Ep #127: How to Stop Restricting

Hi! Happy freakin' New Year! As I'm recording this, it's still 2020, I always record a few weeks ahead of time because it's so much less stressful that way but I'm so excited for the new year. I love new years! So much possibility ahead, I can't wait to see what 2021 brings. I know there's going to be a lot of amazingness because I'm going to create it for myself and you, you're going to too, at least, you better! There's no reason why you shouldn't. Not one. Any reason you come up with, I call BS.

Most importantly, this is the year that you are going to stop binge eating for good. I has to be. It's already taken up way too much of your time and energy. It needs to go and I'm here to help you do that.

Keep listening to the podcast and when you're ready to take this work to the next level and start seeing faster, bigger results, join me in my group coaching program. The next group will begin in March and if you join my email list you'll be notified as soon as more details are released. Just go to coachkir.com/free and sign up to receive one of my freebies on there and you'll be added to my list.

Alright, let's get down to business. Let's stop restricting!

But before we talk about how to stop, let's first talk about restricting and what it means.

Restricting in itself is not a bad thing. It can actually be good for you. It just depends on how you do it and what your intentions are behind it.

I previously did an episode about the two types of restriction, episode #48 which I highly recommend you listen to if you think all restriction is bad. If you haven't listened, stop this episode and listen to that one first.

Otherwise, let's continue.

To summarize, there's restricting from a place of self-love and caring for you well-being and then there's restricting from a place of guilt, fear, and punishment.

Let's use television as an example before we look at food.

I restrict my television watching because I don't feel good when I spend too much time in front of the tv. It's fun for a little bit but after awhile I feel low, my energy gets drained, and I will feel so much better if I get up and switch activities. So I put limits on it. This is for my own happiness and well-being. It's from a place of love and caring for myself.

Now, if I restricted my television watching because I think I don't deserve to watch any, or more, I think I didn't earn it, I make watching television mean I'm lazy, or because I fear I will never stop once I start, then that's the kind of restriction that's going to make me feel bad about myself, like I did something wrong or that tv in general is something bad. If watching tv is something I genuinely enjoy, I'm going to feel restricted and deprived when I tell myself I can't and feel guilty if I do do it.

See the difference?

Now let's bring it back to food.

I restrict what I eat because it's how I feel best. All food is allowed, I'm a grown woman who can eat whatever she wants whenever she wants because I have a car, money, stores nearby, food in the kitchen, restaurants, and so on. You get me? But even though all food is allowed, I choose to not eat crap all day every day. I choose to restrict what I eat because I feel my best when I do. I set guidelines that I want to follow that will give me the results I want. I don't just give in to every craving and eat anything I see that looks good. I say no to myself, I restrict myself, because it's what I truly want and how I will feel good physically.

What I don't do is tell myself I can't have things, remove food groups from my life when there's no medical reason to, punish myself by not allowing myself to eat a joy food if I overate something, not allow myself to eat when I'm hungry because I overate earlier or yesterday, make food off limits or forbidden, things like that that are punishments or fear driven.

So when I'm talking about restricting in this episode, it's that second one that I'm talking about. The first one, where you're lovingly setting guidelines and limits for yourself, do that! Please do that. But the other one, that needs to stop.

So let's first look at why you're doing it.

As I mentioned, it's mostly fear and guilt driven.

You feel bad about what you did and think you have to now punish yourself for it.

You feel bad about having binged so you think you shouldn't eat your next meal even if you're hungry, you shouldn't allow yourself to have that joy food you had planned, or you start scheming how you're going to eliminate that food from your life forever.

Or you are afraid you're going to gain weight or be out of control.

You think certain foods cause you to binge and if you eat them you won't be able to stop so you avoid them. You think if you binge and don't restrict then you're going to gain weight.

Ultimately, you think restricting this way is going to do something good for you.

You think that punishing yourself will help you learn. You think restricting will help you lose weight. You think avoiding the foods will stop you from bingeing.

Well guess what. None of that is true.

Here's why.

How many times have you punished yourself for bingeing? And are you still bingeing?

Punishing doesn't stop you from feeling urges or giving in to urges. It just makes you feel bad about yourself.

There you are, already feeling guilty about having binged, and now you're making it worse by taking away something you want like your planned joy food or beating yourself up. Then what do you do when you feel bad about yourself? You treat yourself poorly, maybe binge more because you think you're bad anyway.

An important part of stopping binge eating is being kind to yourself and punishing yourself for making a mistake isn't helping that and it can also perpetuate binge eating.

Then, does avoiding your binge foods stop you from bingeing? No. Not giving in to urges to binge stops you from bingeing.

