

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #26: Changing Your Beliefs About Food and Eating

Hey you! What's up? What's goin' on? Me, I'm super pumped because I signed on three new clients earlier today and they're all so excited to do this work. That's the best. When I'm excited and they're excited and it just makes for a great foundation for change. Are you excited too? If not, you should be! Because today we're talking about the beliefs you've established throughout your life about food and eating.

When people are trying to figure out why they are where they are, they tend to look into their past to see what they've been taught, what was modeled, and what they've been believing that got them here.

They think about what their parents taught them, what society taught them, what magazines and books taught them, what their friends and teachers taught them, what they taught themselves. They think about what they have always done and what they've seen other people do time and time again.

All this repetition of what they've learned and seen become what they believe to be true.

What a lot of people do is hold onto a these beliefs and think this is just how it is for the rest of their life.

This is who they've become, this is what they believe, this is what they do, and there's nothing they can do about it.

There were definitely beliefs I developed throughout my life that kept me binge eating and I didn't even realize it.

One was that I created this belief for myself that I was a person who would always desire to eat unhealthily and want to eat too frequently and I'd have to battle with this against my desire to be healthy for the rest of my life.

Because growing up, we always had snack foods in the house and I ate it often and in large quantities even when I wasn't hungry and was never told that I should do otherwise. So I didn't think there was anything wrong with it. But then once I got to my highest weight, which led to my weight loss that led

to my binge eating, I blamed that lack of healthy eating guidance for starting it all, and for continuing it. I would think that if I'd never had those bad eating habits to begin with, then after I got to my goal weight I wouldn't have had bad eating habits to revert back to.

I also created beliefs that I had to count calories in order to not gain weight, that if I didn't track my calories then I would overeat, that I couldn't trust myself.

Me continually believing all these things and thinking this is just the person I've become was not at all useful for me. It wasn't useful to think I was destined to always be an unhealthy eater or that I needed something outside of my body to gauge what I should be eating.

I thought I was just speaking the truth, but for me now, I don't believe any of it is true. At all. I am not programmed to eat unhealthily all the time, I don't need to count calories to lose or maintain my weight, I can not overeat without tracking exactly what I'm eating, and I can trust myself.

We get taught to believe so many things throughout our lives, either directly or indirectly. Either someone tells us what to believe or we find it on our own and teach ourselves, or we interpret what is done by other people or ourselves to make it mean something that we start believing.

The problem most people fall into is that once they have learned these beliefs, and they've held onto them for a long time, they don't know how to let them go if they're not serving them in their lives. Maybe they don't even know they can let them go! Like I said before, I thought that what I believed about who I was, was how it was going to be. But no! No, no, no. It can all change.

So I've made a list of just some of the beliefs I hear from my clients that they learned at some point in their lives and I'm going to go through them right now. See if any of them ring true for you too.

1. You have to finish everything on your plate. So many of us were taught this one, right? Maybe back then portions were smaller so it made sense, or your family didn't have a lot of money so nothing was allowed to be wasted. You were told time and time again that everything on your plate must be eaten and that's why now you always feel compelled to eat everything on your plate even if it's one of the gigantic portions that a lot of restaurants serve these days.
2. Eating makes you feel better and I'm talking emotionally, not that you feel better because you were physically hungry and now you're not. I mean if you feel sad, eat a cookie! We associate comfort and love and happiness and relaxation with the food. Now, this is a tricky one because food can actually make you feel better. The feel good chemicals in your brain do get released when you eat, and even more so when you eat sugar or processed foods. But just for a short moment and far too often, what it really does is make you feel worse and we all have experienced this. There's also something to be said for when you have this expectation that you'll feel better if you eat some Reese's peanut butter cups, but then you don't get that feeling you wanted, or you did but it didn't last long enough, and so you keep eating, looking to feel better, thinking that it will come, but it doesn't, and before you know it they're all gone and you feel worse than when you began.
3. I need to binge. This is one that might come up when you feel an urge. As soon as you start thinking that bingeing is necessary, that you *need* to do it, then you're going to feel compelled to do it. You're going to think it's the only way out. Or maybe you're just feeling really stressed, overwhelmed, or angry and again, bingeing is the way out. You think you need to binge in order

to feel a release. But you gotta know that bingeing is never, ever necessary. It's not the only to relieve your urges or feelings.

4. Eating junk food is not allowed. This is actually the opposite of what I experienced growing up and in my binge years I always wished I had been brought up in a healthy foods only household. But then I learned that those who did can also find themselves headed down an unhealthy eating path. Their's is more a rebellion thing where they just want some dang sugar but it's not allowed so they have to be secret about it. They're being taught to restrict. What this can cause is a negative cycle of doing something they have been taught is wrong, which is eating some kind of unhealthy food, so they feel ashamed, and that shame causes them to eat more or restrict themselves as a punishment, which of course leads to bingeing later. This could teach them that these foods are bad and they shouldn't eat them and if they do then they're bad. Not a useful way to think about food as I've talked about in previous episodes.
5. Last one I got for you. One of the most common ones I hear - I can't stop eating. This is a big one. It's one that most of you think is a fact, but I assure you it's not. It's absolutely a belief that you've ingrained in yourself over the years. And what happens when you think it? You feel out of control and you keep eating. You may say that you have all this evidence to prove it true, but I assure you that you also have evidence to prove it false. There have been times you've stopped eating. There's been times you've stopped in the midst of a binge. It's happened. So being so assertive in saying that you can't stop eating or you have no control is not doing you any good. You can stop, but you're choosing to keep eating and if you don't know why you're choosing to keep eating, you can go back and listen to episode 5 about why you want to binge.

