong Is a Mindset, a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Ep #115: Overcome All-or-Nothing Thinking for Lasting Habit Change

This is the *Strong Is a Mindset* podcast, Episode #115. If all-or-nothing thinking is keeping you from changing your habits, let's fix that.

This is the *Strong Is a Mindset* podcast, where you'll learn how to build both a strong body and a strong mind by eating, moving, and thinking. I'm your host Physician, Personal Trainer, Certified Health Coach and Certified Life Coach, Carrie Holland.

Hey, how are you? What's new, what's good? So what's good here? We are going to talk about all-or-nothing thinking today. I want to dive into this and share the many ways I've seen all-or-nothing thinking ruin all of the amazing progress you're making towards changing your life.

Because truthfully, of all the things getting in the way of you succeeding at changing your habits, this one is right up there. This one is up at the top. But then, more importantly, besides sharing how all-or-nothing thinking is not helping you, I want to help you do something about it.

Because you know this already, but all-or-nothing thinking is not getting you anywhere. It's keeping you on a hamster wheel of stopping and starting your diet. It's causing you to say forget it on Friday night, when you have pizza and French fries, when you planned to have fish and veggies.

And then you use that one misstep to be a reason to start over again on Monday. And that cycle can be vicious, you can find yourself repeating it week after week. But I want to help you stop that.

And here's something to know from the get go. All-or-nothing thinking, or black-and-white thinking, as it is also referred to, very commonly goes hand in hand with perfectionism. And it makes sense. Because when you're a perfectionist, mistakes are not acceptable. Slip ups are not okay.

When you're a perfectionist, often you fall into the trap of, it's either perfect or it's garbage. It's not good enough. It's very black and white. It's all or nothing. So when you're a perfectionist and you practice all-or-nothing thinking, generally you have a very binary view of things. You were either

awesome or terrible. You either nailed it or you totally failed it. It is very much either or, one or the other. And there is no room for nuance or shades of grey.

But here's the thing. Perfectionism is not rooted in reality. Okay? This is so important to understand. Perfect does not exist. Seriously, for any perfectionist listening, please hear this because this applies to you too. Perfection does not exist. By nature of being human, we're going to mess up.

We are going to be imperfect at work, in life, with exercise, with eating, all of it. We're going to mess up our habits too. Okay? And in the psychology world, all-or-nothing thinking is considered a very common cognitive distortion.

So cognitive distortion is a big, kind of fancy, term that I didn't know very well until I got into coaching. Let me explain what that means. A cognitive distortion, very simply, is a negative thought pattern that is not based in fact or reality. It's a thought pattern, meaning that it's reproducible. It's generally a habit, so we're not really thinking about it.

And most often it's a negative thought pattern influenced by your emotions. It is not rooted in fact. So I've said it before and I'll say it again. Thoughts are a habit too. Okay? Just as you put the same leg in your pants every day out of habit, you also have a collection of thoughts that are straight up habits too.

You think them without even really thinking about them. Isn't that interesting? You're thinking, but you're not really thinking about your thinking because those thoughts are habits. They're on autopilot. But the problem with this is that when we hang on to those cognitive distortions, they not only become a habit, but then we also accept those distortions as straight up fact. We take them on as our beliefs.

And remember, what's a belief? A belief is your most practiced thought. So the more often you tell yourself, “I can never stick with a diet,” and the more

you practice that thought, the more it becomes your belief, the more it becomes your truth.

But remember that your truth is not the same thing as *the* truth. Okay? That is such an important concept to grasp. Remember, just because you think a thought, even if you've been thinking it for decades, it does not mean it's the absolute truth. There is a big difference between your truth and the truth. It's the difference between facts and the stories that we tell ourselves.

But the best thing about this is you get to choose. You get to choose the stories you tell yourself about yourself. And because you get to choose the stories you tell yourself, I would argue that you make them good ones.

All-or-nothing thinking often keeps you from doing this. All-or-nothing thinking has you telling yourself that you're not good enough, that you will never measure up, that no amount of change or no amount of success is sufficient. So we need to change that.

