

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #44: Binge Eating When You're Tired

Hi! How are you feeling? You feeling tired? It's a common thing to feel these days. So much going on, not enough sleep, exhausting yourselves, and then you fall into the eating trap because of it.

I wanted to do an episode on binge eating, or even just overeating when you're tired because so often people tell me the reason why they binge or overeat is because they're tired.

They're just so tired that they don't care anymore or don't want to think about anything or just want a pick me up or just want to feel better.

I get it. Being tired is no fun. I don't like it myself. It makes doing work harder and makes me not feel like doing fun things. I hate it when I'm so tired that I want to cancel plans with friends or don't want to make any.

I try to avoid it as best I can. I do my best to not stay up too late, even on weekends. I take naps when I can. I'm all about those 8ish hours of sleep because life can be challenging enough when I'm fully awake and alert, so I want to avoid making it more difficult to deal with whatever life has in store for me each day.

But what happens when I am tired? It happens. Amid my best efforts, sometimes I don't get to sleep as much as I want to. There was even a stretch of time not long ago that it was common for me to wake up in the middle of the night and not fall back to sleep for an hour or two. And I still had to get up to work in the morning so sleeping later wasn't an option.

So I had to push through and work tired. Talk to people tired. Prepare my podcast tired. Manage my

business tired. But what I didn't do, and what I don't do, is eat if I'm tired and not hungry.

Tired happens, and what do you do when it does?

Maybe you stop caring. You just let go of everything, stop putting in effort and go on autopilot. You don't want to think about anything because you just don't have the brain juice for it.

You have all these ideas of what you can try in order to not binge, things you've learned with me or elsewhere, but putting those into practice just doesn't interest you when you're tired whatsoever.

It's just so much easier to not try and do what's easiest and familiar.

You've done enough today, you've done enough work and done enough thinking and you're done with it.

It's all very defeatist. It's giving up because your energy is low and you're moody. It's giving up on yourself and just calling it a day all because you're tired.

Once you let yourself go on autopilot and stop trying, where is that autopilot going to lead you? Down your programmed path of course. Down the road that's well traveled that you've been going down. The one where the destination is food and maybe even a binge.

The food and binge are your source of easy pleasure in this gloomy time. You're tired of feeling tired and you just want to feel better, you want to feel something good. You think food will provide that for you.

Or if it's not pleasure you're looking for, you're looking for an energy boost, you want to be woken up, you may think food is what will give you that. Food is energy right? Yeah, until you crash and are back to tired again, maybe even more depending on what and how much you ate.

In tired situations, I'm going to guess the foods you most likely choose are not the healthiest. If we think about how our brains work, it would make sense that it would send out cravings for simple carbohydrate foods that are easy to digest and absorb and convert into energy quickly. Easy, fast energy source.

Now, let's clarify something here. The reason why you're tired is super important to know. You have to know the problem if you're going to find a solution.

Is your tiredness from not sleeping well? Is it emotional exhaustion from the roller coaster of emotions you've been feeling all day from stress to happy to anxious to bored and back around again? Or is it tired due to a drop in your energy level because you haven't eaten in awhile?

Each of these have their own solution, but what you may be doing is just using food for all of them. Any kind of tired that happens, food is your solution. But really the only one where it's a true solution is if it's hungry tired.

The only real solution for lack of sleep tiredness is, well, sleeping.

The emotional tiredness? You've got some options but what it really comes down to is taking a break.

Taking a break from your thinking, maybe doing a meditation even if it's short. I've loved doing that in the past where I just close my eyes, sitting or preferably laying down for even just a few minutes, breathing, and focusing on my breath. Take a break from what you're doing and go for a walk or if the day is done, go for a workout. Take a break and process through your feelings. So much of the time this kind of tiredness comes from just putting your body through the stress of continued intense emotions. It needs a rest. Or maybe the other side of it where you need to take a break and do something fun or enjoyable. I can get tired from sitting around all day and I feel so much better if I go socialize with people or if I'm working on my computer for a long time I feel better after watching or reading something enjoyable.

So first and foremost, you have to know what kind of tired you're dealing with before any decisions are made. Don't just hurry to decide food is the answer because most of the time it's not. Most of the time you're just looking for an easy out from feeling tired, from lacking energy, from feeling moody, from your thoughts, from your feelings, from everything.

Food isn't your solution, it's just a distraction from it all and as we know, once the distraction is gone, the thing you were distracting from comes back. The tiredness comes back.

So now, if you're not going to use food as your cure for tiredness, and you can't sleep in that moment and you can't take a break, what the heck are you supposed to do?

The answer is simple.

You be tired.

Do you hate that answer?

You might, but what's your other option? Be mad about being tired? Or eat when you're not even hungry and strengthen your habit of eating when you're not hungry and possibly end up creating the result of more tiredness?

Not sleeping well happens to all of us, some more than others. We can do our best to try and sleep better, which is a whole other topic I'm not going to get into here, but let's just stick with the circumstance that you haven't slept well and you're tired. So now what?

