

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #43: When You've Gained Weight

Hi! What is up? Are you ready to talk about weight gain? Is anyone ever ready to talk about it? Well, ready or not, here we go!

When you binge often, weight gain usually happens. You might be consistently gaining, or you may gain in the midst of fluctuations if you tend to bounce back and forth between bouts of binges and restriction.

I was a bouncer. For years I was all over the place within a 10-15 lb range and because of the weight range I was in, 10 lbs was noticeable and 15 for sure was. I noticed it, and most likely other people noticed it, even though I don't think anyone ever made a flat out comment about it. Not that I can remember.

I know I'm fortunate for that and that a lot of you don't have the same experience with the people in your life. I hear about how parents, especially moms, or siblings or whoever make comments about your weight and how you don't like it when they do. You say it makes you feel bad.

The unfortunate thing about this is that this is just what happens. With so many things really. We notice someone changes in a way and we have thoughts or judgements about it and sometimes depending on the relationship, we may share our observation with that person.

It may not be a big deal if someone comments on how you changed your hair color or haircut, or if you've changed the way you dress, or if you're wearing your make up differently, but when it comes to changes in your weight, it turns into a big deal.

You don't have a lot of drama, shame, or embarrassment attached to you hair, make up, or clothes. But you do to your weight.

This is because of what all your thoughts about it are.

I used to be very frustrated and embarrassed about my weight and it wasn't even so much because of how my body looked, but because of why I was there. I would be mad that it was bingeing that got me there and then be mad about my bingeing.

So it wasn't even the weight that caused me to feel the way I did but it was my thoughts about my weight and how I got there.

Weight gain itself is not a problem. Weight gain doesn't cause specific feelings. It's always the thoughts about it.

We know this because some people are happy when they gain weight. It's their goal. I was never this person.

Some people also don't really care if they do. If I gain weight, I don't think it's a huge deal.

The difference between those people who feel happy about it, people like me who aren't too bothered, and you who feels ashamed is how each of us are thinking about our weight gain.

One of the biggest issues I see people come across is their concern about what other people will think.

We get on the topic of their weight gain that has happened because of their bingeing and most of the time they end up talking about other people's thoughts about it. That's one of their main concerns. It was for me too.

For me, it was like my weight change was the window into my big secret. I imagined they'd see I'd gained weight and know I've been bingeing. My mind would go to the extreme, to where they would figure it all out and judge me super hard, especially when I gained weight after they noticed I lost weight. I'd feel really embarrassed and like I let them down because they'd see me as someone who is strong, dedicated, and successful and now they wouldn't.

But most likely they really had no idea what caused me to gain weight and if they had any thoughts they were probably just that I was overeating and not working out. That's really where most people's minds go to because binge eating in the way you do it and how I've done it isn't even a thing in most people's minds if they've never experienced it.

You and I on the other hand, it may be exactly what we assume when we see someone's put on weight. "I wonder if they binge." Ever had that thought about someone?

There is so much shame associated with our weight gain when we're bingeing and we see people we know. Even if they don't say something, we think we know what they're thinking.

But honestly, we don't. We have no idea. They may be thinking very judgmental thoughts, concerned thoughts, curious thoughts, or no thoughts at all. We won't know unless they actually say something and even if they do, they may not say what they think.

Have you ever judged someone super harsh about something but said something not so harsh when you were asked your opinion? I have!

Even if they do tell you what they're thinking, and they're being 100% honest, do you even believe them then? You might think they're lying! They say they didn't notice you gained weight and you can't imagine it's true so they must be lying even though they're not.

Worrying about what other people think about your weight is a waste of time. It's not useful. All that matters is what you think because most likely whatever you think they think is just a projection of your thoughts on them.

When I was concerned other people wouldn't see me as strong, dedicated, and successful anymore because I'd gained weight, that was really me. I wasn't seeing myself that way anymore. I was judging myself super hard. I was feeling embarrassed because of how I thought about my weight, not because of what other people thought. Their thoughts had zero impact on my emotions because that's how it all works. Other people's words don't cause our feelings, our own words in our own minds do.

But what about when other people do say something judgey? What about when your mom actually says exactly what she's thinking out loud and comments on your weight? Then what?

Your response still depends on what you think about what they said.

If you think you have no control over yourself and you're disgusting then you're of course going to feel terrible when she makes the comment but not because of what she said, but only because her comment triggers you to think that thought about yourself.

But if you instead are thinking about how yeah you've gained but you're working on yourself and making positive changes now, then you wouldn't feel so terrible.

You determine how you feel, not other people's words.

Your thoughts and words are the ones that dictate how you feel, not other people's.

Even if they're trying to be mean or trying to put you down, it still doesn't matter. They can try all they want but they cannot make you feel anything without you allowing it to happen by agreeing with them.

