

# THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

*with Kirstin Sarfde*

## Ep #11: Stress Eating

Hi! How are you? So, I'm really excited to do today's topic because it's one I hear people talk about all the time. It comes up quite often when I talk to people on mini sessions, which by the way, have you signed up for yours yet? [Coachkir.com/mini](http://Coachkir.com/mini). Let's talk my friend.

When I ask them how they were feeling before they binged so many say stressed.

They tell me about what's going on in their life and how stressful it is and they just needed a break and to relax and food calms them down.

I was one of those people too. I was definitely not one of those, "I don't eat when I'm stressed" people. I mean, I'm still not, my brain still tells me to eat when I'm stressed sometimes, but I'm now much better at managing it.

But the times when I wasn't good at managing it were also the times when I worked in restaurants for many years, which of course is like the worst place for a binge eater to work, right? If you've worked in one, then you know that there is usually something available to be munched on for free.

If a restaurant serves complimentary bread, it's going to be available for servers to grab, and boy did I grab it.

Whenever I'd feel too busy and stressed, because it's such a fast paced environment and pretty demanding as I had to deal with guest requests, co-workers, and managers, so once I had a free minute, I'd grab bread and head on over to wherever I was able to eat it. It was my minute to calm down, step away, and take my mind of everything.

Then once my shift was over, I was hungry and tired and again just wanting something to soothe myself. I didn't care about re-fueling my body or setting myself up to feel better for the rest of the day or night, I deserved something comforting after the stressful shift I had. So I'm wanted have something with french fries and ya know what, it was an extra challenging shift so I was gonna have dessert too.

I used these excuses to stress cope with food a lot, that needed my bread break, that I needed to comfort, and sometimes it wouldn't end there. A lot of the time actually, it all built up choice after choice and then on my way home I might go get something else, or more than one something else's. I

just wanted to zone out with food and forget everything.

One of the biggest problems you face with trying to not cope with stress by eating is that it *does work*.

Eating when stressed *does* relax you when you feel stressed. I really did feel calmer during my bread break and I *was* able to just zone out with food after work.

When you eat, there are chemicals released in your brain, “feel good” chemicals that enhance calmness and pleasure and relieve pain.

You actually get what you're seeking and this is why it's so hard to stop doing it.

Now, there are of course other ways to release those chemicals in your brain, but eating to do it is your easy, go-to, quick fix.

You hear about all these stress relievers, like going for a walk, taking a bubble bath, yoga, exercise, and those sound real great, but when I had one minute before I had to go greet a new table or process someone's payment, I didn't have time for any of that! I only had time to eat bread.

And the truth was, I also didn't *want* to do something else, I wanted to eat.

So the problem is, if you get what you want, why do something else? Because although you get that temporary relief from eating, you haven't actually solved the stress. It's still there underneath. You're just ignoring it for a minute. And once you're done eating, it'll be back.

The work is the same, the people are the same, the things asked of you are the same, the time allotted is the same. And your desire to keep eating is the same....or higher now.

While you're eating, what you're actually doing, along with releasing the brain chemicals, is taking your focus off your current circumstances, and focusing on the food. You get to think about how delicious it tastes, how calm you feel, how you're getting a break, or just shutting your mind off completely.

And that's the thing you need to know. A big part of why you get that relief, that break and calmness for that minute, is because you're changing your thoughts.

While you're stressed you're thinking, “I have to do all these things” or “There's not enough time to get this done” or “This is a disaster!”

Then you're not thinking that way when you're eating.

But once you get back into your work or life or where ever you are in that moment, those thoughts come right back. And you may have even added on some more stress if you start thinking about how you wish you hadn't just eaten, overeaten, or binged.

Most people find it hard to get out of stress because they think they have to change what's going on around them in order to do it.

They blame their circumstances for how they feel.

But if you've been following along with me, you know this is not the truth.

Our circumstances never cause us to feel anything, our thoughts about them do.

No matter what's going on in your life, whether you have 20 things on your to do list and then something urgent randomly pops up, or you have one thing that's taking up a lot of your mental space, it's your thinking that's going to make it stressful.

I could tell you that today I have to prepare my podcast episode, and record it, and I have a meeting, and I have 3 coaching sessions and 2 mini sessions, and I have to make time to eat, and also to make time for my own daily self-coaching and reply to emails. Does that sound stressful to you?