Let's talk about why all-or-nothing thinking is totally messing with you. And then I'm going to give you some ideas for how to work through this. Because honestly, the sooner you let go of your all-or-nothing thinking, and the sooner you start accepting yourself for the imperfect human that you are, the faster you will be on your way to success in whatever change you're looking to make. Okay? So let's go.

First, all-or-nothing thinking is messing with you because it often means you take one small, or even one big mess up, and you make it mean that you are a big failure. So if you operate under the assumption that it must be perfect and you must follow your plan 100% of the time, any misstep or any time you don't follow your plan becomes a big deal and often gets blown up into something much bigger than it actually is.

And I see this happen all the time in relation to following your diet plan on the weekends. So say you have a plan to go out Saturday night and you've decided that you're going to have dessert. But you've also decided that you're going to skip the appetizers, you're skipping the bread basket, and

you're not having a glass of wine because you really want to indulge in a piece of chocolate cake. But then you get to the restaurant and you end up eating all of it.

Even though you swore you were going to skip the stuffed mushrooms, you end up having some. And then because of those stuffed mushrooms, you tell yourself, “Shoot, I blew it. I had an appetizer. I said I wasn't going to. This meal is ruined.” And then you have half the bread basket. And then you order a glass of wine because, well, why not? You've already screwed it up, so you might as well just go all out.

And then you have your dinner and still have the enormous piece of chocolate cake. And then you get home, and because you think to yourself, “Well, I've already blown it,” you follow up your dinner with a couple handfuls of tortilla chips from the pantry, just because. You're not even hungry, but you've decided you've already blown it, so you might as well really blow it.

And when you get up on Sunday, you feel defeated. Maybe you feel bloated and gross from the combination of food and alcohol you had the night before. But beyond how you feel physically from all the sugar, salt, fat, and alcohol, you feel worse about the decisions you made last night. You say to yourself, “Well, I blew it. This weekend, it's a bust. I might as well just eat whatever today, and I'll start over again on Monday.”

Has this ever happened to you? I have seen it happen for so many of my clients, and it does not have to go this way. It's a pattern I've referred to as “might-as-well thinking.” It's where you've messed up once, and because you take an all-or-nothing approach, you think to yourself, “Well, I've already screwed up once, so I might as well just go off the chain and eat my weight in cookies.”

It's might-as-well thinking. Again, it goes hand in hand with all-or-nothing thinking. So when you have a perfectionistic, all-or-nothing view, and then you mess up, even if it's only once, and even if it's only in a small way, it can lead you to give up entirely. Often under the guise of, “Well, if I can't do

it perfectly, and if I already messed up, I might as well mess up even more and go all out."

It's so interesting. You let one mess up be a reason to keep messing up. But again, that is not getting you anywhere, okay? Your need for perfectionism is leading you to failure because you've created an impossible standard for yourself.

Next, another reason that all-or-nothing thinking is sabotaging you, is because it is creating an enormous amount of pressure on yourself. It's like walking a tightrope. You're treading along lightly, gripping the rope with your feet, with the enormous weight of, "What if I mess up?" threatening to knock you off. It is a losing game.

Because, again, no one is perfect, and there is no way to get a 100% on your food choices all day, every day. It is just not possible, nor is it sustainable. But if you hold yourself to this need for 100%, it's an enormous amount of pressure.

So all-or-nothing thinking, especially when it comes to your diet, generally translates to a line of thinking that looks like this. Either you are on the diet or you are totally off the diet. You're either on and being super strict and rigid and extreme with yourself, or you're off the rails and anything goes.

And all it takes is one mishap, or one bowl of ice cream when you planned to have none, to cause you to think, "Well, that's it. I screwed up. I'm off." And that pressure is real. It feels terrible. It feels like waiting for the other shoe to drop, because you know it's coming.

