

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #42: Procrastination Eating

Hi! Have you gotten on my waitlist for a mini session yet? Get on it. This episode is all about procrastination and if you're procrastinating on signing up then that also means you're procrastinating on working with me, and on changing your life forever. If you've been thinking about it, get on that waitlist at coachkir.com/mini because the longer you wait, the longer you'll be going back and forth about whether to do it or not and that's not a fun place to be. Get out of confusion and indecision and do it. Can't wait to talk to you!

So yeah, procrastination. It's all about postponing doing something. Putting it off until a later time.

Do you ever find yourself eating while you're doing that? Maybe it's a difficult conversation that you're delaying, or doing work, or even a simple task that for whatever reason you just are dreading doing.

As I was preparing for this episode, I was trying to think of an example for when I've eaten to procrastinate. I'm sure I've done it with pretty much anything, even as simple as not wanting to mop the floor, because come on, you gotta sweep and fill up the sink or bucket with water and soap and wait until the floor dries before you can walk on it, ugh. Right? But one thing that came to mind that I thought was really interesting was how I used to binge eat, or overeat, to delay going home. I'd be coming from somewhere where I was with people and enjoying interaction, and this could have been when I was out with friends or even at work, and I was then going home where I had nothing fun to do. I had no plans for what to do with my time and in my mind I was just going to watch tv, and there would be nothing good to watch because I was caught up on my regular shows, so it was going to be boring. So instead of doing that, what better way to pass the time than stopping to get food even though I wasn't even hungry? Sounded like a more enjoyable time than what I thought I was in store for.

When are the times when you do it? And why do you do it?

It's all about avoiding. Eating to avoid doing things because you don't feel like doing them.

Or eating because you think it will help you go do the thing. Right? You don't feel like it but, if you eat

some chips or crackers first then you will be more in the mood to get the thing done.

Either way, it's eat now, do the thing later which may become eat now and put the thing off until the very last minute and now I feel rushed or I have to miss out on the fun things or my relaxation because I waited too long to do it.

It happens time and time again where procrastination does you no good and maybe interferes with your free time and causes you stress in the end, yet you keep on doing it.

You keep putting things off because you don't want to do them in that moment.

But why not? Why don't you want to do them?

Is it fear of the outcome? You're afraid it's not going to work out, that someone's going to be mad or hurt, that you're going to feel embarrassed or stupid? Or because you're feeling dread about doing it, you think it's going to suck? Or you feel inadequate and think you're not going to do it well? Or that it's going to be too hard and you don't feel like putting in effort? Or that you're confused and don't know what to do?

You don't want to do the thing because of how you feel when you think about doing it or because of how you think you're going to feel while you're doing it or after you do it.

It can be anything. Have an appointment to make but you're dreading making it because you think it's going to be a hassle? Not yet, eat first and then maybe you'll be in the mood for the hassle. Have a phone call to make that you feel anxious about because it might be uncomfortable and someone may leave the conversation feeling upset? Eat first, which won't really solve the problem though. After you eat to calm down, the anxiety will most likely come back before you make the call and if it's going to be uncomfortable and if someone is going to be upset, it will happen whether you eat or not. Got work to do that's going to be tedious? You can eat, but the work will still be there when you're done and it most likely won't be any more enjoyable after you eat.

Procrastination doesn't solve anything and eating while you're procrastinating not only doesn't solve anything but it also creates more problems than just wasting your time.

You're reinforcing your habit of eating in response to feelings and simply your habit of overeating or binge eating. You also end up thinking about the thing longer than you would if you'd done it. You also might end up cutting into your free time because now you have to do the thing during that time. And you end up feeling the feelings or anticipating feeling the feelings for longer too. The whole thing you were trying to avoid lasts longer!

You're looking to avoid the feeling you're feeling now or avoid feeling the feeling you think you're going to feel.

You want to feel good now. This is the same problem you face with your binge urges. You want to feel good now instead of waiting to feel good later when the urge is gone and you didn't binge.

When we look at how our brain works, it makes sense. I've talked about this before, but if you missed it or are new, our brains don't like pain and uncomfortable feelings. Discomfort comes and our brains say, "no, give me pleasure."

Let's not forget that primitive part of our brains weren't designed for this world we live in. It doesn't know that the thing that's causing your discomfort is the thought of going grocery shopping, it just senses discomfort and for all it knows there is a tiger chasing you. Our primitive brains are simple in their interpretations and responses and don't really understand the complexities of our modern world. It just really knows pain, pleasure, and energy expenditure, the elements of survival. It doesn't break it down into the intricate pieces and the spectrum of those elements. Any pain means go find pleasure and it urges you to find the pleasure in the easiest way possible.

That's why our pre-frontal cortexes, our higher brains are so important and unfortunately for a lot of people, underutilized. That's the part that makes sense of everything and can say, "Writing this paper isn't going to be as painful as my brain may think it will be. It will be okay if I do it. Eating won't help or make it any less boring." It brings in the rationality and your true wants. I bet your true want is that you just want it to be done because you don't want to have to think about it any more than you have to but thinking about it more is exactly what procrastination creates.

You gotta keep that primitive brain in check and know what you're in for if you choose to procrastinate.

Don't you love that word? I thought I made it up and thought I was so clever, but when I googled it I learned that apparently it's been around for awhile.

But really, what are you in for if you procrastinate?

Not as much fun and pleasure as you think you're going to get.

