

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #77: Dismissing Thoughts and Allowing Feelings

Hi! How the heck is 2020 going for you? Did you set goals and are you making progress on your goals? Are you keeping promises you made to yourself? If not, if you're having trouble, then we should work together on it, just saying. If you are interested, you can set up a free mini session with me at coachkir.com/mini and we can talk about what you're having trouble with and how I can help you. And in case you were wondering, working with me is super fun!

Alright. Now onto today's topic. Dismissing thoughts and allowing feelings.

What does that even mean?

Well, dismissing means to send away. It means, according to the dictionary, to treat as unworthy of serious consideration, to deliberately cease to think about, to get rid of.

So when I say dismissing thoughts, that's what I mean: to let them go.

Allowing means to permit, to give the necessary time for.

So then allowing feelings mean you're letting them be there.

People who are stuck in binge eating are not usually handling their thoughts and feelings in these ways. They're actually doing pretty much the opposite.

Let's say you're feeling an urge to binge.

You can't stop thinking about eating and you're feeling really uncomfortable.

Thoughts are running through your mind over and over about how you need to eat something, you want to eat so badly, that eating would just get this over with, and thinking about all the different foods you could or want to eat.

The thoughts keep on coming, the discomfort gets stronger, and you can't take it anymore so you just give in to the urge and eat the dang food.

What's happened there is that you allowed your thoughts to keep coming and dismissed away your feeling, dismissed away the urge.

You sent the urge away, you got rid of it, and you permitted the thoughts about bingeing to keep on coming.

So let's start with the thoughts.

A big part of this work around binge eating is in managing your thoughts.

It's doing work on your thoughts. Thought work as we call it.

If you're allowing your thoughts to run and swirl and loop around in your mind then you are not managing them. You're letting them run amok.

We're not taught that we can have any authority over what we think. I personally didn't even know this until like 5 or so years ago when I was introduced to the life coaching tools and concepts that I now use with my clients and on myself.

When we don't know this and don't know how to manage our thinking, then we're just at the mercy of whatever our brains throw at us in each given moment.

The biggest problem with this is that our brains, left to their own devices, are just going to seek pleasure, avoid pain, and do it with the least amount of energy possible. This is how our brains are wired in order to survive. Stay comfortable and don't exhaust yourself.

Our brains aren't going to default on long-term goals, delayed gratification, future thinking. It's just going to focus on the now.

So you have to purposefully focus on what you want to focus on.

This is challenging when your brain wants to think about one thing and you want to think about something else.

But the effort needs to be put in.

You don't get what you want by just letting your current programming and your primitive brain call the shots.

You gotta call the shots yourself and think what you want to be thinking.

Now, not only might you just be allowing the thoughts to keep on coming, you might also be judging them, which just adds extra emotion to the whole situation.

If you recall from me saying it about a billion times throughout this whole podcast, your thoughts cause your feelings so when you think thoughts about wanting or needing to eat, you're creating the feeling of desire and feeling urges that are driving you to eat the food.

If you're then judging these thoughts, and getting upset that you're thinking them, you're then not only feeling desire and urges but also feeling upset and whatever other feeling you're creating with your thoughts about your thoughts.

Or you're fighting with them, feeling frustrated by them, annoyed that you're thinking them.

You're getting mad that they're there and this just adds fuel to the fire.

This does not make dismissing your thoughts any easier.

When you're so caught up in your binge thoughts and are fully engaged with them, you're believing them, you're agreeing with them, then you're going to add intensity to the feelings and emotions you feel.

All those thoughts are causing uncomfortable feelings and you don't want to feel them. You want out.

So you dismiss them away. You get rid of them the best way you know how.

You don't work through them, you just numb them, ignore them, and avoid them.

You stuff them down.

If you never deal with your feelings properly, and if you eat whenever they come around, you're going to find yourself doing a lot of binge eating, overeating, and not hungry eating.

Feelings that are uncomfortable are going to happen, and I'm pretty sure you don't want your go-to action to be to eat whenever they do.

When you eat to dismiss away your feelings and emotions, you become better at doing that. It becomes your habit and you never process through a feeling. You never truly make it go away, you just ignore it. That means it's probably going to come back soon since you didn't actually fix or solve anything.

