

# THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

*with Kirstin Sarfde*

## Ep #107: The Easy Way to Get Pleasure

Hi! How are you? You ready to dive in? Me too.

Today's episode is about the easy way to get pleasure.

Wanting pleasure is innate in all of us.

I've talked about this before on the podcast, but in case you missed it or forgot, there's this concept called The Motivational Triad. It involves 3 things that our brains have always been wired to do that keeps us alive as individuals and as a species. It's seeking pleasure, avoiding pain, and doing it with the least amount of effort as possible.

Basically, some of the pleasure part is, eat to stay fueled, have sex to reproduce, connect with others to be a survival team, stay clean and warm to not get sick and die. The pain part is pretty self-explanatory, don't hurt yourself because an infection could mean death and don't get eaten by a bear. And the least energy part is because food was scarce back in the day and we needed to conserve our energy if we wanted to be able to go out and find it.

That's what kept us alive back before us humans made it so much easier to survive. But now, in our modern, industrialized world, we don't have to work so hard to stay alive. Food is everywhere, we have medicine and surgeries, wild animals aren't typically roaming around us, and living easily is very, very easy.

Surviving in this world, is easy. Getting pleasure, has become extremely easy.

If I wanted to, I could stop recording this episode right now and in a matter of minutes, get pleasure from several different sources – my computer, my books, my phone, in any of the restaurants within walking distance from me, I could hop in my car and go visit a friend, I could do a puzzle, take a nap, watch tv, I could go on and on.

Pleasure is everywhere and it's easy to get.

And what's one of the easiest?

Food.

There were so many times that I chose eating food by myself as my pleasurable activity.

I had plenty of friends I could hang out with, plenty of things I could do by myself that were enjoyable, but I'd chose food over all of it.

When it came to my friends, it wasn't so much that they would invite me somewhere and I'd decline because I had eating on my mind, although that may have happened at one point or another. But it was more that I had the option of reaching out to a friend and seeing if they wanted to hang out, or going to the store, buying a bunch of food, and eating it by myself, and I'd choose eating.

In my mind, it was a guaranteed good time. In my mind, it was always fun to eat delicious food alone. Obviously I wasn't thinking about the aftermath of what would come, but going to the store, picking out the food, and eating it sounded so enjoyable.

While on the other hand, hanging out with a friend seemed like a lot of work and I wasn't so confident that it would be fun. Here's where my mind would go. It would start thinking that we might have nothing interesting to talk about, maybe they're not going to be engaged enough or not in a good mood, maybe we wouldn't find something fun to do, basically there were just too many variables that could lead to me not enjoying myself.

But with the food, that was all in my control. I knew where I could get good stuff, it was easy to get, I chose the food and I know what I like and that's it. I know what I'm getting into and I'm going to create a great experience.

So I'd choose it.

And then of course later regret it.

Food became my main source of pleasure. I'd choose it over other things that could bring me pleasure because it sounded like the best option which was my doing by the way because I'm the one that made food to be so important in my life and I'm the one that put food up on a pedestal.

I can't tell you how many times I made lists of things I could do for pleasure by myself, besides eating, yet never, or rarely, did the things.

They were all things I really did enjoy like taking dance classes, doing puzzles, reading, watching movies, painting, and I had so many destinations and places to go saved on my computer bookmarks that I didn't go to.

Again, just like I talked about with making plans with friends, I just kept coming up with reasons why I didn't want to do those things, pretty lame excuses when I really think about them now.

I didn't want to spend the money to take a class or go to one of the places on my list. Yet, I had no problem spending that same amount of money on binge food.

I didn't feel like thinking, which let's be real, how much thought really goes into puzzles, reading, watching movies or painting? Some for sure, but it's not like I'm doing Calculus. Besides, it would

probably have given me more energy in the end. It's like when you feel lazy and don't want to exercise but then you do and you feel so much more energized. That's how I usually feel when I do things that stimulate my mind. That's not how I feel when I sit around and eat too much food.

And really, I just didn't feel like doing all those things. I didn't feel like doing my at home alone activities or I didn't feel like making plans, like driving across the city, like doing something different.

I felt like doing what was familiar, comfortable, and easy.

Now that I understand how our brain works, this totally makes sense. This is what my brain is designed to do. Going against this is going against my brain's naturalness and takes effort that I didn't want to put in.

Not knowing this back then was really frustrating.

I wanted to do all the things, I wanted to do new and different things. But my brain kept crapping out on me. It kept leading me to what I'd been doing over and over and it was not enhancing my life in any way.

I see similar problems happen with my clients all the time.