It's only a matter of time before that time comes, and you know you're going to treat yourself like garbage when you mess up. And then you go off the chain and start eating whatever, whenever, instead of just getting back to your plan and carrying on.

So this self-created pressure to be perfect all the time is flat-out unrealistic. No one is perfect with her diet 100% of the time. We all have days that we

eat too much cake, or one too many chocolate chip cookies, or have too many glasses of wine. But if you hold yourself to the impossible standard of 'I'm either on or I'm off,' and then you mess up, just as every human being will do, that is setting you up for a yo-yo of cyclic weight loss.

It is emotionally and physically very damaging, being completely on or completely off. That's too extreme. And it's setting an impossible standard and an impossible amount of pressure that no person can handle. It doesn't matter who you are or how many A's you got in school or what title you have, you're not above imperfection. No one is above imperfection. I know that may sound harsh, but it's the honest truth.

Next, another way that all-or-nothing thinking is sabotaging your progress, is that it effectively discounts any progress until you've arrived at your goal. It especially discounts any of the small wins that you've had, often by nature of your win being small.

So let me give you an example. Let's say you normally have a cookie or some kind of sweet at three o'clock every day, but you recognize that habit is not helping you and that you're not even hungry and that you're just eating that cookie out of habit and boredom. So you zone in and make a conscious effort to cut that back and stop having the cookie because you aren't even hungry.

On this particular day, you do it. Three o'clock comes, you sit through the urge of wanting the cookie. You let that urge be with you, but you don't respond to it. And you got through to the other side and you've realized that skipping that cookie was not such a big deal.

But then dinner comes and you eat a few handfuls of French fries off your kid's plate, even though you promised yourself you weren't going to do that. And then later, instead of acknowledging yourself for managing your urge and not eating the cookie, instead you go and beat yourself up and swear up and down that weight loss is impossible because you ate some soggy French fries from your kid's plate.

Instead of acknowledging the small win you did have, you laser in on whatever it is you feel you did wrong and use that as a reason to say, “Forget it, this is impossible.” So all-or-nothing thinking takes away the small wins that are an essential key component of habit change. Because those small changes are exactly that, small.

Honestly, I think this is one of the most important ways that all-or-nothing thinking shoots you in the foot. It takes away the acknowledgement and the importance of your small wins. But you absolutely need those small wins in order to be successful at changing your habits.

So remember what creating new habits is for a second. Creating new habits is about taking new behaviors and trying and failing and trying and failing over and over again until the behavior becomes a habit. You're making tiny micro steps over and over again to build new habits that combine to become your new lifestyle.

And this is not a rip the Band-Aid off kind of process. Okay? This is not 0-180. Habits are built on small wins, because it is impossible to get it exactly right at the outset. So those small wins are essential because you need them as evidence to your brain that change is possible.

That cookie you skipped at 3 PM, and that urge you managed in the grand scheme of things, it's not a big deal, right? But actually it is a big deal, because skipping that cookie is evidence that reflects your capacity for change. Do you see that? It's so important.

Skipping that cookie is a small win that you can add to your highlight reel of successes anytime you need a reminder of how far you've come. But when you're trapped by all-or-nothing thinking, you don't see it. You don't appreciate that small win for what it is. Because if you're an all-or-nothing thinker, saying no to that cookie is not enough. And all of those small wins individually are not going to feel like enough because none of those small wins alone will be the game changer.

Ep #115: Overcome All-or-Nothing Thinking for Lasting Habit Change

Saying no to one cookie on one day, that's not going to be enough to cause you to lose weight. No one small action is going to be the lightning bolt that results in drastic weight loss. But instead, the game changer is when you take that small win and keep saying no to the cookie over and over and over again so that with time it does make a difference and it does ultimately result in you losing weight; because you just removed a daily 3 p.m. cookie out of your diet.

So even though it's small and it's seemingly not a big deal, it actually is a very big deal because the small wins add up. Acknowledging your small wins is such an important piece of changing your habits. And all-or-nothing thinking will completely rob you of that because you're only seeing the end result. You're only seeing the outcome.

