

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #60: Identifying True Physical Hunger

Hi! How's it goin'? How you doin'? Fantastic? Wonderful! Then let's get started. Let's talk about hunger.

Sometimes when I ask people how they feel before they binge they tell me they're hungry.

I don't doubt that's true sometimes. Sometimes you really are genuinely hungry and you start eating and then you keep eating even though you're full and then it turns into a binge.

But I also think a lot of you are claiming to be hungry when you're really not.

You think you're hungry, you don't really know what hungry means anymore, or you're confused about how you feel.

You've lost sight of what it really means to be hungry.

And I get it. I had so much struggle in this area for so many years. That's part of the reason why I was so scared to stop eating based on calorie distribution. I didn't trust my body to properly tell me when it was hungry and that's partly because I had stopped listening to it. We lost touch. I got too caught up in what I wanted to do that I lost sight of what my body wanted me to do.

I forgot how to trust my hunger signals and I also did the other things I'm going to talk about today that also cause confusion when it comes to hunger.

So let's talk about some of the reasons why you're having a hard time identifying true hunger for yourself.

The first one I'm going to mention I wasn't even going to mention, but I'm just going to say it because it really is a thing. You've all probably heard it already - you might be thirsty. You're confusing thirst and hunger. This legit just happened to me an hour ago. I felt hungry, but I didn't want to eat yet because I had a meal planned in two hours, so I decided I would just let myself be hungry and keep on working

as I felt it. Plus, it hadn't been that long since I last ate so I was a little surprised by the sensation I was feeling too. So I poured myself a big glass of water, drank a bunch, got back to work, and then the feeling was gone. Sometimes, you're just thirsty.

Drink water people. It's a good thing to do whether you're questioning your hunger or not. Hydrate yourself!

Okay, now that that's out of the way, the second one is that your hunger signal is messed up. Your hunger signal is dictated by a hormone called ghrelin and when your hormones are unbalanced, your hunger will be too meaning you'll feel hungry more often. This can happen when you eat foods that aren't natural, whole foods like processed foods, concentrated and artificial foods, sugar, and flour, these are all foods that mess with your hormones.

So if you're eating a lot of those kinds of foods, your hunger signal might suffer.

Even if you're eating them not so often it can still have an effect. I notice this for myself if I choose to eat some one day, then the next day I'm usually feeling more hungry than usual.

You might be getting a sense of false hunger which could really just be a drop in blood sugar or withdrawal.

So there's two solutions here for this.

One, is to not eat those foods, or as much of them. That will of course prevent the hormonal imbalance.

If you do not want to not eat them or not eat less of them, then you feel the false hunger without eating. You allow yourself to feel that way. You experience the repercussions of having chosen to eat those foods. When you eat foods like that, and you know this will be the consequence, you are signing up for it, consequence and all.

It's like when you decide to have one too many drinks. You're making that choice to drink more and you know a hangover will happen because it happens every time you drink that many, and you do it anyway. Then you have no choice but to endure the hangover. You chose it, you did it, take responsibility for it and deal with it.

That's seriously one of the reasons I don't like eating a lot of sugar, flour, and processed foods. I don't want to feel more hungry than I normally do. But then when I do, I feel it through. Nothing I can do about it then, there it is, so let's just keep on going with my day, feel more hunger, and eat normally. Or let's be real, maybe I will eat more to quench the hunger. Nothing wrong with that either, but I still know when I'm doing that why I'm hungrier than usual, that it's probably not my body really needing fuel, it's just confused, and that I'm eating just to avoid this false hunger. I'm aware of it all and it is always useful to be aware of what's going on with you.

Okay, the third reason I got for you is that you're confused about what hunger and fullness feel like.

I've had so many times where I think I'm still hungry but what I'm really feeling is full. I'd feel a sensation in my stomach and just assume that it meant I wasn't full enough. I literally just finished eating a meal and felt a sensation that wasn't comfortable and even though I thought that meal should be physically satisfying, I thought maybe it wasn't because of how I was feeling.