You can now make it worse or make it fine. You can be frustrated by it or you can accept it.

The tricky thing about choosing frustrated by it is that so many of us, maybe all of us I don't know, but definitely for me, our emotions become heightened when we're tired. So the frustration is going to affect you so much more intensely when you're tired compared to when you're not. It's gonna throw you for a loop! If you're not skilled at managing your emotions and you're in that heightened emotional state, it's going to be extremely difficult for you to get out of it, calm yourself down, and actually relax. That's where food comes in as the quick and easy pseudo-solution.

So what if instead you just choose to keep coming back to acceptance around it?

What if it were just okay that you're tired and you accepted that?

Being in a rational mind when you're tired, just like managing your emotions, is not as easy. Your

cognitive function is hampered meaning it might be harder to concentrate or focus and your brain's cells aren't communicating so well.

But let me stress here that it's not so well, harder, and hampered. It's not impossible. You still have the ability and it's your choice whether you use that ability or not.

You've done this. There has been a time when you were so tired, but you finished whatever it was that you were doing anyway. Anybody out there who's been emotionally exhausted at work? I remember so vividly my restaurant days when I'd have to wake up early for my shift, so I was physically tired, and I was running around all day in a high stress environment dealing with customers and co-workers and after the rush, I still had an hour or two left in my shift. Some days, I would stop for a bread break. Sure it may have helped for that minute, but then I was just out back to it like the bread never happened. It wasn't at all useful. Regardless of that, I'd finish my shift, tired and all. Giving up just wasn't an option. I had a job to do.

Or let's take it back to those few months ago when I wasn't sleeping well and had clients to coach. Did I cancel my calls or eat in between sessions? Nope, I just did my best to focus on them and powered through. I didn't let it stop me. I didn't give up on myself. I was just tired while I worked.

So what if for you, giving up just wasn't an option? What if allowing the tiredness to be there and still managing your thoughts and feelings was your only option?

You have it in you. You've done it at one point or another. Keep making that choice to do it.

Now, what if you're someone who is tired a lot? How do you just keep trying to deal with it day after day after day? You're tired of dealing with it and food ends up being your savior through it all.

Well, again, why are you tired? If it's hunger tired, maybe you gotta eat more. If it's emotional tired, you have to work more on managing your mind and your emotions. If it's sleepy tired, then like I said, that's a whole other topic that I'm not going to get into here since I'm not a sleep expert or doctor, although I am pretty good at sleeping if I do say so myself. There are just so many factors that can cause sleep disturbances.

But what I can say is that if it's sleepy tired, food might be exacerbating the problem if you're eating before sleeping. Especially if you're eating a lot or bingeing before sleeping.

I don't know about you, but when I used to binge at night it would totally mess with my sleep. There were times when I'd even wake up sweating with a racing heart in the middle of the night. Then I'd have a food hangover the next day which for sure wasn't helping my energy or my mood. Talk about a way to cause sluggishness.

And even after I stopped bingeing, I was experimenting with my daily eating and when I began eating less at my first meal, my energy increased. Even just overeating a bit during that one meal each day had an effect on how tired I felt throughout the day.

Food may be fuel, but too much of it, even if you're just overeating and not bingeing, can bring you down. This is good to know if you're someone who tends to overeat to make sure you don't have an energy dip. It might actually be doing the opposite than you're intending.

So one thing that can help the whole sleepy tired thing would be to just feel tired and not eat and not give up on yourself.

Even when you're tired, no matter how tired, it's still possible for you to say no to food. It's still possible for you to feel your feelings instead of reacting to them.

The best advice I can give you is to practice doing all of it when you're not tired so you become a lot better at it in general and it will just take more effort when you're tired.

And I guess another piece of advice would be to do as much planning as possible so if you are hungry and any version of tired at the same time, you're not left trying to make a rational decision when you're in that headspace. Have something ready for yourself. Make it easy for yourself because easy is exactly what you want in those times.

If you're tired and you can't sleep, or can't take a proper break, you have two options. Eat to try and keep yourself awake and give yourself some short-term pleasure, which may just make the problem worse, or just accept that you feel tired and keep on keepin' on.

Don't look to food as your way out of tired. You can look at it as your way to perpetuate it and possibly make it worse. Makes it a little less desirable doesn't it?

Might it be harder to not give in to urges and not give up on everything and to actually care about what you do? Sure. But it's not impossible.

You can follow along with that craving and do what your brain is urging you to do, or you can override that command and choose to let the craving and let the tiredness just be.

You can choose to care even when you're tired, and relax without food, it's possible to do! And feel better by letting yourself just feel whatever you feel and know that better feelings, true, real better feelings will come if you don't keep trying to avoid the negative ones.

Being tired doesn't mean you have to give up on everything, including any progress you've made with your eating.

Be someone who does the work, even when they're tired. Don't let anything stop you! Have a great week calmly making your way through to the other side! Bye bye!