It's like asking, immediately after you skip that cookie, “But did I lose any weight though?” And that is not helpful.

Next, another reason that all-or-nothing thinking can sabotage your habits, is because by nature you are either on or you're off. There is no in between. So when you're off, it's really more like all bets are off. So you don't just eat your weight in pizza Friday night, you have the pizza, and then, because you think to yourself you've blown it, you follow up that pizza with cupcakes.

And then you wake up Saturday and have waffles and sausage instead of eggs and oatmeal. And you continue the cycle of being very much off the chain until you get tired of it and decide, “Okay, I have to tighten things up around here.” And then you go in the complete opposite direction and restrict yourself all to stink.

You don't leave any room in your plan for foods you enjoy. You resume white knuckling and you cut out carbs and pizza and chocolate. And you keep telling yourself that you have to keep this up and you have to be on. And then you're right back on that tightrope, walking very gingerly until you slip up and eat too much pizza. And then the cycle repeats itself.

So all-or-nothing thinking can set you up for food binges. You might find yourself vacillating between being completely on, where you are being super hard and restrictive with yourself, and being completely off after one mess up to where you go off the rails, eat whatever, whenever, and you do it with abandon until you cannot stand it. Or until you cannot stand the way you feel anymore. And then you start the process all over again.

And this is where all-or-nothing thinking can really harm you, because you're not leaving any room for in-between. You're not leaving yourself any room for inevitable failures. Okay?

And last, all-or-nothing thinking will totally stall your long-term success because it is very much short-sighted. When you're stuck in all-or-nothing thinking, you're looking at the here and now and using that as a measure of your success. If you didn't eat perfectly on plan today, then it's garbage. If you had a bag of chips today, or if you had a few pieces of candy today, even though you said you wouldn't, then the day is a total failure.

And you tell yourself that you're never going to be able to lose this weight, and so where you get stuck is that you only see what's right in front of you. You only see the immediate outcome of some chips or candy eaten instead of looking at the bigger picture.

When you are so focused on immediate perfection instead of long-term habits, then yes, it would make total sense that a misstep would completely derail you, because all you see is today. All you see is what's right in front of you.

You get sidetracked by the handfuls of chips that you had and let that be a reason to give up altogether instead of letting that be a reason to ask yourself, “Hey, what would I do differently next time?” And when you get so focused on making today absolutely perfect, and you put all of your eggs in one basket and expect nothing less than perfection from yourself, you lose sight of the longer-term goal of making real, sustainable lifestyle change.

You lose sight of the habits themselves. And instead let failure mean there is no way you can reach your goal. But that's not how this works. That is not how changing your habits works. Okay?

So now that we've talked through five different reasons that all-or-nothing thinking is sabotaging your progress, let's talk about what you can do about it.

You do not have to be stuck in all-or-nothing thinking, and you are not doomed to be on again, off again with your diet forever. You can overcome all-or-nothing thinking. But I'm not going to lie, this takes serious, legit work. Okay?

So let's talk about what you can do to bust through this. The first thing you can do to overcome all-or-nothing thinking is to actually believe that flexibility applies to you too. Believe that being imperfect applies to you too. And here is why I'm saying this.

I have this conversation all the time with the women I work with. They are badasses. Okay? They work hard. They are successful. They have very high expectations of themselves. And often, when we talk about how they treat themselves, I will turn it around and ask them to tell me how they talk to their friends or family or their kids when they mess up.

And they will tell me that they're super kind and understanding and compassionate towards those people. But then they turn around and talk to themselves horribly and say things to themselves they wouldn't dare utter aloud to another human.

So what I'm asking of you is to accept that being flexible and that being imperfect applies to you. I've said it before, I'll say it again, but you are not above imperfection. I am not above imperfection. No one is above imperfection.

The rules are not different for you because you were your high school valedictorian, or because you graduated top of your med school class, or

because you're in the top 5% of your company. Okay? None of that matters when we're talking about your habits and your life, because no one is immune to imperfection.

