

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #86: Choosing Your Story

Hi. How are you doing over there? You doing okay? This episode was actually going to be released next week but as I was working on it I decided it needed to be put out ASAP.

Right now, as I'm recording this, we are in the midst of a pandemic. If you're listening to this at a later time, months, or years from now, I'm sure you will remember how it was for you in the early months of 2020.

People all over the world are being affected, we are each being affected, and what's so interesting to see is how we're all handling it.

There's panic, there's fear, there's worry, there's apathy, there's defiance, and there's calm. The feelings I'm seeing from people are all over the place.

There's things going on in the world. Although it centers around the same thing, people, depending on different factors of their lives, are all being affected differently.

Some people's jobs, schools, and livelihoods are affected, some people's family members are affected or are at risk of being affected, some people's social lives and travel are effected, some people's food and toilet paper are affected.

Our individual circumstances aren't all exactly the same.

You might think that is why the feelings are all over the place but that's not it. A single mom may look at someone who doesn't have kids and expect the kidless person to be calmer than she is. A paycheck to

paycheck server who's restaurant isn't allowing people to dine-in may expect the person with a salaried job that would never shut down to be calmer than they are.

But that might not be the case.

It's not our jobs or our kids or what's going on in our lives that we don't have control of that causes us to feel how we feel.

It's always ourselves that does.

Now, you may be wondering, what the heck am I doing talking about this on a binge eating podcast. How is this relevant?

Well, let me tell you how.

A main reason why you binge is because you're avoiding discomfort whether it be uncomfortable urges to binge or uncomfortable emotions. Eating when you're not hungry happens because you want to feel a certain way. So if you're panicking about something in your life, or if you're worried about something or many things, then what might you do in response to that feeling?

You might eat, that's what's you might do.

You might eat to avoid the feelings and to calm yourself down and to distract yourself away from your problems or your imagined problems.

When you're someone who binges, you're most likely also someone who uses eating as a temporary solution to feel better or as a distraction.

When life hands you lemons, you eat them. You don't take that time to make lemonade, that's too much time and effort!

Seriously though, when you're reacting to your life and your circumstances in a way that causes you to feel all kinds of uncomfortable emotions and a lot of them, it's going to make it even harder to allow all of them. If you're not skilled at allowing yourself to feel discomfort, then you're not going to use the most difficult times, such as now, as an opportunity to practice. You'd be practicing feeling uncomfortable way more than you'd be effortlessly feeling good and you don't like that ratio so you're just going to try and feel good more often. You're not going to try and feel out the discomfort, you're going to escape it if you can because there's so much of it.

Now, in the present moment as I'm recording this, like I said, it's pandemic time. Hopefully, this will end sooner than later. But regardless of whether or not it's happening, all of our lives at one time or another are going to have circumstances that we aren't happy with, that we don't want to deal with, or that greatly affect something in our lives.

I think this is a perfect time for me to bring up this topic given the impact we are all experiencing in our lives right now, but this really is a topic to be thought about and worked on for your whole entire life.

It's that no matter what the circumstances are that you are dealt, you have the authority to handle it however you want to.

If you don't realize this, you might blame your circumstances for how you feel and for how you behave.

But there are so many people living with the same circumstances, or at least pretty dang similar, that are having completely different reactions.

It all depends on the story you're telling about the circumstances and about what's going on around you. Your story is your version of your opinion and your descriptions and your interpretations. Your story is yours to tell and how you tell it will determine how you feel, what you do, and what results you create in your life.

We all have a story about what's happening right now and about what's going to happen in the future.

It is optional to think things are crazy or scary and it's not going to feel good to think about things that way. I was having a conversation with two people recently where one person said “things are going to be crazy for awhile” and the other said, “Oh man, this could be the start of crazy.” Me being the coach I am, I had to chime in and say, “Not crazy, just different.” Word choice matters. To me, it feels so much better to think things will be different than to think they will be crazy.

It's the stories we're telling that are causing us to feel how we're feeling.

Some of us are telling worrisome and fearful stories about how bad things are going to get or about how bad things are right now.

While some of us, myself included, are telling optimistic and calm stories.

Given the option of choosing fear and worry or optimistic and calm, I choose the latter. This is really is a choice we're all making everyday as we think and talk about what's going on and what we think is going to happen.

Now, some people think it's useful to feel worried or fearful. They think it drives them to take care of business and get prepared. But I don't believe that's necessary at all. I'm also taking care of business, doing what's recommended, be being prepared without fear or worry and I'll say, it feels so much better to feel how I am.

I also want you to observe what you have been doing if you've been feeling fearful or worried or what other people who are feeling that way are doing. They're over saturating their minds with news reports, they're complaining about how things are being handled, they're over thinking everything, they're taking drastic measures and over buying. I'm not saying any of this is wrong, please don't hear that, if you're doing that or if someone else is doing that, then that's your or their prerogative. What I want you to hear is that your feelings, which are going to drive your actions, are completely optional.

You have options and you have the authority to choose which ones you want to feel based on how you choose to think about your circumstances.

Let me give you an example that is not related to the pandemic, just any everyday thing that happens to people, that happened to me recently to illustrate this.

A couple months ago, I was at my brother's house for my nephew's birthday party and when my dad arrived he asked me what happened to my car. My response to that was, "I don't know, what happened to it?" I had no idea that anything had happened so please dad, inform me. Apparently, someone had dented and scraped it on the driver's side toward the back and I hadn't noticed it, but my parents' did when they drove past my car. So I went outside to check it out. Of course I was immediately disappointed and then I asked my dad what I should do now. He said to call my insurance company and take it to a body shop to have them fix it. I said okay, and went back inside to the party and enjoyed myself the rest of the day.

