

Hey, Netflix - stop calling shows 'bingeworthy'

By [Lila Bruk](#)

13 Apr 2023

It's become a favourite pastime among friends, couples who are out of ideas for date night, and people who simply want to relax and unwind after a long day.



Source: Supplied.

This is the era of what has come to be known as 'binge-watching' – spending an inordinate amount of time in front of a screen, eagerly tapping the 'next episode' button to find out how your favourite show progresses, or lining up a string of films to watch, marathon-style.

To be fair, Netflix isn't the only one making use of the word 'binge' in an inappropriate context. It's not uncommon to hear people talk about 'binge-eating' a slab of chocolate over the weekend, or 'binge-listening' to their favourite murder mystery podcast.

Common as it may be, the causal use of the term bingeing is damaging. Bingeing in the casual sense is a choice to indulge a little more than usual, to have a 'cheat' day every now and then, or to consume entertaining content in excess because you simply can't get enough of the gripping story line.

Bingeing, or Binge Eating Disorder (BED), in reality, is a serious mental health condition that should not be made light of.

Binge Eating Disorder is a type of eating disorder characterised by recurrent episodes of binge eating, where a person consumes large amounts of food in a short amount of time and feels a loss of control over their eating.

BED, along with all other eating disorders, are often associated with shame and secrecy due to the stigma and misconceptions surrounding them. People may feel embarrassed or ashamed to admit that they have an eating disorder, particularly if it is misunderstood or dismissed as a lifestyle choice rather than a serious mental health condition.

Importantly, while many of those who use the phrase bingeing in a casual sense probably don't mean any harm. The biggest problem with using a word with such connotations so flippantly is that it contributes to the current stigma and lack of awareness that exists around eating disorders.

This in turn prevents people from seeking help or admitting that they have a problem at all, causing them to feel afraid or ashamed to speak up.



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This is the reason that the Panda mental health app has started an eating disorder support group, to create a safe space for users to connect with a mental health professional and with others facing similar struggles.

This connection plays a significant role in giving those with eating disorders the support they need to help manage their experiences.

Demystifying fact from myth

Taking eating disorders more seriously can also help to demystify fact from myth. For instance, eating disorders affect men too – pop icon, Ed Sheeran, recently shared his own experiences with Bulimia Nervosa and called for greater awareness of eating disorders in general. In addition, eating disorders are not simply connected to body image issues or wanting to look thinner.

While weight loss or body dissatisfaction may be a common symptom of an eating disorder, it is important to recognise that eating disorders can affect people of any body size or shape. Eating disorders can also manifest in different ways, such as through obsessive exercise or rigid food rules, and may not always involve a desire to be thin.

So, if we can't use the word 'binge' in these unhealthy, insensitive ways anymore, what words can we use to describe watching episode after episode of a series? A few ideas include *marathon*, or an all-day *session*. You could even customise it to your favourite show and call it (name of your favourite show)-fest.

The point being, we don't have to perpetuate the stigma surrounding eating disorders or shame the people who suffer from them to enjoy a pastime (or a cheeky midnight snack).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lila Bruk is a registered dietician and nutritional consultant, who has been in private practice since 2006 and has written in over 450 general and health-related publications. She regularly gives lectures on nutrition.