So the more you can practice flexibility, and practice accepting that you are in fact human, and by nature of being human you are going to mess up, and you eating an ice cream sundae as big as your face does not mean that weight loss is impossible for you.

The more you practice accepting this, the closer you will be to true self-acceptance, and the farther you will take yourself from all-or-nothing thinking. The more you can remind yourself that one mistake does not define you as a person, it does not make or break your diet, and it does not mean anything about you, and it certainly does not mean that you're a failure, the better you'll feel and the more likely you'll be to keep going forward implementing your habits. Okay?

So practicing flexibility will be key. And I don't just mean intellectualizing it while you nod your head saying, “Yeah, I get it. I need to accept being imperfect.” I mean actually feeling whatever comes up when you mess up and being kind to yourself in that process. I mean practicing awareness instead of nodding and smiling while nothing changes on the inside. Okay? This is essential.

Next, the next thing you can do to get over all-or-nothing thinking, is to actually acknowledge your small wins. Okay? And I'm not asking you to throw yourself a party for skipping the cookie. You don't have to make a big hairy deal about not eating the cookie. But at the same time, I don't want you minimizing it or under identifying with it and brushing it off either.

Because I said it already, those small wins, while they might seem small, they are actually super important. Those small wins give you motivation to keep going.

So remember the order of operation when it comes to habit change. It's action, results, motivation. You take action and you do something, like say

no to the cookie. You get a result. When you say no to the cookie, you prove to yourself that you can in fact stop overeating. And then you use that result to motivate you to keep going.

Action, results, motivation. In that order. Okay? And acknowledging your small wins is a practice in sufficiency. This is about sufficiency. It's about enoughness, about you being enough.

When I was talking about this earlier, I mentioned that part of the problem with all-or-nothing thinking is that too often you think your small win is not enough. You'll tell me, “I don't want to lose a half pound this week. I wanted to lose two pounds this week. I didn't want to exercise for just 10 minutes today. I wanted to exercise for 45 minutes. I didn't want to end my day with candy. I wanted to say no and have a day that was totally on plan.”

Even though all of your other decisions throughout the day were on plan, you will tell me all the ways that what you did was not enough. So instead of doing that, I'm asking you to acknowledge your small wins for what they are and let those small wins be enough. Okay?

I'm asking you to accept that whatever effort you put out today is in fact enough, even if it didn't amount to a two-pound weight loss on the scale, or even if it wasn't enough weightlifting to appreciably grow your biceps. Whatever it was that you did do, I'm asking you to practice recognizing it and then deciding for yourself that it is enough. Okay? This is huge. This is so, so important to overcoming all-or-nothing thinking.

So what if every day you decided that the positive things you did for yourself to get you one step closer to weight loss, or eating healthier or exercising, what if you decided that whatever you did today is enough? How much better would you feel? How much more willing would you be to keep going if you decided that whatever you were able to do today was enough?

Instead of picking your one decision apart and deciding it means you're not capable of change, you will feel so, so much better when you decide that

what you're doing is enough. When you're putting in a real, legitimate, solid effort to change your life, and you acknowledge the small wins you accumulate along the way, and accept that as enough, then you are getting somewhere. You will feel lighter. You will feel better. You will feel empowered to keep going.

But please do not just take my word for it. Okay? Prove it to yourself. Practice reminding yourself of your small wins every stinking day. And I don't care how small it is. It could be that you took the stairs instead of taking the elevator at work. It could be that you walked and got the mail at the end of your driveway, instead of pulling up to the mailbox with your car.

It could be that you left three french fries on your plate, instead of cleaning the plate entirely even though you weren't hungry. It doesn't matter. Practice sufficiency. Practice being enough. Okay?

All right, next. Another thing you can do to overcome your all-or-nothing thinking is practice self-compassion. I'm not going to spend a ton of time on this because I have gone on about this concept many, many times before. But I want to point out here for anyone new to the podcast, I want to point out a central concept to changing your life and changing your habits.

