THE
STOP BINGE EATING
PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #80: Escaping Yourself

Hi! How are you? I hope you're good, I'm good, and I'm ready to talk about escaping yourself.

What this is about is not wanting to experience yourself or your life fully. It's about only wanting to experience parts of yourself or parts of your life, the parts you want, rather than being present with all of it.

When you're not willing to be with it and with you, you use food to try and create better, to hide away, to not have to deal. You use food to escape whatever is happening in that moment.

I want you to think about the times you binge.

What goes on before you do it?

Some of the things I hear most often are that you're thinking about food a lot, you're feeling stressed, overwhelmed, anxious, lonely, or bored, or you're feeling an urge.

Something is happening that you don't want to happen. Thoughts and feelings are happening.

There may also be things around you are happening too that you don't want to happen.

People are doing things and saying things and things are happening that are out of your control.

So rather than think about all of it, and rather than feel crappy, you turn to food so you can not think about it and numb yourself or try to feel better.

It's a distraction from all the things in your life, or from the one thing that's bothering you.

When I think back to the most common binge scenarios for me, I can definitely see that as being true.

My urges bothered me, so I ate to numb them.

Being lonely or bored bothered me, so I ate to give myself something to do and to feel good.

My reoccurring thoughts about eating bothered me so I ate to stop thinking them.

Eating didn't truly help any of it though. If I felt lonely and binged, I'd end up spending more time alone feeling lonely and felt especially alone as I'd think about how I was stuck in this eating habit that I didn't think anyone could help me with and I'd also feel so terrible physically that it stopped me from connecting with people because I felt so low and drained that I had no desire to move and I'd just lay around and watch tv and not even really enjoy it.

I wanted to escape the loneliness and in doing it I created more of it. Eating didn't solve it or make me not be lonely, it just distracted me from it for a little bit.

If I was thinking about eating too much and feeling an urge to binge, and then I binged to make it all go away, I never solved the problem of why I had so many thoughts about eating and why I felt urges. I just pushed them away. So they'd come back I just kept doing the same thing. I was teaching my brain that this is how we deal with thoughts and urges so it continued to be my go-to. Just like how some people teach themselves that drinking is the way. Something happens and they think, "I need a drink."

Something happens for you and you think, "I need to eat." You think you need to eat because you think you need to get away from whatever it is.

Instead of solving problems or just letting things be, you escape them.

You escape your thoughts. You just shove them to the side. Now, I've talked before about dismissing thoughts and letting them go but know that the process I follow for dismissing is different than distracting from or pushing away.

When you're dismissing, you're facing your thoughts, understanding them, questioning them, challenging them, and changing them. When you're escaping you're not doing any of that. You're just ignoring them hoping that they'll just go away but they won't if you don't deal with them.

It's like if you have a problem with someone and you have the option of talking out or just ignoring it. It feels so much better, and you can actually move on from the problem when you talk it out. When you don't and you just ignore it, you both hold on to this underlying resentment and it doesn't go away because it doesn't get solved.

Sometimes it's easy to just let go of a thought and think something different. I've use the example before where I had the thought, "You should just give up" and I let that go and thought I shouldn't instead. Even though it was easy, I still went through the process where I heard it, I understood why I was thinking it, I knew I believed differently, and I choose to think differently. It just all happening very quickly.

I didn't just think I should give up and then continue to believe it and feel defeated and eat to avoid these thoughts and feelings. I also didn't try to convince myself that I shouldn't. There was no

convincing, I truly did believe it.

I was talking with a client recently about thoughts she has about herself. She binges and then thinks she's a failure. So then she feels bad about herself and when I asked what she does when she thinks and feels that way, she said she just ignores it and doesn't deal with it. What then happens is that every time she binges, she thinks this same way and feels bad. This of course doesn't just happen right after the binge, but so many other moments when she's thinking about her overcoming binge eating and how she still binges and it brings her down. She wasn't doing the work to think about her progress differently, in a way that encourages her to keep going and learn from what happened and to look at what progress she has made....which is a lot by the way. Having a binge doesn't mean you're not making progress, it just means you still have work to do and need to practice more.