Eating isn't going to completely take your mind off the thing you don't want to do. So now your mind is going to bounce back and forth between "yum food" and "ugh, that thing."

Because you're not actually getting it done, you're thinking about it longer and feeling dread, anxiety, nervous, fear, all that for much longer than you would if you just did the dang thing.

Not only are you delaying doing the thing but you're also prolonging the feelings that you don't want to feel.

How much sense does that make?

Also, if you decide to eat something sugary or floury as you procrastinate, then there's a good chance your mind will continue to be on food. That's what those foods do to your brain, they begot more thoughts about the food. So now you're thinking about food on top of thinking about the thing and here you are thinking about two things you don't want to be thinking about. Madness!

What it comes down to is that when you procrastinate you lose time. The time you spend doing it bleeds into what's supposed to be your real free time. You can't enjoy your procrastinating time because it's spent thinking about things you don't want to think about. It's not nearly as enjoyable as the free time you would have if you did the thing, didn't eat, and then were able to do something you actually want to do when it's all over.

Stop wasting your time and just get it done.

Do things even though you don't feel like it.

You are an adult and sometimes there will be things that you aren't going to look forward to doing or that are scary or that you anticipate will be uncomfortable or that you're confused about.

But so what? There is a reason these things are on your to do list. There is some sort of purpose to them in your life or they are there because you created the situation that caused them to exist. If they have a purpose, then fulfill it because for whatever reason, there is some reason why you want to get it done. If it's something you created in your life, then take responsibility for it and handle it. Figure it out and take action.

It may not feel amazing to do it, but it may feel amazing to get it done. It may even end up feeling good in the midst of it when you're in the zone.

Take working out as an example. You may not get excited about doing it, but when you're in it, it can feel pretty darn good. Especially if you had to talk yourself into going and then you're like, "Yeah! Look at me go! I'm doing the thing!"

Whatever things you want to do, put them in your calendar, for a specific time, don't just say you're going to do it at some point tomorrow, pick a time to do it tomorrow, commit to it, and follow through on your commitment. Make the commitment to yourself and honor it.

This ties back into self-relationship building that I talked about in episode 40. Do what you say you're gonna do. Don't eat instead of doing the thing. That only leads to you doing two things you don't want to do – not doing the thing and eating. Then you still gotta do the thing so eventually it's three things you don't want to do. Not doing the thing but thinking about doing it, eating in response to feelings, and then eventually the thing you don't want to do. Too much. Just stick with the one.

You're going to get it done anyway, eventually, so why the heck not now? Why put it off? You think you're going to want to do it more later? It's highly unlikely. It's not going to be any easier later or tomorrow and you're probably not going to want to do it any more than you want to right now either. It's not going to be less confusing later, figure it out now. It's not going to be any less scary later, get over it now. The outcome probably won't be any different if you put it off so just get the outcome over with now.

I'm never going to feel like doing laundry. I really don't think I've ever felt inspired to do laundry. I don't think I've ever gotten excited about it. But I plan for when is a good time to do it based on my availability and my clean clothes situation, and I do it at that time. I'd rather get it done than have to worry about how I'm going to manage the few clean clothes I do have. This especially matters when it comes to my workout clothes because jeans I can wear multiple times but workout leggings? No way, those are a one and done. I want to be able to work out so I do the dang laundry. It's important to me. I'd rather get it done than to sit around playing on my phone, watching tv, and eating as my mind keeps jumping to how I have to do laundry and when it does I feel a sense of guilt for not doing it even though I said I would and a sense of dread because of the little things like how I have to go down there multiple times and I gotta fold it and put it away. And if I put it off too long, I'm left without clean leggings and now what? I miss out on workouts and how good I feel when I workout until I can find another time to do laundry. And I may miss out on true free time I could have had because now will be spending that time interspersing with going down to the laundry room and folding clothes and putting them away.

It may not seem like a huge deal to put these things off but in the end, if you're missing out on your time for you, then I think that is a big deal. Especially if that time is replaced with habits you don't want to be engaging in anymore.

Even your binge eating work is something that gets procrastinated on. You keep saying you'll do it next time you feel an urge, that today you're just going to do what's easy and you'll put in the effort later. Then what you're really doing is putting off having freedom around food and becoming your best version of yourself.

If you just do the thing, you get amazing things. Things that are way better than the moment of pleasure you get from your procrastinating.

You get real free time and enjoyment of leisure activities guilt free, dread free, anxiety free, and fear free. You get the freedom you're longing for.

You don't have to think about the thing anymore. You get to stop driving yourself crazy thinking about it!

Procrastinating with eating is just going to make it all last longer, the feelings and the undesirable eating habits. And then it cuts into your free time and that's not cool. Do it even though you feel dread, anxious, nervous, fear, confusion.

Eating may sound like a way better idea than the thing you want to put off doing, and hey, maybe it is, maybe eating is more enjoyable and a way to feel better for a minute, but the act of eating instead of doing the thing doesn't sound like a good idea.

Get it done so you can get it out of the way and move on with your life. Work through the feelings you're trying to avoid whether it be by thinking about the thing or the situation the thing may present differently, or by just feeling and doing it anyway.

Eating isn't the answer to make these experiences better, it ends up just prolonging the feelings you don't want.

So this week, make a promise to yourself to not procrastinate. Make specific plans to do things and do them when you say you're going to do them. Just get it done so you can have more of the positive and less of the negative. Have a great week getting things done! Bye bye!