You change best when you feel good. Okay? You change best when you feel good. And what that means is that you cannot beat yourself up into your next best version. Changing your habits, eating healthy, losing weight, establishing exercise, none of that happens when you're mean to yourself. It doesn't last.

I know it sounds funny to say it, but you really cannot be a jerk to yourself and expect it to work. Instead, how about a little self-compassion? And as a reminder, what exactly does that mean? Self-compassion means that you practice self-kindness instead of self-judgment. To put it simply, you are nice to yourself.

Self-compassion also means that you recognize that mistakes are part of our common humanity. Again, in English, you recognize that you are

human, and by nature of being human, you are going to mess up. And that mess up is not a reason to stop, but in fact, it's a reason to keep going.

And third, self-compassion means you don't over-identify with your mistakes, but you also don't under-identify with your mistakes. So you don't make a huge hairy deal out of the missteps, but you also don't ignore them. Okay? That is self-compassion in a nutshell.

And while I just summarized, in a few short sentences, something people have written volumes and volumes about, I don't want to oversimplify self-compassion. So please recognize that self-compassion is paramount. It is so important when you take work of changing your life.

I will be so bold and promise you that you will feel so much better. And change will be that much easier when you treat yourself kindly, instead of taking the all-or-nothing approach where you are either a complete success or a complete failure. And self-compassion will help you do that.

All right, next. Another skill to practice as you stop all-or-nothing thinking is practicing balance and moderation. What I mean by this is, instead of having a super restrictive diet plan for yourself, where you don't make any room for any of the foods you like, instead you practice treating yourself and let it not be a big deal.

So how exactly do you do this? You create a plan for yourself of how you're going to eat, and then you include in that plan how you are going to treat yourself. You make a decision that on Saturday night, when you normally go out for ice cream with your family, you're going to have a reasonable sized ice cream.

And you practice not letting that turn into a spiral of cookies, popcorn, candy, etc., that spills over into breakfast Sunday. You practice enjoying fun, indulgent foods without it becoming a spiral. Because really, that's what changing your diet is about.

I am not going to sit here and tell you that you should plan to never have chocolate again, or that you're never going to drink alcohol while you're out to dinner with your friends, or that French fries are off limits. That's not real life. Instead, I want you to practice having an indulgent or fun food without it turning into a free-for-all.

I want you to prove to yourself that you can have ice cream with your kids and it's no big deal. There is no guilt. There is no shame. You haven't blown anything by having ice cream, and you get on with your life and you get back to your plan. You don't spiral out about how you're a failure because you had ice cream, and you don't make it mean anything about you. You practice balance and moderation. Okay?

And now here is one last idea or concept that I want to offer to you. I'm really excited about this one because it is a serious reframe and one that I think can really help you if you practice thinking this way. So what if you decided that every decision you make in relation to your diet is going to be independent of the decision you made before it?

Really think about that for a minute. What if, just what if you decided that every food decision you make is its own decision, and each decision has nothing to do with the decision you made before it?

I have mentioned this statistic before and I'm going to mention it again here. There's research from Cornell University that suggests that we make on average 226.7 food decisions in a day. I have no idea where the 0.7 came from, but all the same, however you slice it, that is a lot of decisions in one day. That's one day.

So of those 226.7 food decisions you make, not everyone is going to be a winner. Not every food decision is going to be on plan. And with that in mind, what I want to offer you is this. What if you could treat each one of those 226.7 decisions independently?

What if your 134th food decision had absolutely nothing to do with the 133rd food decision that you made in a day? Meaning, if you ate five pieces

of pizza at lunch with your coworkers, and completely ignored the salad and chicken that you brought with you, what if the next decision you made at 3 p.m.. when you normally have a snack. has nothing to do with the pizza you ate at lunch?

Meaning, instead of using those five pieces of pizza as a reason to say, “Forget it, I've blown my diet for the day. This is never going to happen for me. Weight loss is impossible, so I might as well have chips and a candy bar.” Instead of doing that, you say, “Okay, it's 3 o'clock, it's snack time. I'm going to have my apple and Greek yogurt just like I planned.” And you don't let stuffing yourself with pizza have any bearing on the choice that you make for your snack.

