

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #87: Planning Your Life

Hello! I'm hearing people say they're feeling a lot of different feelings these days. But to be honest, it's not just now, I've been hearing people mention these same feelings for as long as I can remember. Now though, it just seems like it's more often and about different things than they were feeling them about before.

The ones I want to address today are stress and overwhelm.

Although it would be nice if we could control what happens around us, be fully in charge of the circumstances of our lives, and to every day be able to follow our routines that we like to have, that's not what happens.

Things change around us. Other people do and say things that affect us. Things happen and come up that get in the way of us following our desirable routines we create for ourselves.

This is the reality of life.

Right now, as I'm recording this, people's lives are being disrupted in so many ways.

Their work schedules are different, or they now have their kids at home all day, or they have been laid off work, or their gym is closed, or their favorite restaurants or bars they go to are closed. The circumstances of their lives are different.

But although there are so many people dealing with this right now, all at the same time, this is nothing new. These are things that happen all the time. Sometimes long-term and sometimes just for a day or two.

Since right now people are facing several changes in their circumstances at the same time, they are experiencing more stress and overwhelm.

My concern for you is that if you're feeling excessive stress and overwhelm then you might be eating to distract yourself, to avoid how you're feeling, or to relax.

So in this episode, I want to share with you one thing you can do that can help you ease the stress and overwhelm you might be feeling.

It's planning.

I've talked before on this podcast about planning your food, I'm all for that, but I'm also a big advocate for planning your life as well. I'm not even talking about planning your life like the next 3 decades, not that that would be a bad thing to do, but I mean today, tomorrow, this week.

When things change in your life, you might get kinda lost in it all. You don't know what to do, you don't know when to do what, and you might worry about not being able to get everything done that you want to take care of.

Then all the stress and overwhelm comes up because you don't have a clear picture of what your life is going to look like from moment to moment. You worry about it all, about there being too much, about you not being able to do it all.

Stress happens when you think there's not enough – for example, enough time, enough money, enough help. And overwhelm happens when you think there's too much – like there's a lot going on, too much going on, or a lot or too much to do.

If you're winging your day to day life, just doing what you feel like doing or not having any kind of plan, or just seeing what happens, which a lot of you do, then you're probably not making the best use of your time.

I had a client who recently was bothered that she wasn't following her eating plan she made for herself.

When we looked at why she didn't follow it, the main reason was that she didn't have, in her home, the food she planned to eat. Since she didn't have it, she just ate whatever was on hand at home...and it wasn't quite what she has really wanted for herself.

This all could have been avoided had she made time to go to the store, but she never planned to. She was winging it and figured she'd go at some point but never did.

Had she planned the day and time that she would go, she would have been much more likely to have gone and prepared herself to eat exactly what she planned.

This is such a simple example of how lack of planning and preparation can affect you later.

Ever heard that saying, “Failing to plan is planning to fail?” I'm so down with that.

You have things you want to get done and things you want to take care of. Wouldn't it be so calming to know exactly when you're going to do it?

There's such a difference in how it feels to think, “I'm going to record my podcast at some point this

week” vs “I’m going to record my podcast on Wednesday at 10am.”

If I do the latter, I can feel more confident that it will get done. Even if things come up as the week goes on, I still know I’m going to get it done because I’ve set aside time for it. That’s podcast time, no matter what. It’s important and that’s when it’s getting done.

Now, something people commonly bringing up is how constrained they feel when they plan. It sounds like a logical argument.

But is being constrained really a bad thing? I’m going to argue that it’s not. It’s like how I’ve talked to you about restriction. Restriction in itself is not a bad thing. What matters is the motive behind it. If it’s restriction from self-love and to better your well-being, then it’s great. If it’s self-hated, punishment, and fear, not so much.

I think constraint is actually quite freeing. If I say I’m going to record my podcast on Wednesday at 10am, then I don’t stress about when I’m going to do it, I don’t worry about whether or not it will get done, and I also don’t have to feel conflicted about what I’m going to do when 10am on Wednesday comes.

I know when I’m going to do it, I know I will get it done, and when Wednesday at 10am comes, there’s no conflict, there’s only one thing that is an option.

It’s so freeing to know all these things.

And what’s even better is that by planning as much as I can in my life, I’m making sure I’m fitting in everything I want.

There’s no waiting around to see if there will be time, I’m making time.

There’s no, seeing what I’m going to feel like doing, I’m just deciding what I’m doing, especially with those things that I’m never going to feel like doing....and I’m looking at you laundry and cleaning my home.

I know some of you want to be free and spontaneous, but if you do that, overall, has that been useful to you? Are you getting everything done that you want to and are you relaxed or stressed when you’re doing it?