Eating becomes the easy activity. It becomes the default, go-to.

Food tastes good, it's pleasurable, and it's so easy to get.

I can't tell you how many times I've heard people say, "It's just easier."

I'm not going to disagree with that. I don't usually keep joy foods in my home simply because I don't want them as a regular part of what I eat but if I really wanted to binge, I could go to town on the cashews I have in my cabinet, or take a quick walk to the convenience store across the street or order something from a food delivery app. I could get food in my mouth with little effort if I really wanted it.

It is very easy.

And you know what would take a lot of effort? Allowing myself to feel a craving for food and to not eat it. It's also not pleasurable.

So if it takes a lot of effort and isn't pleasurable, why the heck would I do it?

Well, before we answer that question, let's look at the whole picture of getting the easy pleasure from food.

Yes it's easy and yes it's pleasurable, but then what? Then you feel terrible and dealing with the aftermath of a binge is hard. Taking that easy pleasure ends up resulting in hard pain.

So then going back to my question. Why chose to put in effort to not binge and experience the pain of an unanswered craving?

Because it will give you the opposite effect of the binge. It will result in the pleasure or achieving

goals, the pleasure of pride, the pleasure of not feeling completely stuffed, and it will make living your life for the rest of the day and into tomorrow a lot easier than if you'd binged.

So many of you when you make the decision to binge, you're not thinking it through. You're not considering your options and the consequences.

All those times I chose food over my friends, I wasn't either.

I thought about how much effort it would be to come up with a plan, to find someone who was available, and to actually meet up with them. I also, like I said, thought about how it might not turn out as I wanted it to.

I wasn't thinking about all the super fun times I've had with my friends. I wasn't thinking about how it would be totally worth it to put in that effort and how when I'd done it before it was totally worth it.

I also wasn't thinking about how I'd feel for the rest of the day or night if I chose food over them.

When we choose the easy pleasure, it's usually because we're thinking very short-sightedly.

We're focusing on the pleasure we can get now, without considering consequences, rather than how we can get long-term pleasure that's going to be much more fulfilling.

That long-term thinking is what gets us through work, unless you're a serial procrastinator of course which is another example of going for easy pleasure. It's the "work hard play hard" mindset.

Get the hard stuff done now so you can have guilt-free, obligation-free, pleasure time later.

I've actually been in the midst of this myself. I've put in the time to create and record several podcast episodes ahead of time already. I'm usually just a couple weeks ahead, but I've put in extra work time and right now I have more than that because I'm going to be taking some time off of work, because I'm a human and I need vacations. And also because I'm moving again, which you'll hear more about probably next week. Because I've chosen the hard stuff ahead of time, I'll be able to take my time off and not worry about catching up when I get back or feel bad for not working on it while I'm on vacation.

I did the hard stuff instead of putting it off until later and making it harder for myself later.

That's what you do when you choose eating as an easy pleasure. You put off feeling discomfort until later.

Do you want to feel the discomfort of your urge now or feel the discomfort of feeling too full?

Do I want to put in the effort to see my friends or do one of my solo activities and feel fulfilled afterward? Or do I want to eat and feel emotionally empty afterward?

The easy thing may seem like the better option for you in the moment, but you have to think it through, all the way.

Is the easy way the way you want to take?

Sometimes in life the easier way can be the better option. It's not like easy is always bad. What really matters is the cost of it. Does choosing the easy way cost nothing, very little, or a lot?

Like if I wanted to have someone plan a trip for me, I could pay them to take care of everything and make an itinerary. If I see the value in that and I'm willing to pay for it and have no problem with that, then ultimately the cost in my life is very little. What I gain from doing that it worth it to me.

Or if I'm driving somewhere and there's the route with no traffic versus a route with traffic, then sure, easy has no cost and I actually gain time.

But bingeing and choosing to eat when you're not hungry when you have goals of not bingeing, of losing weight, of being healthier, or having a more fulfilling life, that will cost you. A lot.

You don't always have to choose the hard things. It's always your choice.

You can choose to eat if you want to, you can drink to make yourself more comfortable, you can back out of things that you think are too hard, you can skip work and binge on Netflix, but know if or how much it will cost you.

Know all of what you're choosing. You know how a binge is going to end. You know how giving in to an urge to binge is going to end.

Think about it on purpose.

And if you want to be choosing more of the hard things because you want the results you'll get from doing them, make sure you're thinking about the outcome there as well. Don't get caught up in the hard, get caught up in the benefits, the amazingness, and the good feelings you'll get.

The easy way probably won't get you those.

So have a great week being fulfilled by the hard stuff. Bye bye!