Do you see how that works? So I'm going to offer you the same advice my kid's football coach gave him when he messed up a play. You practice having the memory of a goldfish. When it comes to your diet decisions, you don't perseverate or obsess or endlessly ruminate over your choice to have those five pieces of pizza. And you don't hang onto it and let that pizza impact the next decision you make.

Instead, you use every single one of those 226.7 food decisions as an opportunity to make a choice that supports your health, fitness, and weight loss goals. One choice does not impact the next choice, okay? The choice you had to eat off plan and eat those five pieces of pizza, that choice is made. It's over.

So now, from there, you have another choice. You can make your very next choice be something you're proud of, or you can make your very next choice be something you're not proud of. That's it. And I would argue that it's not your choice to have the five pieces of pizza that's the big deal. Because really in the grand scheme of things, it's not, right? It's pizza.

The big deal to me is the next decision you make. I'm going back to Jon Acuff, who is a fabulous author and has written numerous books, including *Finish*, described this concept of “the day after perfect.” He says that the most important day in your pursuit of a goal is the day after perfect. It's the

day after your streak was broken, the day you didn't go to the gym or didn't get up early or didn't eat your salad. It's the day you get back up and get back to your plan as soon as possible. And I love that concept.

James Clear has a similar concept. He calls it “never miss twice.” He says that one miss is an outlier. Two misses in a row is the start of a new habit. And I love that. So you miss once, but then you get back up and get back to your plan ASAP. You don't let one miss begin a series of misses.

And I think these are both very similar ideas, and I love them both, and want to offer you those concepts to consider as you apply them to your habits. I've beaten the dead horse, and you know that we are not perfect.

As you change your habits, establish an exercise routine, change up your eating, or try to lose weight, you are going to mess up. It's not a matter of if, but when. And the point of me saying this, and reiterating our imperfection, is because it's not the mess up that matters so much. It's what you do after the mess up that will make or break you.

When you're an all-or-nothing thinker, you let one mess up take away all of your progress, and you use that as a reason to give up on yourself altogether. And if you've been there, done that, you know it's an ugly cycle. So instead, what happens if you look at your mess ups differently?

What happens if you see each choice as its own, that has nothing to do with the choice before it? What happens if you decide to be nice to yourself when you mess up, instead of tearing yourself apart? What happens when you acknowledge and celebrate your small wins, instead of minimizing them and telling yourself it's not enough?

What would happen if you allowed yourself to make mistakes because you own and accept that it is part of the process of change? Well, I'll tell you what happens, change gets easier. Changing your habits becomes accessible. It becomes less daunting. You feel lighter because you're being nice to yourself. You don't let any one decision ruin your day or ruin your subsequent decisions.

You decide that what you are doing is enough. And you keep taking action. And because you keep taking action, you keep getting yourself that much closer to your goals.

And if you want help with this, let's go. When you coach with me, we'll dive into what's keeping you from reaching your goals, including all-or-nothing thinking, and you'll practice the skills that get you past it so you can get on with your life and get on with your habits.

Check out my website. Go to www.CarrieHollandMD.com/contact, send me a message, and let's start dismantling your all-or-nothing thinking. All right?

Thank you for hanging out with me, and I'll catch you again next week.

Hey, if you're looking for your next great read, I've got you covered. Head over to CarrieHollandMD.com/books and download my list of most favorite reads. I've got two collections waiting for you. One is all about work-life balance. The other is a collection of books that have changed my life. I've referenced many of these books in the podcast, and now you can access those titles all in one place.

Again, that's CarrieHollandMD.com/books. Check it out and find your next great read.

Thank you for listening to the *Strong Is a Mindset* podcast. If you want to learn more about how to build both a strong mind and a strong body by eating, moving, and most importantly, thinking, check out CarrieHollandMD.com.