So there's just some beliefs around eating that I hear often. There's so so many more, but I don't want to spend hours going over all the counterproductive beliefs people learn in their past that keep them binge eating and I'm sure I have previously and will in the future touch on all the other ones.

So what were some of the beliefs you've developed throughout your life about food and eating that you still believe today?

If you find beliefs that are not serving you anymore, or especially if they never did, it's time to let them go. It's time to see the truth behind them and start believing what you want to believe instead.

No matter what your mom always said, what people told you, what you've been telling yourself for years, you can decide right now that you want to believe something entirely different.

Isn't that cool?

You're a grown up. You make your own decisions. You can decide what you want to believe.

First you gotta know what beliefs have been established in you and you might not really know. The belief that it's okay to eat any kind of food, all the time, whether you're hungry or not, that I had, I didn't even realize was a belief I had. It was just normal to me and I didn't think twice about it.

But once I realized it, I worked on changing it. I've changed a lot of my beliefs in order to get to where I am now. Some I'm still working on, I'm a work in progress too you guys! But some seriously life changing shifts have happened in how I think about food, eating, my body, and my weight because I've consciously decided to believe something else.

Beliefs are just thoughts we've thought over and over. They are an acceptance that a statement is true or that something exists.

You can accept something else. You can think something else over and over until it feels as true as the old belief.

You can let your old beliefs go once you see that they're not what you want to be believing, that they're not serving you, and that you don't see truth in them anymore.

The more falseness you can find in your old beliefs, the easier it will be to let them go.

We all change our beliefs all the time, sometimes it's just not so consciously done.

I knew this guy who was a friend of a bunch of my friends and I only saw him once in awhile when his band would play. I never really talked to him, but I would see him on stage and think he was kinda a douche. Then a good friend of mine told me she thought the same thing and we would talk about why and my belief about him being a douche was strengthened the more we talked about it and the more she confirmed that she agreed. For the longest time I had zero desire to talk to him more than I had to and when I was around him I was disinterested in anything he said or did.

Then one day I actually talked to him. And he was kinda cool and I kinda had a good time and I started to actually like him as a person. Maybe he wasn't so douchey after all. Maybe I was just seeing his stage persona, which isn't actually the person he is when you get to know him and have a conversation. Who knew? So after gathering evidence that was contrary to my original belief, I started believing he was a cool guy, which was great because I saw him at many more social gatherings and we'd have a great time hanging out when we did. I honestly no longer believe he's a douche, even when he's on stage.

What happened was that I had a thought about him, that he is a douche, and I repeated it every time I saw him or talked about him, and this repetitiveness turned a one time thought into a strengthened belief. Then I challenged the belief by actually getting to know him better and I let the old belief go as I didn't see any douchiness in him once I got to know him and stuck with my new belief about him being cool. This was really good too because I no longer felt negatively when I was around him. Not liking someone I saw rather often did not serve me. It made me cold and unfriendly which is the opposite of how I want to be and how I think I genuinely am.

It's the same with your beliefs about food and eating and yourself.

Do the beliefs you've been holding on to for all these years still serve you? Did they ever? Do you still believe them?

If not, then you can decide to start believing something new and start looking for the evidence that this is what is true for you now, not all the old, not-serving-you beliefs.

The evidence for what you want to believe exists, but you have to decide what it is you want, and practice thinking about it, and then you will see it.

Growing up I learned that it's okay to eat anything and everything whenever I felt like eating. That

dessert comes after dinner every night, that snacking is normal, that bagels for breakfast is normal and pizza and french fries for lunch pretty much everyday was a fine meal. Yeah, I don't know about your high school, but pizza and french fries was served every day and was the most popular meal.

So what do I believe now?

I believe that eating all the time and whenever I feel like eating is not okay for me and not at all beneficial for me for my weight and my physiology. I don't feel good in so many ways when I do that.

I believe that dessert doesn't always come after dinner and I honestly rarely eat dessert after dinner if I'm eating at home simply because I don't like to eat sugar or flour that late in the day.

I believe that snacking doesn't need to be a regular part of how I eat day to day.

I believe that I'm much better off having protein, fat, and vegetables for breakfast and that's what I aim for.

And I believe that pizza and french fries is a terrible daily lunch, I can't believe how often I used to eat that. Nowadays, there are still times when I'll eat that for a meal, I'm not gonna lie, but it's rare and definitely not multiple times a week.

So now you.

You don't have to believe that you have to eat until you clean your plate if that means you're overeating. You can believe that eating according to when your body tells you it's full is the way to know when to stop eating.

You don't have to believe that eating is the way to feel better. You can believe that changing your thinking is how you do it.

You don't have to believe that you need to binge. You can believe that you can allow your urges to pass instead.

You don't have to believe that sugar, flour, or processed foods are bad. You can believe that they are foods to be enjoyed and eaten on occasion.

And you don't have to believe that you can't stop eating. You can believe that you can, and you have, and that you're working on stopping more often.

You have developed beliefs over time and now you get to decide whether or not you want to keep believing them.

It's your responsibility to check in with what you believe and choose to keep or let go of them deliberately. What keeps you bingeing is continuing to believe what does not benefit you. So figure out what will benefit you and believe that!

This week, find one belief from your past that is keeping you stuck in your binge eating. See how it's affecting you and decide consciously what you want to believe instead. Then practice believing and look for all the evidence to support it. You'll see it when you believe it.

Have a great week, remember you're just one decision away, this week it's one decision about holding on to a belief! And I'll talk to you next time. Bye bye!