

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #34: Body Acceptance

Hi! How are you? I'm going to imagine that you answered that by saying you're great and I'll tell you right back that I'm the same.

Today's episode is all about your body.

What are your thoughts about your body? Do you love it? Hate it? Kinda like it? Kinda don't?

That's a question I've been asking all my clients when we first start working together and although some of them are content with their body, a lot of them hate it, or at least dislike it.

There's been many times in the past when I've been unhappy with my body, sometimes as a whole and sometimes just parts of it. I don't think I ever would have said I hated it, but maybe there were times when I did. I don't know.

Because I was so unhappy with it, I wanted so badly to change it, and because I was binge eating I was having a really hard time doing it.

I was unhappy with my body so I'd restrict my food in an unhealthy way so I could lose weight, which would then lead to bingeing and I'd then be back where I started and super disappointed.

Or I'd feel embarrassed by it and I'd isolate myself and not go out and not date because I didn't like how I looked and I'd blame my bingeing for all of it and blame myself for being that way. And I'd usually binge when I was in that space.

Not a fun place to be.

All those negative thoughts about my body were causing me to feel negatively, which then drove me to take negative actions. It was not at all useful for me to think so badly about my body but I didn't know else to think. I didn't want to lie to myself and say I loved my body, because I didn't, and I didn't want to be okay with it and surrender to it either because it wasn't what I really wanted for my body.

So I just lived in dislike and unhappiness during all the moments when I had thoughts about my body.

It doesn't feel good to hate your body or even to not like your body. It doesn't feel good to hate or not like anything.

Notice how you feel when you think negatively about your body, when you think it's disgusting, flabby, gross, or ugly. Do you feel angry? Sad? Ashamed? Disgusted?

With all the options for how you can describe your body, why choose those ones, ones that make you feel terrible?

Why do you think about yourself those ways?

I think the problem a lot of people fall into is believing that how they feel about their body is just how they feel and there's no other option.

They hate their body and they think that's a fact. They think they have huge thighs or their stretch marks are horrible or their belly is repulsive and there's no other way to look at it. They're like, "no really, look at them, don't you agree how horrible they are?"

No, I don't agree. These are not facts, they're your opinion and hating your body is a choice. Describing your body parts in a negative way is a choice.

I know it can be hard to see it this way, but it really is. It is your opinion and your preference and you can choose to change your opinion and your preference. We do it all the time with so many things in our lives.

I'll use me moving back to my hometown as an example. I moved to California when I was 23 and moved back here last year at 36. I left because I was just over living in New England and wanted something different. After living in California for 13 years, for many reasons, I made the choice to go back home to Massachusetts. I chose to go back to the place I didn't really like before. But this time, I decided I was going to love it on purpose. I wasn't going to say it's boring or complain about the weather, I was going to make it fun and appreciate the weather. That's exactly what I've been doing. I'll never forget when I text a friend of mine telling her I was moving back and she said, "Don't get me wrong, I'm psyched about you moving back, but I thought you hated it here." And I told her, "Feelings change." They did change, and *I* changed them because I wanted to like living here, and I have been, on purpose, by looking at the good things about being here.

Your feelings and thoughts about your body can change too and it's so worth working on changing them because you will feel much better and your life will be better, even without your body changing at all.

Seriously, your body doesn't need to change in order for you to change how you think about it. My hometown didn't have to change in order for me to change how I think about it.

If you just stay in the place where you're thinking about how much you don't like your body, then you're going to feel sad, angry, ashamed, or disgusted. Being in that emotional space is not going to benefit you in any way if you're wanting to change your life for the better. Do you go eat healthy foods

in proper amounts and fill your free time with fulfilling activities when you feel those ways? Doubt it!

Those are the times when you're likely to self-sabotage, isolate and hide, mope around, binge, or do something that's not going to give you a positive result in the end.

You can't hate yourself into positive change.

You can't call yourself gross, disgusting, flabby, ugly and then expect yourself to do nice things for yourself. No, instead you're going to make these descriptions of yourself mean terrible things like that you're not worthy or not good enough or worse than other people. If you really feel that way about yourself, then you're not even going to try to change anything. Or if you do, if you do actually start changing how your body looks, it's not going to be in a healthy, well-thought out, sustainable, way. It's going to be in a punishing, self-destructing, impatient way.

Even if you don't hate your body, and you're just feeling unhappy about it or wishing parts of it were better or different or simply being dissatisfied, you may not think it's such a big deal. And it may not be a big deal, but it's still not useful at all. It still doesn't make you feel good. It still brings you down.

You can feel so much better than how you've been making yourself feel and you can learn to like your body no matter how it looks.

But you don't have to like it right now. That may not even be an option for you.

What is always an option though is accepting it. Accepting your body for where it is right now, for how it looks right now.

What commonly gets asked when I suggest accepting your body is, "Why would I want to accept something I want to change so badly?"

The answer is, because acceptance is more likely to lead to positive change than hate or any of the other negative emotions you create from thinking badly about your body.