When you allow your thoughts and dismiss your feelings, you drive yourself nuts, you eat to make the nuttiness go away, and you don't solve any problems, you just create more.

So the goal then is, to do the opposite of that and dismiss your thoughts and allow your feelings.

So many of your thoughts about food and eating are irrational or thoughts you don't want to be thinking. They're thoughts encouraging you to eat and because you don't really want to eat, deep down you don't, you're getting upset about them.

So first things first, don't get upset about the thoughts you think. They are just sentences and words in your mind. They're not harming you. Sure they may be driving you to eat when you don't want to be, but still, your response to them is what determines if you drive in that direction or not.

If you can be calm about your thoughts and just see them for what they are, just words and sentences, then there's no need to get all worked up about them.

Also, it is not mandatory that you believe your own thoughts or engage with them.

I like to think of our brains as toddlers. The thoughts about food that pop into your mind that tell you that you need to binge are like a toddler telling you that you need to binge. If a toddler kept saying that to you you'd rather easily be able to tell them you don't and carry on. But when it's coming from your own mind you give it way more attention. You give your own thoughts different meaning than the toddler's words but it would be so much more useful if you treated them the same.

You can dismiss away what the toddler says, dismiss away your own thoughts too.

Now, the toddler may come back and say it again and again but you just dismiss them away again and again. Do it with yourself.

It's okay if the thoughts come back. It's not a big deal. They're just words and sentences and you can let them go and think something else.

Your thoughts are optional, there is nothing you have to think. There are not mandatory thoughts. When a thought comes into your mind, you do not have to keep it there.

Last year, I had an issue with a thought I kept thinking. I set a goal for myself each month and each month the thought that I'm not going to reach my goal would come up and I'd feel fearful when I thought it. It was ridiculous too because I had no evidence that I wouldn't reach my goal. I actually was more likely to reach my goal because there hadn't been a month in recent months that I hadn't.

I got coached on this thought and the first thing my coach told me was to stop judging my thought. It was not useful at all for me to call my thought, "ridiculous." All that did was add annoyance on top of my fear. Then, I had to just stop allowing myself to think the thought. There was no reason to think it. Again, I had nothing to back it up. So in this case, I was able to let go of my judgement of my thought and choose to think differently about my goal on purpose and intentionally.

Sometimes it's easy to let thoughts go and think something different when you can clearly see the falseness in what you're thinking and so much more truth in the useful thought you want to be thinking. But sometimes it's not. If it's not, it's because you're believing it too strongly. In that case, there's some breaking down and uncovering and questioning that would be helpful to do, to work through why you're believing the thought so hard. That's what a lot of coaching is all about. It's understanding why you think the way you do and learning how to shift your thinking into more useful thoughts and beliefs.

What I want you to know now is that you have the ability to think differently and you can let go of thoughts that don't serve you. Pay attention to what's going on in your mind, hear what thoughts are in there, and make conscious choices to think what you want to think.

And then there's those feelings that you are dismissing away.

Stop that. You can't just ignore your feelings. That's exactly what you've done and it hasn't worked well for you.

Your options are to avoid your feelings by eating or to feel them and not eat.

Dismiss or allow. Those are your options.

Just like with the thoughts, they're not going to harm you if you let them exist in you. You're going to be fine. It's normal to feel feelings, all the feelings.

If you're not willing to allow yourself to feel then you're going to be running away and eating each time you feel them.

Give it a go and see how much discomfort you are willing to experience. Have you even tried? Or do you just give up as soon as you feel something?

Both your thoughts and feelings are worth noticing. Even before you dismiss away a thought you have to notice it. But you notice it, decide it's not right for you, and you dismiss and replace.

The feelings are to be noticed too but you're not going to fix them or replace them, you're going to let them be.

And here's the good news about all of it. If you are dismissing away your un-useful thoughts that are causing the urges and uncomfortable feelings then the feelings won't last for such a long time because those thoughts are what are causing the feelings. They're definitely not going to last forever that's for sure.

So moral of the story, let your feelings be and toss and replace your un-useful thoughts. Not the other way around. Have a great week and I'll talk to you next time.