So when she and I worked on this together, she was able to see that there were a lot of urges to binge that she did allow and that she didn't react to by bingeing. That although she gave in to an urge, there were so many that she didn't give in to. So was she a failure? Depends on how you look at it, but why look at it in the negative light if you can look at it in the positive light? She can look at the one time she did binge and call herself a failure who isn't progressing or she can look at all the times she didn't binge when she felt the urge to and think she is making progress.

Escaping your thoughts doesn't help you to make the mental shifts that will cause you to feel better. For my client, it was us really looking into this thought she has about herself and questioning it and looking for other believable ways to look at her circumstances that allowed her to let that negativity go.

Your thoughts are changeable and if you ignore them instead of doing the work to change them, then you're going to keep thinking them and keep feeling badly.

So you escape thoughts and you also escape your feelings. You don't like how you feel so you avoid feeling and you numb feelings.

Many of you don't even realize you're doing this. Your reaction to your feelings is so quick that you don't recognize what you're feeling and don't even give yourself a moment to decide whether to allow it or eat to make it go away.

You've conditioned yourself to eat as soon as you feel something.

You've conditioned yourself to escape your feelings.

And when it comes to the things outside of you that you can't control like what other people do and say or when you're in a position that you don't want to be in that you're not able to change, it's not even these circumstances that you're trying to escape from, it's your thoughts about them and how you feel when you think about them.

Other people and circumstances don't cause us to feel anything, it's always our thoughts about them that do.

This is why two people can have different feelings about the same thing that has happened. They could have the same relationship with a person who did whatever they did, but one person thinks very negatively about it, and therefore feelings negatively, while the other person thinks more neutrally about it and therefore feels more neutrally about it.

You've seen this any time something happens that you're furious about and you can't believe that your husband, boyfriend, best friend, sister, or whoever else is involved isn't as furious as you are. "How are you not more upset about this??" And they're like, "It's just not that big of a deal." They're thinking about it in a completely different way.

So it's not even the circumstance that you're wanting to escape from, that's not really what's affecting you. It's your thoughts about it and how you feel because of your thoughts.

You're wanting to get away from your mind.

You're wanting to get away from your body.

You're wanting to get away from discomfort.

You're wanting to not feel, to not think, and ultimately, to not be with yourself.

You're wanting out.

You're wanting to escape yourself.

Here's what you need to hear about you though, and about life.

It isn't just sunshine and daisies. It's not just happiness and comfort and easy and pleasure.

It's also darkness and weeds. It's also sadness and discomfort and hard and pain.

This is life.

You're willing to experience some of it. You're willing to experience the good parts. But when it comes to the bad parts, you're like nope, not doing it.

You of course have the option of doing that. You've chosen that option many times. Whenever you've chosen to eat when you don't like what you're thinking or don't like what you're feeling, you're choosing to escape what life is for that moment.

Now, if you have the option of escaping the bad, why not choose it? Why not numb it away if you can? Why not ignore it if you can?

Because of what happens when you do.

When you do that, you end up missing out on more of the good stuff than you would if you didn't try to skip the bad stuff.

Think about what it costs you and what you miss out on when you binge in order to skip the bad.

You miss out on socializing with friends and family. You miss out on feeling good. You miss out on being present when you are with people. You miss out on having the body you want.

It costs you time and money that you'd rather be spending on things that truly fulfill you. It may cost you relationships and friendships. It costs you your confidence and self-esteem.

Trying to skip the bad doesn't mean you will have less bad. It actually creates more of it.

You can't escape all the bad, you just can't. And when you try to there will be consequences.

Sure you can drink to forget, but the next day, you'll remember again and have a hangover on top of that. You just added to your pain.

You can eat to forget, but when you feel that food hangover and the regret on top of it, you've added to your pain.

Life is full of the good and the bad.

It's full of thoughts you like to think and thoughts you don't.

It's full of feelings you like to feel and feelings you don't.

Are you willing to experience all of it? All of you and all of life?

If you're not, why aren't you willing to do it? What do you think will happen? What is so bad about it?

And are you willing to do it if it means that you'll get more of the good?

