

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #65: Positive Emotion Eating

Hi! How are you feeling? Are you feeling happy? Are you going to go eat because you feel happy?

When we talk about emotional eating, most people think it's only in response to negative feelings. They think it only happens when you feel sad, stressed, bored, feelings like that.

But it's not only the negative emotions that we eat in response to, it can happen when you're feeling positive feelings too.

This can be very confusing for some people who notice that their bingeing happens when they feel good or when they're celebrating. They can understand why they'd eat when feeling negatively, but not so much why when feeling positively.

So today, I'm going to tell you why.

First, I just want to remind you what emotional eating is. It's when you eat based on how you're feeling emotionally instead of based on you feeling hunger. I go into much more detail back in episode 52 in case you missed it.

When you're emotionally eating because of negative feelings, whether it be an urge, stress, sadness, loneliness, boredom, feelings like that, you're doing it so you can numb, avoid, or distract from them. You don't want to feel them so you eat to escape them.

Put simply, you're trying to control how you're feeling and you're using food to try and do it.

This makes sense to you with negative emotions. You want to feel differently, you want to feel better.

But when you're feeling positive emotions, don't you want to feel them? You don't want to feel differently, right?

Well, there's two answers here and chances are, if you eat when you feel positive emotions it's one or the other, unlikely both.

The first answer, which is the more common answer, is that yes, you do want to feel them. You're feeling a positive emotion and you like feeling that way. But the problem is, you don't want the feeling to go away.

You want to extend that feeling for as long as you can, and possibly even add to it.

If you think that eating will make you feel good, and you're already feeling good, then you think eating will make you feel even better!

Take when we've accomplished something big as an example. We're feeling so proud of ourselves. We're happy. We want to keep those feelings going so we go out and celebrate. We eat and drink and we're consuming these substances to try and make the good feelings last longer.

You feel happy and you want to keep it going, or make yourself happier.

You're still trying to control how you feel with food.

But if that's not you, if you're not doing it for that reason, then there's the other answer to the question. No, you don't want to feel them. You do want to feel differently.

This is the case for people who are so out of touch with their feelings that they don't feel comfortable feeling anything at all. They have become accustomed to feeling numb and any kind of emotion causes them uneasiness.

They don't like any kind of change in their emotional state. It can be concerning or scary to them.

So just like with the negative emotions, they want out. They want to eat and make it all go away.

What it all comes down to, whether you're eating in response to negative or positive emotions, whether you're doing it because you want to feel it more or feel it less, you're wanting a feeling.

You're looking for a better feeling or you're trying to prevent the loss of your positive feeling.

What's so interesting about eating to continue the positive feelings is that in the end, it will most likely all backfire. Sure you may get the feeling for longer, but at what cost?

You eat and then end up with the opposite of what you wanted. The positive ends and instead of just going back to neutral as you would if you hadn't eaten, you're dropping down into negative instead. And maybe physical discomfort on top of it.

So, what if you just allowed yourself to feel the positive feelings for as long as they're there? What if you just appreciated them while you're feeling them and let them pass through as they do.

Just like negative feelings, positive ones aren't going to last forever. They're going to come and go.

And once they're gone, they're not gone forever. You will feel them again. You can generate them again.

The reason why you're feeling positive feelings is because you're thinking positively. Your thoughts cause your feelings so a time will come again when you're thinking positive thoughts.

You could do it right now if you want to! Try it. Try thinking a thought that will create a positive feeling.

Back in the episode where I talked about having more fun, I used the thought, "This is fun" as an example. It makes me feel joy just to think that.

If you want to feel more positive feelings, you don't need to eat more food. The real positive feelings, without the negative backlash, come from your thinking. You don't need to eat to feel good, you can think to feel good...that's what causes the feelings anyway.

Even when you are eating and feeling good, why are you feeling good? It's because of what you're thinking while you're eating and about what you're eating. If you're sitting there thinking about how good the food tastes and how enjoyable it is to be eating right now, then you're going to feel good.

You could also be eating the same food and think about how gross you are for eating it and how you shouldn't be eating it. Not feeling so great then, are you?

Your thoughts matter most. When it comes to positive feelings, your thoughts matter more than the taste of the food.

So here's what I want to you practice doing. You've heard me say it about negative, uncomfortable feelings, and I'll say it about the positive ones too.

Allow yourself to feel them. Know that they're temporary and that's ok. You will feel them again. Let them pass through you and in this case, don't resist letting them go. Or if you're uncomfortable feeling them, just like with the negative, don't resist allowing them to be there.

Let your feelings, positive and negative, be what they are for as long as they are.

Have a wonderful week feeling positively for as long as you do and allowing those feelings to end whenever they do. Bye bye!