

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #21: Loneliness

Hi! If you're listening to this on release day and you celebrate Christmas, Merry Christmas! I hope you have a wonderful day full of joy and laughter. If you're listening to this any other day or if you don't celebrate Christmas, I hope you're still filling your day with joy and laughter.

I'm of course recording this episode a couple weeks before Christmas but I'll tell you, I'm pretty excited about this one.

As I think I've mentioned before on this podcast, I lived in California for about 13 years and I'm in my first year living back home in Massachusetts. It's been awesome by the way. And this will be my first Christmas with my family since I think 2011.

Since then, I had some Christmases with friends and I also had some Christmases alone.

Now before you get all sad for me, which people did whenever I'd tell them what I was doing or what I did, know that I chose to be alone.

I always had at least a couple friends in town that invited me to go to the movies with them or come over but I declined for whatever my reason was that year. Usually it was because I just didn't want to get dressed and leave home, I just wanted to stay home and watch Christmas movies and Face Time with with my family for a bit. Other times it was because I worked so much around Christmas because so many of my co workers or colleagues, depending on the job at the time, were out of town and I'd picked up extra shifts and just wanted to relax and not be around people. You know what I mean?

So it was all by choice and I very much enjoyed having that day off to myself. I didn't think of it as being sad that I was alone.

I was alone on a family holiday and I did not feel lonely.

How could I be alone on Christmas and not feel lonely? So many people just didn't understand...while there were definitely people who totally understood and wished they could do the same!

Now, I want to talk about loneliness because it used to be one of my main trigger emotions when it came to binge eating and I've heard many people say the same.

I'd feel lonely so I'd eat to feel better, to comfort myself, to give myself something to do.

And it was crazy because I knew part of why I felt lonely was because of my bingeing.

I perpetuated the loneliness cycle with my excessive eating.

I'd feel lonely, then binge because I felt lonely, then sit there alone and feel more lonely and have zero desire to connect with anyone because I felt so crappy.

It was all very confusing to me too because I love being alone. I need my alone time. I look forward to it.

But every now and then being alone and loving it would turn into being alone and feeling lonely and I didn't know why.

What was also confusing was the times when I'd actually make plans and go out to a party or a show or something and still feel lonely. Being around people was supposed to make that go away, wasn't it? Well, it doesn't always.

That's the thing about loneliness. You can feel it whether you're alone or with people.

I remember one day during my coach certification training we were working in small groups and I said that I felt lonely because I was single. Then the mentor in my group pointed out that that's not true and asked the married people if they ever feel lonely and they didn't hesitate to say yes.

It doesn't matter what your circumstances are, whether you're alone, with people, in a relationship, single, have no family, have a huge family, they do not determine whether you feel lonely or not.

It's all about how you think about being in that circumstance.

Listen to these thoughts – no one cares about me, no one understands me, I don't belong here, I don't fit in, no one wants to hang out with me, I'm all alone, I have nowhere to go, I have nothing to do, no one loves me.

These right there, thoughts like these are the cause.

It's not being alone that causes loneliness. Like I said, I'm alone often, I love being alone sometimes, and I don't feel lonely most of the time. Does it still happen once in awhile? Sure. But I can see that the solution isn't forcing myself to go out, because if I'm in that loneliness thought pattern, changing who I'm around isn't necessarily going to change how I feel.

I also know that eating isn't the solution either.

How many times have you referred to food as your friend? Your best friend? Your boyfriend?

Let me just cut to the chase here. Food is the worst friend.

Think about it. It doesn't care about your feelings, it just sits there and doesn't do anything, and it makes you feel terrible if you spend too much time with it, and you actually regret spending too much time with it.

What kind of friend is that??

That is not the kind of connection you're looking for. Yeah it may be reliable, you always know you can count on it to be right there at the grocery store when you want it, but do you want to be with someone or something just because it's available?

You don't deserve to settle for that. You deserve to have someone care about you, and like you, and listen to you.

And you know who the best person is to do that for you?

You!

If you like you, care about you, understand you, are willing to listen to you, and want to hang out with you, then being alone is awesome.

