

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #57: Breaking the Binge Cycle

Hi! We're here! You and I, together again. Isn't it great? It is. I wish it would never end....unlike binge eating! Let's end that!

Sometimes binge eating seems like it's part of a cycle that's never going to end.

It just goes around and around with one thing leading to the next.

I actually did a quick image search for binge eating cycle and there were so many images of what a binge cycle might look like for someone.

Most of them include feeling bad, feeling urges, the binge, restricting, over hunger, and also feeling better meaning that temporary relief that happens when you start the binge.

This is how I see it go for most of you:

You feel bad whether it be an urge or other negative feeling, you binge and feel better for a few minutes, then feel worse, restrict your food to make up for it, get overly hungry, feel an urge, binge to feel better, feel bad, binge to feel better, feel bad, restrict, and so on.

Sound familiar?

That's how it used to go for me at least.

One thing leads to another and everything in the cycle is a problem.

So it can be confusing to figure out where to break the cycle or how to break it. Which problem do you try to stop first?

There has to be a point where you can do it right?

There definitely is and although you can start at any place in it, really fixing any of the problems will

be helpful, but in my opinion, there is a best place to break it.

But before I go there, I'm going to go through the other places that are helpful and talk about why they work and why it's also not the most effective way to break it.

First of all, something most of you do that stops you from even starting to break it is you go backwards in the cycle and continually get confused about how to do each thing.

You want to not feel overly hungry but you'd have to not restrict to do that. But to not restrict you'd have to not feel bad about the binge. To not feel bad about the binge you'd have to not binge. To not binge you'd have to not feel negatively or feel an urge. To not feel bad or not feel an urge you'd have to not do whatever caused those whether it be a binge, restricting, or whatever else in your life, and you're back in the cycle trying to figure out how to not do all those things.

Don't do that. Don't get sucked into the cycle. Don't worry about the next thing, or the previous thing, just focus on one at a time.

Say you choose to focus on not restricting. And to be clear, I'm talking about the detrimental kind of restricting, not the useful restricting and if you don't know the difference, go back and listen to episode 48 about the two types of restriction. Focusing on this can be a good place to start. But a lot of you will have trouble with this because you're afraid that if you binge but don't restrict then you're going to gain weight. On the other hand though, if you don't restrict then you're not going to cause the over hunger that might lead to a binge urge. Are you willing to take the chance and possibly gain weight if it means less of a chance of feeling an urge?

So you can make the choice to get back to regular eating after a binge instead of cutting way down. That's an option.

To do this, you'll have to think differently about your binges. You'll have to not feel so guilty about them or angry about them. It's that guilt and anger and other similar feelings that drive you to then cut way back on what you're eating to make up for it. People who don't restrict don't feel the need to overcompensate because they just accept what happened and move on.

For some of you, this will only be partly helpful. There's actually a lot of you out there who are already not restricting in this way and are still bingeing.

That right there shows you that eating more food usually isn't the full solution. Some people do eat more and stop bingeing and that's great. That didn't work for me and it doesn't for a lot of other people too.

If you stop restricting you can still be in the feel bad, binge, feel bad, binge cycle.

Then there's the option to not feel bad. Seems like a reasonable solution. This one makes sense because if bad feelings come before the binge, then if you're not feeling bad feelings then a binge won't happen. If you're not feeling urges then a binge won't happen.

This was the solution I always aimed for. I wasn't aware of the whole urge thing when I was bingeing, but I was aware that it usually happened when I was bored, lonely or nervous. Also, what I now label as urges at the time I would call anxious, just feeling that overwhelming buzzing and restlessness.

Those were probably my most common pre-binge feelings.

Knowing that, I tried my best to not feel them and unsurprisingly, I failed at doing that.

I tried to change what I did with my time to try and avoid feeling bored and lonely, but it didn't work. I always had this internal struggle where I liked spending time alone so I wanted to do it, but at the same time felt like I had to spend more time with other people, which I did also want to do, but my desire to not put in the effort to do so won more often than not.

But even during the times when I was able to go out more it didn't necessarily stop me from *ever* feeling bored or lonely.

I wasn't able to eliminate those feelings from my life nor was I able to eliminate nervousness or anxiousness. I wanted to just not feel them so I wouldn't binge, so I focused so heavily on trying to make that happen.

Not feeling bad ever, is unrealistic and not going to happen. We're not going to feel good all the time.

And what about the times when your binge starts with happy feelings? You're celebrating or joyful for whatever reason, so you eat and it turns into a binge. You gonna start trying to avoid happy too? Avoid all the feelings?? No thank you.

Trying to not feel feelings isn't the solution. You can try to feel less of the negative by thinking more positive and neutral thoughts, since your thoughts are the cause of your feelings, but no matter how hard you try, you're not going to be able to eradicate the negative.

So stopping the restriction might be helpful, but might not be. It's definitely recommended though!

And stopping feeling negative feelings just isn't possible.

So the only other option here is to not binge.

You break the cycle by not bingeing.

That's what you take out of the equation.

If you don't binge, you won't feel bad about bingeing which will stop the cycle from going into restricting or more bingeing in response to those bad feelings.

So how the heck do you do that? That's the big question here, right?

You don't binge by feeling the bad feelings, the urge, the negative feelings, without bingeing. You feel. That's the action you take.

That's where the cycle stops.

You let the negative feelings and urges happen, and you feel them, you don't avoid them, you let them exist.

And you don't eat.

It's not easy but it is very simple and I know some of you like to be all confused about this. Don't be. Don't say you don't know where to start.

You start by feeling and not eating .

You can of course start with trying to not feel so bad or not restricting in a non-beneficial way if you'd like, but what it comes down to is that the true, real solution for ending this cycle and putting a stop to it is to cut it off before the binge happens.

You have that option, every time. It's always available to you and you have to make the decision to feel whatever the heck it is that you're feeling and not eat to try and numb it, avoid it, or make it go away.

So no more thinking that it's a never ending cycle. It's not. It's end-able.

Make the choice to end it. Make the choice to cut it off and make that choice over and over.

It's not a one time thing where you break the cycle and you're freed.

It will start over, you will feel an urge or a negative feeling again and you'll make the choice to not let the cycle continue or even start again.

I can't say it enough times. Feel feelings. Feel urges. Let them happen but don't let the eating happen. End it.

I'll talk to you next time. Bye bye!