

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #29: Lessening Desire for Food

Hi! How are you? Are you amazing? Yes, yes you are. Let's talk about desire.

The reason why you binge is because you feel urges and simply put, urges are really strong, intense desire. You really really want to eat. You really really want to eat a lot of food. You really really want to numb yourself, not think, and zone out.

Not bingeing may be your true desire, but in some moments, bingeing is your ultimate desire. It's all you desire and the urge, the strong desire, is what keeps you going and going once you start eating.

Either you're just doing whatever and that urge hits and next thing you know you can't stop or you start eating for emotional reasons, you're feeling stressed, bored, angry, lonely, and then you start feeling urges and desire for more and it gets way out of hand then.

Desire is a wanting and when it comes to binge eating it's wanting more and more food.

So if desire is the main reason why you binge, wouldn't it be nice to feel less of it? Because if you feel little or no desire to binge, if you feel little or no desire to eat those foods you binge on, wouldn't it be a lot easier to not do it? Heck yeah it would! And, lucky for us, there is a way to lessen the amount of desire you feel.

But before I tell you how, let's talk about why you feel desire and why your desire may be so strong.

There's two main reasons. One is because of how our brain reacts to food, which can be described as our primitive wanting, and the other is what you've been thinking and believing about food which is our cognitive wanting.

The brain stuff I touched on in the last episode, #28, the one about sugar and flour, and I'll give you a brief summary today, in a very overly simplified explanation, to refresh you, or to explain for the first

time if you didn't listen to episode 28.

What happens is, our brains create desire for food for survival purposes. Our natural, primitive desire for food is good because if we didn't desire it, we would not eat it and we would die. It's the same idea behind why we desire things like sex, warmth, and sleep - sex so we don't die off as a species, warmth so we don't freeze to death, and sleep so our bodies and brains can function at their best levels.

The gist of how our brains create desire for food is that when we eat food, we get pleasure, dopamine, and endorphins that feel good, and our brain takes note that food is important for survival. Pleasure equals important. Our brains then create desire for more food so we will repeat this important behavior. It's a system where we eat and get a pleasurable reward, and that reward motivates us to seek out the behavior again so we can get the reward again.

When we eat foods in their natural state, like a carrot stick, this system works at a moderate level. We feel some desire, we get some pleasure, dopamine, and endorphins, and we remember all this for later when we're hungry again. We remember that this is a good and important thing to do. However, when we eat concentrated foods, like sugar and flour and other processed foods, they cause extreme pleasure, dopamine, and endorphins, then we start to strongly desire these foods. Because of the reaction they cause, our brains think they must be *very* important for survival. Therefore, they encourage us to eat more of them, and soon if they're available, which shows up as strong cravings, urges, and desire.

So that's how different kinds of food physically affect desire in our brains. When you eat kale, your brain responds in a super chill manner, like yeah, that was a good thing, let's remember that, and you may desire to eat it again at another time. But when you eat a piece of cake, your brain is like, whoa, this is amazing and super important so we need as much of this as possible and as often as possible.

This could also explain part of why you may binge on foods that you don't really like. You're not paying attention to the flavor, you just keep getting signals for more from your brain purely because of what the food consists of – likely concentrated sugar or flour or other highly palatable foods that cause this over desire reaction in your brain. It's recognizing the perceived importance of it and demanding more.

Now, how your brain reacts to what you're eating is just how it is. We can't change our brain's chemical responses, this is a primitive design and is just how it has evolved. But there is something you might be doing that makes the desire you feel to be even more strong and that makes your urges even more strong.

It's what you have been thinking and believing about those foods and what you have been thinking and believing about bingeing on the cognitive level.

I want to be clear that what I'm talking about now is about the cognitive desire that happens in our minds, not the primitive desire that happens with the chemicals in our brains.

You can create a desire for eating when you're not hungry, for overeating, and for bingeing just by thinking desire inducing thoughts. Do this often and you start desiring food too much and desiring bingeing too much. You start feeling urges for them.

You may think it's the food that causes your feeling of desire but it's not. It never is. Food, as it's just sitting there, causes nothing, it causes no emotional reaction. What does happen is that a thought in our

mind is triggered about that food which then creates a feeling of desire. Our thoughts cause our feelings and desire is a feeling. If it were the food that caused the desire then we would all feel desire for the same foods.

Some people like to argue here that they personally are innately drawn to certain foods and I'm going to show you how we know this isn't true. And this is not about whether something tastes good or not, but how much you want it.