Or say the same stuff, and being around other people is just as awesome no matter what's going on. Imagine if you're out with people and you're thinking and believing how great you are to be around, and then you can just enjoy being with you even if you're not talking to anyone.

I remember a time I was at a party where I actually knew a bunch of people but there were multiple times throughout the night that I wasn't being included in conversations. I was thinking they didn't want to be friends with me or didn't care that I was there and felt pretty down on myself. It sucked. All these people, and some people I knew even, and there I was feeling lonely.

It was only because I was having thoughts that brought down my confidence and my self-esteem and what did I do when I felt those ways? I hung out by the food. I kept going back to food because I was generating loneliness, low confidence, and low self-esteem with my thinking, instead of building myself up and then trying to join in or just being comfortable being myself, even if that meant I wasn't included in every conversation.

So I want you to see that the solution to loneliness is of course not food, because food doesn't give you the feeling you're actually looking for, and the solution isn't always being around other people either.

The solution is always in your thinking. It's in liking yourself and having a good relationship with yourself and liking being with yourself, your thoughts, feelings, and all.

I loved being with myself on Christmas, hanging out with myself and watching movies. I didn't want to be with anyone else.

And when it comes to feeling lonely because of your struggle with binge eating, and thinking no one understands you and what you're going through, you are so not alone. I understand you, I get you, all of my other podcast listeners and clients and social media followers and all the other people who struggle

that haven't found me yet, we all get you.

You're not the only one.

Now all of that being said, I gotta also say that making time for people is important as well.

Even those who like alone time still need human connection and socialization. It's a human need. We're social creatures.

So stop telling yourself you have nowhere to go and nothing to do and go find something. Anything. Look at this world we live in. There's endless possibilities of things to do and at least hundreds or thousands of people, depending on where you live, in driving distance from you. You can find one to hang out with for a little bit.

I have no doubt you can find one person who is a hell of a lot better of a friend that food will ever be.

But until you stop telling yourself all these negative, lonely inducing thoughts, you're not going to take any action.

So start opening up your mind to the possibilities that there is a person better than food that you want to and can spend time with. There is an activity better than eating that you want to do. And most importantly, that eating is not the cure for loneliness, no matter how connected you may feel to that food in the midst of a binge.

Seriously, have you ever wished you never met that food you just binged on? Have you ever wished that a binge food of yours was never created or you never had to see it again? Yeah, that's not the kind of friend I want to have.

So start with being your own best friend. This all begins with what you choose to think about when you're alone and being okay with being by yourself and when you listen to yourself, when you listen to your thoughts, you are compassionate instead of judgmental because that's what friends do.

I think that's what a lot of it comes down to is not wanting to be with your own thoughts. You have all these negative thoughts swirling around in your head and they're making you feel bad and you don't want to be around them. You're being your own Negative Nancy but instead of being compassionate and trying to understand yourself, you're just shutting yourself off from yourself by eating.

Imagine if someone you love and care for was venting to you about a tough time they're having. Are you going to shut them out or listen and try to understand?

You're just venting in your head and what I suggest you actually do is vent on paper. Stop the thought swirling and write it out. So often my clients tell me how helpful it is when they write instead of just think. It really does help you sort through your thoughts and can sometimes even help you figure out how to look at your circumstances differently right then and there. It's awesome.

When you're alone, feeling lonely is not inevitable and again, you can even be with people and feel lonely, so right there, that shows you that loneliness is all in your head.

You can feel happy, content, and loved no matter who is around, even if it's just you.

Look at how you think about being alone and see how that's causing you to feel lonely. Then ask yourself this to see if you can look at being alone a little differently. What's awesome about being alone? What do you love about it? Really take moment to answer that. Look for the good in being alone rather than the bad.

Changing how you look at being alone is what will lead you away from loneliness, food will not. Don't let yourself forget about the consequences of lonely eating. They're not good. It doesn't actually help you to feel good about who you are or aren't with.

If you don't want to feel lonely, you don't have to change anything except how you're perceiving the people in your life, including yourself.

Alright, that's what I have for you today and if you haven't already, make sure you subscribe to this podcast on whatever app or site you listen to it on. Don't miss one single episode because they're all so good! Have a great week and spend lots of time alone feeling content, and remember that you're always just one decision away...bye bye!