If I compare my life now to my life when I was bingeing, I'm definitely experiencing more good.

I can remember having so many wasted days where I'd binge early in the day and feel terrible the rest of the day, possibly bingeing again to deal with it.

Or so many wasted nights where I gave up on finding something fulfilling that might take some effort and chose the easy pleasure of eating and ended up creating hours of feeling down and not well.

I remember spending too much money on food and that was money I would have rather spent on fun things like concerts and other events and traveling that I'd say I couldn't afford to do because I had spent too much money on food.

I'd spend so many hours working out trying to make up for my binges. I like working out and moving my body, but I was doing it way more than I do now and I was doing it for different reasons than I do now. Not reasons that I liked.

My sleep would be affected and I wouldn't feel rested in the morning and there were times I'd even wake up in the middle of the night sweating and my heart racing.

Most of all, I'd live with the embarrassment about my eating and my fluctuating weight, and the frustration of not being able to stop bingeing and of not being able to reach and stay at my ideal weight, and with the loneliness I kept creating by choosing to spend my time doing what I kept doing.

I'm sure there's so much more, but those are the first things that came to my mind.

Now that I'm much more willing to experience the negative parts of life, the things that don't feel good, the things that aren't fun to think about, I'm able to not have wasted days where I feel like crap, to not have food hangovers, to spend my money on better things, to enjoy my workouts more and spend less time doing them , to sleep better more often, and to feel better about myself, not be so stressed about eating and my weight, and to feel less lonely when I'm alone.

This is why I choose to experience life in it's goodness and not so goodness.

I let the discomfort happen. I let the thoughts come and I work on them.

Now I do want to be 100% honest with you here. Am I perfect and do I never overeat or drink to escape discomfort? No way. There are times when I do. But it is not nearly as often as I did when I was bingeing and not willing to feel discomfort and didn't know how to handle my thoughts.

So much more often than not, I choose discomfort and I choose to work on my thoughts.

I don't want you to have this idea that you're either fully experiencing all of of yourself and of life or you're doing it wrong.

I think we all find some way to avoid life and avoid ourselves at one time or another in all kinds of ways.

I've seen people do it by over spending on things they don't really need to try and feel good.

By having a lot of sex with different people to try and feel good.

By gambling to try and feel good.

By getting sucked into tv shows or social media to try and distract to feel good.

But you gotta keep yourself in check.

It's one thing to escape once in a while and see the negative consequences once in a while. It's another to do it so often that you end up missing out on the life you want.

I know it may be hard to see now, but the life you want isn't only the good stuff. Without the bad, the good wouldn't even be as good.

There's this show that's been on for a few seasons called The Good Place. Now, I'm gonna try to not spoil anything for you, because I hate it when people spoil shows and movies for me, but something happened on the show recently that I think shows the truth about living with only the good and zero bad.

In this episode, these people were so ridiculously bored of living the prefect life. They were bored of having everything they want whenever they want it. Without the contrast of happiness and unhappiness, everything was just completely neutral. Because there were no downs, there were no ups.

Think about it, if there was no unhappiness and you were just happy all the time, would happiness be

the same as it is with the existence of unhappiness? Probably not. You'd get used to it and it wouldn't be as awesome as it is now. It's the contrast that makes it so good. Without negative there is no positive, it's all just in the middle.

So you may think you just want the good, but really think about what that would be like?

That all being said, that's not what it is anyway. Again, that isn't what life is and we know this because none of us live that perfect, 100% goodness all the time life.

So accept that this is what life is and be willing to be present in all of it.

Face what comes and handle it instead of avoiding, distracting, and pushing away. Solve the problems and when you can't change things right away, or at all, accept them as they are and feel crappy for a little bit.

The good will come, don't force it. Don't be in a hurry to get there.

Just remind yourself that this is life and that you want to experience all of it because that's how you get to create the life you want.

Let it all happen, be in it all, be with yourself, go through it all, and then you can spend more of your life creating what you want instead of dealing with the consequences of trying to force more good.

Have a wonderful week living life and being in all that encompasses it, all the thoughts and all the feelings. Bye Bye.