If it were the food that caused your desire then you would feel the same amount of desire for it all the time, every time you thought about it or saw it. You may say that you have the same amount of desire for chocolate chip cookies every time you think or hear about them, but what about something like rice? Do you sometimes want rice and sometimes you don't? Or what about chicken? Or salad? If it were the food that caused desire then you would feel the same amount of desire for them no matter what. But that doesn't happen. Your thoughts about them are different in different moments and therefore how you feel about them is different as well. Sometimes you want your mom's homemade roasted broccoli and sometimes you don't. When you want it you feel desire and when you don't you don't. The broccoli is the same every time, but what you are thinking isn't.

So what are these desire causing thoughts that you may be thinking about these foods? Here are some, but of course not all:

I want it, That looks amazing, It's the best thing in the world, It's to die for, I need to have it, I want more, I can't live without it, I love it, It's orgasmic.

Really think about how you feel when you think each one of those. You can feel the desire bubble up inside of you. That desire doesn't happen until a thought like one of these pops into your head.

Now let's say me and my friend Katie both eat the same exact crackers, but I feel a strong desire for more and she doesn't, why don't we feel the same way? Sure, maybe our brains chemically react a little differently, but what's also going on is that we're thinking differently about it.

She may be thinking that they were delicious but she's had enough. Now she feels satisfied and doesn't desire more. But I'm over here thinking how delicious they were and how I want more deliciousness and as I'm eating I keep thinking I want more and more. So much desire created here and it compounds to even more desire as I continue thinking about the crackers in this way.

Now, there's nothing wrong with thinking they're delicious. Let's not deny that they taste good. But as long as I only focus on wanting more, instead of focusing on how I've had enough like Katie did, then the desire will keep on showing up.

Katie experienced the pleasure she wanted, and now she's done. I on the other hand, was not satisfied with the amount of pleasure I got from them and I wanted more. This search for more pleasure is what caused me to overeat.

The same could be said for why one person desires to binge and another person doesn't. One person may think that bingeing is enjoyable, while the other person may think bingeing is not at all enjoyable.

So now you can see how the foods you eat can affect how your brain naturally responds with desire and how we have been responding on top of that. It's double trouble when our brains and our minds both

agree that bingeing on and eating those processed and highly palatable foods are extremely important. So, what if you stopped agreeing?

What if you stopped putting bingeing and those foods up on a pedestal?

No matter what you've been thinking all this time, it is absolutely possible for you to change your opinion and how you think about bingeing, about how much you want to eat, and what you want to eat, in order to feel less desire. Our thoughts are not set in stone. We can find new evidence and believe new things and think what we want on purpose.

We see this happen with people and romantic or sexual relationships. You meet someone and you desire them a little bit, then you get to know them better and start desiring them a lot. But then you break up. The desire is still there and you want to be with them so badly. But eventually, the desire disappears and you no longer desire them anymore. You're over it. The person is still the same, but what's happened is that you now think differently about them. You no longer think how badly you want them, you think about how they are a good person and it just didn't work out. You don't think you need them anymore, you don't think about wanting them so badly anymore, you think you're okay without them.

Thoughts change, then feelings change, with the object of desire never changing.

So decide what you want to think about food and about bingeing in order to feel less desire for them.

What have you been believing that makes you want them and what would you need to believe in order to not? And don't try and lie to yourself and say that your favorite food is disgusting because you know that's not true. But you can start with taking it down a notch when it comes to how important it is to you.

Food is important and desiring food in general is not a problem at all. It's purposeful for our survival. But it's once the desire becomes too strong and when you're desiring eating in a way that causes negative outcomes, like bingeing, that it becomes a problem.

So if you want to feel less desire, you can eat less of the foods that cause extreme chemical reactions in your brain on the occasions when you're making rational conscious choices about what you eat, aka the times when you're not bingeing and feeling out of control, and also work on thinking about food and bingeing differently in ways that make them feel less important.

The whole purpose of lessening the amount of desire we feel is to make it easier to say no. If you don't desire it, at all or very much, then you won't feel deprived if you don't have it. There's no restricting going on, just your own choices about what you do and don't want to eat.

So start noticing the ways in which you make food and bingeing seem super important to you and make conscious, deliberate choices about how you want to be thinking instead.

Alright my dear listeners. Before I go, I want to let you in on one of my strong desires I have right now and it's my desire for you to leave me a review on iTunes if you haven't yet! That'd be so great! It only takes a minute for you to write a few words about what you've found to be helpful in this podcast. Okay, enough about reviews, it's time to go, it's time for you to go work on your desire, and have an amazing week knowing that you are just one decision away from making even the littlest bit of

progress in the direction you want to be going. Bye bye!