

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #102: Creating Space Between Urge and Binge

Hi! How are you? Doing well? Having a nice summer so far? I am!

I just had a wonderful weekend with my family. We went to my uncle's lake house on Saturday and had a freakin' blast. My boyfriend's dog is the absolutely cutest when he's in water, prancing around, swimming all over the place, it was the best. And then we had some more hang time on Sunday just chillin and the weather's been beautiful and I'm ready for more summer fun to come!

I hope you're creating summer fun too because, why not? And if you're listening to this episode way after it was released, you best be making fall fun, winter fun, and spring fun! Do it.

Alright, enough about fun, let's talk about urges, binges, and the space between.

When people tell me about the times they binged, I often hear some version of this story:

“It just happened. One minute I was watching tv, and the next thing I knew, I had eaten a whole bag of potato chips and a carton of ice cream.”

To them, it all happened so suddenly and without them even realizing what was happening.

I told stories like that to myself all the time.

I didn't remember eating a lot of what I ate. I mean, I knew I ate it, but it wasn't memorable, even just minutes after having done it.

I was so excited when I was buying that food, so excited to taste it, and then I didn't even.

I wasn't present. I wasn't enjoying it. I was not focused on what I was eating. I was focused on the next thing I was going to eat, or the next bite, or getting it all in as quickly as I could, or not even focused on the food at all but on my tv or phone.

When we're not paying attention to what we're doing and being present, we miss so much.

When it happens at the start of a binge, the most important thing you miss is that moment between the urge and the binge.

So many of you are missing that moment.

You hear me talk about allowing urges and deciding to not binge, but then you tell me it all happens so fast that you miss the moment and by the time you realize what you're doing, you're knee deep in food.

You're don't even have awareness of the urge or that you are headed for a binge.

But even if you don't have awareness of it, you're not recognizing it, and you're not realizing it, it's still there.

There's always a moment between an urge and a binge.

There's always a moment when you feel an urge and then you decide to binge and then you put a piece of food in your mouth.

It doesn't "just happen."

Sure, maybe it's quick, but I'm going to guess that there's probably more time in that space than you're telling yourself there is.

Think about how long of a time there is between you feeling an urge and you putting food in your mouth. What are you doing in that time?

Driving to a store, picking out food, buying it, and walking to your car?

Walking into the kitchen?

Opening up a package that's already next to you?

I'd say that unless you just happen to have a piece of food in your hand when you feel an urge, which I'm going to guess is very rare for you, that there is some time between you feeling the urge and getting the food and that period of time, whether it be 10 seconds or 10 minutes, that is the moment you are getting into a binge rather than getting away from it.

You're getting into the binge because you're not pausing. You're not taking notice of yourself, and what's going on.

You're not aware of how you feel, what you're thinking, or what you're doing.

You're on autopilot. You're not being intentionally conscious of what you're doing.

You're shutting down, shutting off, and letting go of your goals and all the reasons why you want that goal.

You're choosing to focus on feeding the urge rather than doing the work on yourself.

If you're not paying attention to what you're doing, and you don't realize what you're doing, then you can't do anything to change it.

Awareness is always the first step. You have to see that you're going for a binge in order to stop it. You have to know that you're feeling an urge in order to allow it. You have to hear that you're wanting to binge in order to remind yourself of why you don't want to binge.

Being aware is a choice. If you aren't aware of the moment you make the decision to binge, it's because you're choosing to avoid, numb, and check out.

Sometimes the binge happens gradually, where it turns from overeating to binge eating. In this case, there's first the moment you decide to eat when you're not hungry that's causing the overeating and then there's the moment when you decide to keep eating when what you were overeating on is gone, now you decide to find something else to eat, or the moment when you notice you're full, and decide to continue eating. Or when you notice you're starting to eat faster and you allow yourself to keep eating and keep increasing your speed. There's still moments when you're deciding to keep the eating going and to accelerate your eating.

Then there's the times when you may decide you're going to binge. You know exactly how much you're going to eat and you go for it.

I remember doing that a lot. For a few years I lived about a block away from a 7 Eleven and I would think about what I was going to buy while I was getting ready to leave my apartment and while I was walking there. There was a good chunk of time spent thinking about what I was going to buy and eat and you know what I wasn't thinking about? Not bingeing. I was just going with the urge, I was feeling it and thinking about food and buying it and walking with it back home and that whole excursion took probably about 10-12 minutes with the walking, picking out the food, and buying it. That's 10-12 minutes between me first feeling the urge and me eating and that whole time, I probably spent almost all of it fully decided that I was going to binge.

That's 10-12 minutes where I didn't stop and question what I was thinking, how I was feeling, and what I was going to do. I didn't know any of it was optional. It thought it just was how it was so let's go.

But eating is always optional. What you decide to do is optional. How you handle your urges is optional. You can question all of it, but you might not. You just going with it without any regard for what you're doing.

But what if you don't have that longer period of time when you're buying food and all that. What if the food is right there, in your house, and you're just steps away from a binge?

There's still time. There's always time.

Your body does not involuntarily walk over to the food. The package does not open on its own. You do not magically end up with food in your mouth.

There's a moment you decide to do all of these things and these are all moments that are available for you to make the decision to stop what you're doing.

Even if you react and start eating food before you realize what you're doing, you can still decide to stop yourself.

Coming into self-awareness and making new decisions is always an option.

Something else too that's important here is that you are clear with yourself about your true wants, your goals, and why you want them.

When you're thinking about those, and you're committed to them, and they're top of mind, you'll more easily notice when your thoughts and actions aren't aligned when they are.

It will give you that alarm bell telling you that something's off and needs to be looked at.

When you're not thinking about your long-term wants and your well-being, you're going to default to what feels best in that moment.

Running on default does not help you create your best life and stop you from binge eating.

So if you want to be able to notice that moment between the urge and the binge, you have to practice awareness.

You have to be able to see what's happening in your mind, in your body, and in your actions.

Like I said, you can't change anything if you don't even know it's happening.

You can't change your response to an urge if you don't even know you're responding to an urge.

Self-awareness may not be something you're used to doing, and that's why you're not recognizing the moment of decision, so start paying attention to yourself instead of running from yourself and hiding out.

You create the space, it doesn't just happen, especially if you're not used to taking time to check in with yourself.

You give it to yourself. You decide to pause.

It's like when you're having an argument with someone and it starts to get heated. You can keep reacting and watch it blow up into yelling because you're not pausing to check in with where your feelings are and where they're headed, or because you're not aware that you even have a choice about how you're handling the situation, or, you can notice where it's going and choose to pause for a moment. You can choose to pause and think about what you're doing. You can choose to take a

moment to calm down and make a new decision for how you want to handle it.

Make space to think about not bingeing and not giving in to urges.

Binges don't just happen to you. They don't just “all the sudden” happen.

There's a thought, an urge, a decision, and an action.

You have the ability to create space if you choose to and if you're aware of what's happening.

Don't shut down and shut off.

Choose to be present and to be connected with yourself.

Then choose to make a different decision and choose to feel the discomfort of not bingeing when you feel an urge.

You're always just one decision away...give yourself a moment to make sure you're making the decision you truly want to make.

Alright, I'll talk to you next time. Bye bye.