If you listen to my tone, you might say it does. Or, if you're someone who does the same or more than that in a day, or if you think your to-do's are more stressful than mine then you may think it's no big deal.

The truth is, what I just listed for you doesn't stress me out at all. If I were honestly explaining my day to you I'd say, I going to prepare my podcast episode, and record it, and I have a meeting, and I have 3 coaching sessions and 2 mini sessions, and I'm going to make time to eat, and also to make time for my own daily self-coaching and reply to some emails.

What a difference, right? I don't think it's a big deal, it just is what I'm doing. But for some reason, people just love dramatizing their lives and making things out to be way more stressful than they need to be.

It all comes down to perception.

All this stress you feel, you are causing.

Which is really good to know because changing your circumstances isn't always possible.

It would be really nice if we could just walk out of work or leave our responsibilities but that's just not realistic.

You have a job, and household chores, and errands, and meals, and unexpected things that pop up just like pretty much everyone does, and there's no changing all that.

All you can change is you.

You don't have to run around all day thinking you have to get all this done, everything's not going to get done in time and what's crazy is that almost all of the time, it does all get done.

You can either get it done while acting like a crazy person and ripping your hair out or while being calm. It's all going to be fine.

Now, I do want to say that when you feel yourself starting to get stressed, it's not always so easy as just telling yourself it's all going to be fine and then you'll immediately feel better.

But it's still important to direct your thinking anyway because every little bits helps.

You can either keep thinking stressful thoughts and compound your stress or you can, on purpose, calm yourself down by neutralizing the situation and looking at the facts. The stress may not go away entirely, but it's going to feel a lot better than if you create more and more stress and it's going to be much easier for you to feel the stress without eating. That's what I want you to do here, don't eat to relieve the stress, manage your thinking and allow yourself to feel just like how I've talked about allowing yourself to feel your urges to binge.

There was a time not long ago where I was faced with technical issues with a company I coach for a few hours a week. I didn't know what to do and I was communicating via text with one of the company's directors and I was kinda freaking out so afraid that the problem wasn't going to be solved quickly enough and it was going to impact my schedule negatively.

And then I stopped the nonsense. I felt my stress level rising, I knew I was feeling that way because of all the thoughts spinning around in my head and my concern for what was going to happen, and then I chose to think differently. I chose to believe that it would all work out fine and that the director would help me sort out any issues.

But here's the thing. Even though I shifted my thinking, the stress didn't go away right away. I still felt it in my chest and my heart was still beating harder than usual. So you know what I did? I let it be.

I was watching tv and I watched it while experiencing stress. And I was okay.

Then sure enough, that feeling finally went away and of course the tech and scheduling issues were resolved. All was good and there was no stress eating or bingeing involved. Because there was no point in doing that. Eating wouldn't have made the director work faster nor would it have made communication between us go faster.

What I did was, I chose to feel the short term discomfort to get the long-term satisfaction. That satisfaction came from knowing I chose to feel instead of eat and yes, I still get proud of myself when I don't eat in those situations because I remember how habitual it was for me in the past.

So always remember that you have the choice of how you want to deal with your stress.

How I recommend is that you look at what's causing it, your thoughts not your circumstances, and neutralize it with calming, rational thoughts, and choose to feel it out.

And this doesn't take a lot of time. Just a few seconds really because again, I know you may not have time to go for a walk to clear your head and you don't have to.

It's just a quick pause to center yourself, bring awareness to what you're doing and what your options are.

It's all going to be fine, you're going to figure it all out and get it all done.

You can handle it.

And those feel good chemicals that you're looking for from the food? There's other ways to get them

and they are ways that aren't going to keep you bingeing, overeating, and struggling with your weight. They're natural pleasures including the stress relievers I mentioned before that people are always recommending and doing anything you enjoy doing that relaxes you or engages you. So I'd recommend, as a stress preventer, to begin incorporating some of those into your life not just when you're stressed, but daily to prevent an increase in your stress.

Bring yourself to calm as often as you can.

So in conclusion, the reason why you feel stressed is because of how you're thinking about your circumstances so the way to lessen it is to change how you're thinking.

Then, the other important piece for not stress eating, is to allow yourself to feel some stress without trying to suppress it.

True relaxation comes from processing through the stress, not from continually avoiding it.

So process, people. Manage your thinking and process.

Have a wonderful week, bye bye.