Accepting your body doesn't mean you have to stay this way forever. It doesn't mean accepting that this is where you're meant to be forever and it doesn't mean you can't change it if you want to. It means you're accepting that this is where you are right now. It means you're not constantly hating, rejecting, and looking at your body with disgust and then treating it badly in response to how you feel.

It means you accept the reality of your current situation. You're not arguing with and angry about what is.

If you do want to change it, if you do want to tone your muscles and lose some weight, after you've stopped bingeing of course, let's not forget what I talked about back in episode 10, then you can, when it's time to do that.

That's an important piece to remember too, that while you're working on stopping binge eating, I highly encourage you to stop trying to lose weight. Again, if you don't know why, go listen to episode 10 where I talk about this. So then if you're not working on changing your weight, changing your body, then you have to be okay with it where it is while you're working on your binge eating.

Imagine you're trying to feel better and stay positive about your abilities to stop binge eating. Then you look in the mirror and see your body. What would happen if you started all that negative self-talk about it? Negative emotions would happen, that's what. A lot of you eat or binge when you feel negative emotions or you hide or isolate yourself, or you punish yourself by restricting your food in a way that doesn't make you feel good, and doesn't do your body any good, in order to try and change.

Hating on yourself is just going to make it harder for you to see that you're a good person and worth the hard work you're putting in because you're so focused on what you think is bad about you. Your weight does not bring your value down. You are always the same worth, same value, and good enough no matter what your size.

When you look in the mirror you can either insult and disrespect yourself, or you can look for something good.

What do you like about your body? And you're not allowed to say nothing!

I know you can find something. Your hair? Your fingernails? Your calves? Your eyes?

And what do you appreciate that your body can do? Can it walk? Can it see? Can it laugh? Can it hug?

We get so focused on what we don't like about how our bodies look that we can forget that they're meant for so much more than how they look. Our bodies are meant to do! They are the reason we are able to even live life. That should count for something!

Even if you feel physically uncomfortable, or if you have a hard time walking or moving in some way, and you're not just focusing on liking the aesthetics, you still have the option of either thinking about how it's holding you back and inhibiting your life and thinking about all the things you think you can't do, or you can think about how this is where you are and you will change for the better. You will do something about this. You will work on your bingeing so you can make positive changes.

Look at yourself in the mirror and purposely say to yourself, aloud, something you like or appreciate about your body every day. It can be something you see or something you can do because of it. Either way, you're teaching yourself to focus on those aspects. Why focus on the bad when there is good to focus on? The good are the ones that are going to help lead you away from hate and dislike and toward acceptance.

The truth is that you have parts of your body, they look this way now, there are things your body can do, and you get to live because of your body.

So would you rather spend your days feeling hate and dislike or feeling acceptance? That's what it really all comes down to – deciding how you want to feel and how you feel is what will determine what you do.

It's like if you're stuck in traffic, you can either get super pissed about it and feel frustrated and annoyed thinking about how this is such an inconvenience on your life, or you can accept that traffic happens and accept that traffic is happening right now, and there's nothing you can do to change it in this moment, so you might as well just let it be and drive on forward as you can. Getting mad about it doesn't make the rest of the cars, or yours, move any faster. It's just going to put you in a foul mood, and think about what you do when you're in a foul mood. Do you ever eat to try and feel better? That

could all be avoided if you just accepted the reality of the traffic.

How you feel is directly affected by how you think about your circumstances so you can think nasty thoughts about the circumstance of your body or you can think the neutral truth. I suggest pursuing acceptance because to me, it feels way better than hate and dislike. And again, better actions come from neutral feelings than negative ones.

Don't wait until you get to your ideal weight to accept your body, you don't have to and actually it's much more likely you'll get there if you don't wait.

As my teacher Brooke Castillo says, "Your relationship with your body doesn't get better when your body gets better, your body gets better when your relationship with your body gets better."

Have you ever gotten to your goal weight and still weren't happy? That's why. Your body's size and shape doesn't dictate how you feel about it, you dictate how you feel about it. You decide to be okay with it, accept it, or even like it.

You can decide that you're okay with where you are now and not hate yourself for it. You can stop saying such nasty things about yourself.

Accept that this is what your body looks like now, this is its health now, and this is the truth of what your body can do now.

Accept the neutral, factual, truth.

Speaking negatively about your body has no upside. Stop doing it. Be kinder to yourself. Be nice.

This is your body right now. Accept it. And remember that I'm not talking about accepting that it's going to be this way forever, but accepting the truth that this is how it is right now because your other option is to be mad about it and being mad isn't going to benefit you. Be less emotional about it, be in a neutral space. It's so much easier to make good decisions for yourself when you're feeling neutral as opposed to feeling negatively.

You can feel better about your body right now. You don't have to wait until you're at your goal weight and feeling better now is what will give you the peace of mind to do the work you want to do.

Acceptance of where you are is what will help move you in the right direction while feeling the way you want to feel.

Think about your body in a neutral way. Think about the facts. You'll feel so much better if you just accept the facts. You have a body. This is your body. This is where you are.

You don't have to love your body right now, you don't even have to like it, but stop hating it so you can feel better and do better.

Have a wonderful week, decide to be more accepting of yourself, and I'll talk to you next time, bye bye.