

# THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

*with Kirstin Sarfde*

## Ep #27: Why Willpower Doesn't Work

Hi! How are you? Guess what....yesterday was my birthday! I'm 37! What what! I'm recording this on January 23<sup>rd</sup> so in case you're wondering, my birthday is the 22<sup>nd</sup> and today my 37 year old self wants to talk to you about willpower.

Have you ever thought that you just don't have enough willpower to not binge and to say no to food?

So many of us think we don't and that that's the reason why we keep finding ourselves knee deep in food wrappers and empty containers.

You do well saying no all day, but then your willpower runs out by the evening and you start saying yes. Or maybe you're able to make it last until the weekend or for a whole month, but then you completely unravel and binge your brains out.

Then you start thinking you're weak and you just don't have it in you to change, and then you give up.

If you think you don't have enough willpower to clean up your eating habits for good, you're probably right. And this does not make you weak or unable to change. It makes you normal.

Willpower is a limited resource, it does not last forever, and therefore it's not a reliable way to make long-term, lasting change.

How I like to look at willpower in terms of the Thought Model is that what you're doing when you're using it is trying to change your action without changing how you feel.

Remember how the model works. Your feelings are what drive your actions. So if you feel disempowered, defeated, or out of control, then you're going to be driven to give in to your urge to binge.

When you're using willpower, you're trying to not eat while feeling those feelings which is super hard to do!

Imagine trying to take control of what you're doing when you're feeling disempowered. It's unlikely to happen. Imagine trying to win when you're feeling defeated. Also unlikely.

These feelings drive you to give up, not to keep trying.

What happens when we use willpower is that we feel these feelings, and use everything in us to not do what they're driving us to do, which may work for a little while, but eventually you're tired out. You can't do it anymore. You have no more will.

You're using all this energy to create determination when there is this underlying feeling of defeat and disempowerment holding you back from truly feeling determined.

This is why people fail long-term. This is why people say diets don't work.

You may start off feeling really good and excited, but then the self-defeating thoughts creep in and instead of working on those, you start working against them.

Here's how I like to look at it. It's like you're going up on an escalator toward your goal and in the beginning all you have to do is stand there and enjoy the ride toward it. It's pretty easy. But then the escalator starts to slow down. It gets slower and slower until it stops and actually starts moving in the other direction. It starts going down. But you don't let that stop you. You stop just standing on the step and you start walking up. Then the escalator starts moving faster going down and you have to start walking faster to go up. You can only do this for so long until you tire out, stop walking, and let the escalator drive you down to the bottom, back where you started.

The escalator is your feelings. When it's going up and you're just standing there, that's when you're feeling feelings that drive you to your goal. When it starts going down, that's when you're feeling feelings that are driving you away from your goal.

So when those feelings shift, you have two options. One, you can just start putting in more effort to get where you want to go. Two, you can figure out the problem and find a solution.

What if you took some time, assuming you know a little something about escalators, to fix the problem. Why is it going down now? Let's figure this out! Let's figure out what caused the shift and shift it back.

Your feelings don't just happen. They are caused by your thoughts so if your feelings changed from determined and empowered to defeated and disempowered, clearly there was some kind of thought shift that happened.

Fix the thoughts and your problem is solved. Shift your mindset from "I can't do this" to "I will do this" and watch how much easier it will be to actually do it.

Another common feeling that willpower gets used to push against is desire.

Deep down you so badly want the food, which is driving you to eat, but you're resisting the desire and not eating instead. Again, you keep thinking that you want it and that you need it creating all this desire, but then your action is that you don't eat it. Because you're not dealing with the emotion properly, you end up using up all your mental energy to fight against it, and the desire eventually wins. Instead of shifting how you think about food, which would change how you're feeling and therefore

drive a different action, you're keeping the strong desire without eating, then feeling deprived because you're not giving yourself something you so badly want.

Again, shift your thinking and it becomes so much easier to say no. If you think about how you don't want or need the food and have good reasons to back it up, then there is no willpower needed. Your Thought Model just flows from thinking you don't need it, to feeling less desire, to not eating it and being okay with it since you don't feel desire for it.

If you want to stop relying on willpower and create lasting change for yourself, you have to stop working against yourself.

You have to create the feeling that will drive you to take the action you want to be taking.

The reason willpower has come into play for you whenever it has, is because you unknowingly strengthened a belief you don't want to believe. You kept thinking, "I can't do it" more times than, "I can." You kept thinking, "I need food" more times than, "I don't need food."

So now it's time to switch it around. On purpose, you have to think what you want to think more than what you don't.

You have to strengthen the belief you want to believe and remind yourself that the one you don't want to believe isn't true or useful.

It's always going to come down to what you're thinking and believing.

Change your thinking, then the action will simply fall into place.

Change from the source of the problem and there is no need for willpower.

No need to walk up that downward escalator, just reprogram it to go in the direction you want it to go in. No need to force yourself to not eat when you're feeling defeated or strongly desiring that food, reprogram your brain to not create those feelings and to instead create feelings that will drive you toward where you want to go.

If you genuinely don't want to binge, then there is no willpower needed. If you genuinely know you're capable of and willing to not give in to your urges to binge, then there is no willpower needed.

Work on believing that.

Willpower is not the answer, so don't worry about not having enough of it. No one does!

When you're using willpower, there is this constant struggle between what you want to be doing and what you're programmed and driven to do.

Your programming is in your thinking and if you don't change your thinking, you won't be able to change your actions for very long.

If you only focus on changing the action, you'll be consistently wearing yourself out all the time.

Do the work at the source of the problem. Find out what thought is holding you back from moving forward and work on changing it. You programmed yourself to think this way through repetition, now it's time to reprogram to think a different way.

And if you want help with this work, I can absolutely help you. Sometimes it's hard to find the problem thoughts and come up with solutions and that's where I come in. I'm really good at it. So if you want my help, you can sign up for a free mini session with me at [coachkir.com/mini](https://coachkir.com/mini). I hope to talk with you soon, I will definitely talk to you next week on the podcast, and I hope you have a great week knowing that you're just one decision away. Bye bye!