What was so interesting to me was that when I went back inside, my dad was apologizing for bringing it up because he was concerned it was going to ruin my day. He didn't want me to feel sad at the party. My boyfriend was also concerned about me feeling bad and maybe even feeling angry.

But the thing was, I wasn't at all. I wasn't angry, I wasn't sad, and it was all because I chose not to be. Because of my coaching tools I have and knowing that I have the ability to feel how I want to feel about it, I chose to accept it and move on. There was nothing I could do to change what happened, I had a solution to fix it, and I wanted to have fun at the party. So I did. I felt neutral about the car situation and chose to focus on my nephew and all the family and friends at the party. It was completely my choice how I wanted to think and feel about the circumstances of my car having been hit.

I could have chosen to be angry and sad but why would I do that? What good would that have done for me? It wouldn't have changed the state of my car, just the state of my mind and my experience of the party.

What I want to point out here too is that I also wasn't indifferent about it nor did I not care. Of course I cared, I just chose neutrality as far as my feelings were concerned.

I mentioned earlier that there are people who are feeling defiant and indifferent in our current circumstances and that's probably not going to be a useful way to feel if they want to help make things better. Those are the people who aren't listening to recommendations by our leaders and not taking proper precautions.

They're telling the story that what's being recommended doesn't matter or that it won't make a difference or that our leaders don't know what they're doing. Again, they're welcome to think this way and feel how they feel, but the question still remains, is it useful to do that? For the greater good of the world, probably not.

Story telling matters, whether it's about what's going on in the world right now, what's going on in your individual life right now, what's happened in your past, or what you imagine will happen in the future.

Let's start with your past. How do you tell your story of your past?

If I were to ask you to tell me about your binge eating up until now, would it be full of hopelessness, despair, and defeat? Maybe your story could have a lot of that, but you could also keep it to a minimum and also to not end it on that tone.

If I'm telling my story, I could simply say, I binged for 10 years and there were times when I felt like no one could help me and I would never be free from it. But I was able to overcome it, someone was

able to help me, and now I get to teach others how to overcome it too. Because of what I went through, I am now able to make a difference in the world and help people experience less suffering around food.

Now, you may say that you haven't overcome it so your story up to now isn't going to end the same way mine did, but that doesn't matter. You can still end it with optimism and hope. You can say that you've been struggling and failing and have given up so many times, but now you've found this podcast, you've found someone who gets it and gets you and you're so grateful to have the resources you now have.

Isn't that such a better story than just complaining about all your hardships and struggles? When all you do is focus on those, you feel terrible. But by the end of the story I offered, there's a light at the end.

Now look at your present. Is your story that you can't get it, that you're a lost cause, or that you're out of control? Not useful if you want to get it and realize and utilize your self-control. You could say you're a work in progress, that you're learning, that you're putting in effort.

And then there's the future. That's a big one for a lot of you I think. You're being pessimistic and hopeless. You're telling the story of you never stopping binge eating and struggling forever. Well guess what, when you tell that story, that's the life you're going to get. You're going to feel defeated, give up, and keep bingeing and struggling forever.

You have to tell the story about you making your dreams come true. You have to tell the story where you do what it takes, where you really do change yourself, and where it is possible for you. The future is unknown and the stories you tell about it will be what you create. If you don't believe me, go back and listen to episode #50, Believing Without Evidence. But in short, if you tell yourself that you'll never stop, then you'll feel hopeless, give up, and not stop. And if you tell yourself that you can change, then you'll feel motivated, you'll put in the work, and you'll change.

Notice what stories you're telling. Then, what's really important, is to separate out the circumstances which are the facts and things you can't control from your thoughts which is all your opinions, descriptions, and interpretations.

Your circumstances probably aren't changeable in this moment and that's okay. They don't have to change for you to feel better and act differently. All that needs to change is the stories you're telling, your thoughts, your beliefs.

So as you're going through this process of stopping binge eating, through this pandemic in the world, and through any undesirable circumstances of your life that happen, know that your stories are what affect your feelings, your well-being, and your behavior.

Choose useful ones.

Choose to believe everything will be okay. Choose to talk about the good things that will come from it. Choose to believe that whatever is out of your control is being handled by whoever is in charge of handling it as best they can.

There is so much emotional discomfort that happens in our lives, even when we know how to manage our thinking to reduce it. Do what you can to manage your thinking and to choose what you want to be thinking and feeling, and put in the effort to be in a more useful and less uncomfortable mental space.

You have more authority over how you think, feel, and act than you give yourself credit for. Use that authority to tell stories that make you feel how you want to feel and that bring more calmness, optimism, acceptance and any other feeling you want to be feeling right now into your life.

As this podcast evolves, I want to talk to you all more about creating less discomfort in your life. I've talked a lot about allowing discomfort, but when you have a lot of it in your life, it can make it more difficult to do that. It can be overwhelming and exhausting if you're trying to allow discomfort all the time and getting little comfort in your life. So get ready for more about that. Let's clean up your thinking about yourself and your life and stop being so negative about things and stop being counter productive with your thinking.

So as I continue on, get ready to learn more about how to create a better life, as well as continuing to receive insight about handling food situations and obstacles, and in the meantime, notice your stories and intentionally tell them how you want to.

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