It's like if someone tells you they don't like your favorite movie, and all the reasons why, but you're solid in your belief that you love it for all your reasons, then their opinion isn't as bothersome. It doesn't change your opinion of it. You don't have to adopt their opinions, you can keep your own, still love the movie and let them not like it, even if they're trying really hard to change your mind.

Because you're so solid in your belief that it's the best movie ever, you don't feel bad when they tear it down. You just let them be wrong and hold on to how you want to think and feel about it.

No matter what someone else says or thinks about your weight gain, you don't have to let them persuade you into thinking there is something wrong with you. But the thing is, if you're not solid in your belief that there's nothing wrong with you, and that even though you've gotten here you are going to change and become the eater you want to be, it will be too easy for you to agree with that other person. What you believe about your weight gain and the future of your weight is what's most important here.

So other people's thoughts and words don't cause you to feel bad about your weight gain and your weight gain itself doesn't cause you to feel bad. Even knowing that your binge eating is what caused you to gain doesn't make you feel bad. You can still know and not beat yourself up about it not get mad about it like I did. It happened, here you are, and getting angry about it isn't going to help you.

Feeling disappointed or embarrassed isn't going to either. I know people think that they need to get fed up or feel bad about where they are in order to make a change, but they don't. Feeling all these negative emotions about your weight only drives you to hide, isolate, cover up, and maybe even eat. That's what you do when you feel disappointed, ashamed, or embarrassed. You don't feel those ways and then go create a plan for a better you. That plan doesn't happen until you shift your mindset about it all. Stay with negative emotions and you'll be stuck in the negative actions that got you to gain weight in the first place.

Now, what those negative feelings might do is inspire you to think differently once you've decided to not feel them anymore. But know that it's still the new thinking that causes the change, not the disappointment or shame. The new thinking is what makes you feel determined and motivated which then leads to you doing something to change for the better. So if you want to get out of this negative space, you have to make the conscious choice to think differently about your weight gain.

Choose acceptance of where you are now and take responsibility for what you did and what you will do right now.

It doesn't matter how you got here. What matters is that you're here. This is your reality. You can't change where you are right now, but you can change what you think of your body and yourself and what you can do in order to change your reality for the better.

Blaming is not useful here. I used to blame myself and it didn't help me in any way. Constantly thinking about how frustrated I was that my bingeing caused my weight gain did not help me. I thought I was just telling it like it was, and yeah, maybe I was, but going there continuously just made me feel bad every time I did it.

Blaming other people isn't useful here either. Don't blame them for how you feel. Take responsibility for your own feelings and clean up your thinking about yourself. Once you do, it won't matter what they say.

Notice how you're projecting your own thoughts about yourself onto other people.

Notice how you're thinking about your weight gain.

If you're thinking negatively about it and judging yourself, why are you doing it? Why be so hard on yourself?

You always have options for how you want to think about yourself and talk to yourself.

I remember talking with one of my clients about this and she brought up such a great example about how if her dog gains weight it's not a big deal at all. She simplifies and neutralizes the whole thing. He's been eating too much, so let's feed him less. Done. She doesn't judge him or call him disgusting or chastise him. She just comes up with a plan and takes action.

You've been bingeing, that's why the weight gain happened, now what? You work on your bingeing. You take care of business. Drop the judgment and get to work.

Instead of wallowing in the misery of your past, make a plan for the future and go.

Then if you are in this future focused place, focused on where you're going not where you've been, and you are working on changing your eating habits and someone says something to you, it's not as big of a deal. It doesn't affect you like it does when you're feeling shame. You know what you're going to do, you know you're going to turn things around, and because no one's words can change how you feel, you can hold on to your hopefulness, determination, and empowerment by choosing to continue to believe you can change.

If you feel affected by other people's words, take a minute to figure out what you're thinking about their words that are causing your feelings.

If you're feeling down about your weight gain because of how you're thinking about it, figure out what you're thinking.

Your weight does not determine whether you're good enough or whether you're a good person or whether you are deserving, worthy, or beautiful. Other people don't either. You do. You are all of these things no matter how much weight you gain, no matter why you gain weight, and no matter what other people say or think.

Your thoughts are the problem, not the weight, not them.

You're here, this is your weight now. Feeling ashamed or disappointed about it isn't going to help you. Accept what has happened and where you are, believe change is possible for you, and go out there and take action to change.

When your thoughts are what you want them to be then your weight will become what you want it to be because it's your thoughts that create your reality.

Accept yourself and believe in yourself and know that no one can bring you down. Only you can so keep lifting yourself up!

Have a great week believing in your capacity for change, no matter where you are or what's happened, and I'll talk to you next time. Bye bye!