You'll find something else to binge on if you are making that other food off limits. And, if you love that food and you're now telling yourself you can't have it, guess what, you're going to feel deprived and want it more.

There was a time when I decided to give up sugar, alcohol, and caffeine for a month. It was just a fun challenge I wanted to do to eliminate the stimulants from my life, give my body a break from them, and also I wanted to see if it would help me sleep better.

When I decided that, my human brain thought, "but what if I want a chocolate coconut donut?" Now, those are my favorite donuts and they're not easy to find but there's a donut shop where I used to live that has them.

What was so interesting to me what that I had   n't eaten one in forever. I never even really thought about them or if I did I would choose to not eat one for whatever reasons I had at that time.

It wasn't like they were a big part of my life and I wasn't going to a donut party any time soon either.

But once I told my brain they were off-limits for the month, my brain freaked out a little bit. And it happened even though it was a lovingly restrictive decision and something I wanted to do for my well-being. I wanted to give my body a break. It had nothing to do with punishing myself or fear of eating or drinking too much or gaining weight yet still, once I said I was eliminating them for a month, my brain thought about them.

I know how to handle that deprived feeling. I know how to handle my thoughts like that. But if you don't, and you're telling yourself you can't have certain foods or food groups then you're going to feel

deprived and your reaction to deprivation is to eat what you're feeling deprived of.

What's even worse is when you're eating that forbidden food and telling yourself it's the last time you're going to eat it. Well guess what happens then. You get as much in as you can while you're allowing yourself to eat it. You don't just have one, you have many.

You think making it off limits will stop you from eating it but it doesn't. It makes you want it more, you eat more than a sufficient serving when you do eat it, and if you don't binge on that food you'll find something else to binge on.

Supposedly eliminating food from you life, which by the way, you can't because you are not in charge of what food exists in the world, won't stop you from bingeing. It might lead you into a binge.

Lastly, the one that makes the most sense to most people, is restricting to not gain weight.

If you binge, if you eat a lot of unnecessary food when you're not hungry, if you're excessively eating more than your body needs, then you're most likely going to gain weight.

So it makes sense to try and balance it out by under eating after that, right?

Yes, it may make sense but, is it useful and will it actually help you to not gain weight or to lose weight?

I can speak from experience that it didn't work for me. In the short term, sure, but as I kept doing it, it turned into a disaster.

The under eating, not eating even when I felt hungry, not fully feeling full when I stopped eating, it all activated the survival mechanisms in my brain because my brain and body didn't like it. They wanted to be fed!

So they'd urge me to eat more, and I'd fight that urge, and the urge would become more intense, and I didn't know what to do besides give in to the urge and then there was a binge.

I know you all know about this because so much of the time when I talk to you all, you tell me about the binge/restrict cycle you get into.

You think you're helping yourself but you end up making it worse.

There you are, trying to not gain weight by not eating enough and then you get so hungry and your brain is urging you so strongly that you overdo it and binge.

Maybe you lose weight during that restrictive period but it all comes back when the binge happens, maybe more.

You're not helping yourself stop binge eating when you restrict like that, or in any of the ways I'm talking about here.

You have to see the truth about all of this. You have to see the full story of what happens when you restrict this way.

If you want to stop restricting you have to think about restricting differently.

Right now, you're seeing it as something beneficial that will help you in some way.

But as you can see by the examples I gave, and these are not just my examples by the way, I hear these same stories from other people over and over again, you can see that in the end, it's not useful and just perpetuates bingeing and an unhealthy relationship with food.

If you want to help yourself truly, allow yourself to eat anything you want but, put guidelines and limits in place that you genuinely want to follow.

And if a binge happens, go back to normal eating, whatever that looks like for you within the guidelines you've set for yourself.

Might you gain weight if you binge and then go back to normal eating? It's possible, but, what's the other option? Starve yourself? Either way, weight gain might happen. Choose the one that will support you in stopping binge eating. Choose the one that isn't going to stimulate your survival mechanisms and create more urges than you already feel.

Don't guilt yourself into cutting things out. Accept your mistake, learn from it, and move on.

You restrict because you feel the urge to do it, just like you feel the urge to binge. And on a quick side note, it's also why some people purge, because they feel the urge to purge. I used to feel that way with exercise. The day after a binge I felt the urge to workout hard.

These are all urge driven. So just like you're learning to allow the urge to binge, also allow the urge to restrict. Think about how it's going to hurt you more than help you.

Tell yourself the whole story, and the truthful story.

Let's make this the year that you also stop restricting yourself in unhealthy, punishing ways and stick to the restrictions that will enhance your life and your well-being.

I'll talk to you later.

Bye bye.