What I think was really going on was that I was looking for an excuse to eat more.

I would honestly use so many stomach sensations as reasons to eat. I can remember so many times that I would think eating would make me feel better, eating would make my stomach feel better. It was always my solution when I didn't even really know if that was true. Maybe not eating would make it feel better. I didn't want to try that solution out though because I wanted eating to be the solution. I wanted to eat. So I'd use however my stomach was feeling as an excuse to do it.

The way to handle this one is going to be through trial and error.

You have to pay attention to your body and learn for yourself what true hunger feels like because I can't tell you what it feels like for you.

Look to your stomach. That's where the hunger is at.

It might be helpful for you to use the Hunger Scale when figuring this out. The Hunger Scale I use actually goes from -10 to +10 with negative ten being "I'm going to pass out starving" and plus ten being "Thanksgiving stuffed." Zero is neither hungry or full, it's when you're in the middle of a meal or in the middle between meals.

Put a number on how you feel throughout the day and as you're eating. Label the feeling with a number. Gauge it. Do this over and over to practice feeling what you want to feel. Find out what too much and not enough feel like. Figure out where your ideal hunger level is for when you want to start eating. Feel it for yourself. Become familiar with it.

It's all about checking in with your stomach. If you're unsure, don't just assume you're hungry, and actually, I suggest if you're unsure and assuming, assume you're not and wait it out. See if whatever you're feeling goes away or if it becomes more intense. Be willing to feel whatever you're feeling until you're entirely sure.

You can also consider when you ate last and how much. There is no exact amount of time or amount of food that should result in you still being full, but it's definitely something you can consider to help you evaluate what's going on.

Now the last one, the most common one I see. You just want to eat. You're thinking about eating, food is on your mind, you're desiring food and you're labeling your desire as hunger. You may have a hunger for food, but this is not physical hunger, it's not your body asking for fuel, it's you wanting to eat for emotional reasons. It's a desire or craving for food. It's you wanting, not your body wanting.

You're emotionally hungry. You want food because you're thinking about how good it will be or for anything other reason other than because it's time to fuel yourself. I talked about a lot of ways emotional eating shows up in our lives in episode 52 so check that out to help distinguish times when you're not really hungry but you just want to eat.

This is when you gotta check in with yourself, really just like I explained a minute ago with using the hunger scale, considering when you last ate and how much, and really just checking in with your stomach.

Also, you might want to consider what you're wanting to eat. Are you hungry for a candy bar? Ice cream? Pizza? Or vegetables? Turkey? Yogurt? This isn't always a clear indicator, sure you can sometimes want healthy, whole, natural foods when you're just wanting to eat, but sometimes it can help to see what it is you're wanting to help you be aware of what's really going on.

So if you're not clear on what hunger feels like or whether or not you're feeling it, take the time to check in with yourself and pay attention to what different sensations feel like for you. Check in with your stomach, trial and error to learn what hunger feels like to you. Sometimes this may mean that you'll eat when you're not hungry and you can learn from that or sometimes this may mean that you end up getting too hungry because you were unsure and it ended up being real hunger and you can learn from that too. Don't be afraid to risk hunger and to try and fail. Just make sure you learn and take notes.

If your hunger signals are messed up and your hormones are unbalanced, experience the consequence of feeling falsely overly hungry without eating and eat as you normally would, and you can prevent it by not eating the foods that cause it, or you can always eat if you want to. That's always an option but if you're noticing you're more hungry than usual at least take the time to do the detective work to understand why.

If you check in with your stomach and you're not hungry, yet you want to eat, it's emotional. You're not physically hungry, you're emotionally hungry. You have a hunger, you are not hungry. Just because you want to eat, doesn't mean your body wants you to. Pay attention to why you want to eat. Make sure it's for the right reasons.

And lastly, drink that water! Just do it, it's good for you.

Alright my people, have a great week feeling that hunger and figuring yourself out! Bye bye!