I see people who wing it, who don’t have plans, run around like chickens with their heads cut off because they have no direction. They’re also constantly thinking about all the things and worrying about them instead of focusing on the one thing they’re doing. If they had a plan for when all the things would get done, they wouldn’t have to worry about them and they could calmly do whatever they’re doing now. Then move on to the next thing and do that calmly without worry.

Now, maybe you are a planner, maybe you do take the time to plan your life and block out time for tasks, activities, and to dos. But now that your circumstances look different, you might be having a hard time.

You had a routine, you loved it, and now it’s no longer doable.

So what do you do now?

Well, it's simple. You create a new routine. You figure out what you want to do with the time that you have now, you figure out alternatives for things you're not able to do right now, and give yourself a structure to follow.

People get so reliant on their work or school schedules and when they're no longer there, they don't know how to manage their time. It's not like, since there's no one watching or no one telling you what to do that your only option is to just do whatever.

You watch yourself and tell yourself what to do. You create a structure for yourself and be very specific about it. On this day, from this time to this time, I'm going to do this thing. Starting with your priorities, you put everything you want to do into your calendar and give yourself a reasonable amount of time to do it.

When you do this, you get to see exactly how your day or week is going to play out. You don't have to stress about getting things done, you can clearly see if you will have time or not. If you don't have time for something, then you don't have time for something. Since you're going to schedule your priorities first, then whatever you don't have time for isn't important right now. You plan to do it another time.

Planning, calendaring, giving yourself structure, it's all just such a simple way to ease your stress and overwhelm.

You get to see it all, laid in out front of you. You get to make time for everything and be realistic about what can get done. It's so much better than just having this never ending to do list and expecting to get it all done in one day and stressing about how you're not. Of course you're not. If you took the time to put the tasks into time blocks then you'd clearly see it's just not possible, and that's okay. There's only so much time but, by being intentional with how you use it, you get to make sure you're getting the best use of that time you do have.

There is enough time, you just have to make it.

Now, if you're spending your time eating to relieve your stress and overwhelm, you're not using that time get the things done that you're stressing and worrying about.

Here you are saying there's not enough time and too much to do yet instead of doing the things, you're eating.

Having all that stress and overwhelm isn't helping you get things done and if you are getting them done you're not feeling so great when you're doing them.

So let's lessen the amount you're feeling. As I've just talked about, planning and creating structure for yourself is a great tool to help do that. But it's not the whole solution because your stress and overwhelm aren't coming from your circumstances. They're not coming from your lack of structure, your change in routine, the things going on around you, the people in your life. It's coming from you and how you're thinking about all of them.

Your circumstances have changed. You have more responsibilities than you did before or you have different responsibilities than you did before. How do you want to be thinking about this? Do you want

to freak out about how it's all too much and you'll never be able to do it all and run around all day exhausting yourself so much that the only thing you feel like you can or want to do at the end of the day is escape with food? Or do you want to get to work, get it done, and still have time for true relaxation at the end of the day where you're not dying for an escape but just winding down doing whatever you like to do?

Stop telling yourself that what you have going on, is a lot or too much. That thought alone will overwhelm you. How you describe your to dos and your circumstances is your choice. So instead of looking at the big picture and seeing it as too much or a lot, break it down and see it how it really is. You have things going on. You have this, this, and this. And also, you're going to figure out how to work it all in and take care of everything. You are, because it's important to you.

How you think about your circumstances is your choice to make. We can't always control or change our circumstances, but we can choose how we want to respond to them.

Your life and how you live it in the midst of what's happening in the world and in your immediate world is your choice to make.

Set up your life how you want it to be given your current circumstances.

Set up your eating how you want it to be too.

Be realistic about your plans and about how your life can look right now.

Just like you, my life has changed in the last month. Maybe not as drastically as for you, but there's still been changes.

I've had to change how to do workouts since my building's gym was closed. I've had to change my social life since I'm choosing to not see my friends and am not able to go out to restaurants, bars, or pretty much anywhere indoors that I used to go. But I didn't hear the news about the changes and freak out about what I'm going to do. I figured it out. I figured out how I can still workout. I figured out how I can still have fun and be social.

For you, you may have your kids at home. How do you want to manage your time with them? You may have been laid off. How do you want to structure your time now that you're not working? Also, if you're concerned about money, how can you still make money right now? What can you do to manage the money you do have right now? You may have more food in your house than usual. How do you want to structure your eating?

These are all useful questions so answer.

Here you are with the circumstances you have. What do you want your days to look like? Create that. Structure it. Plan it out.

If you want to feel less stress and overwhelm during the times when your life changes, do what you can to set yourself up for success.

Take it one task at a time, take it one problem at a time, plan out when you're going to take care of and do things, and most of all, stop making things more stressful and overwhelming by thinking there's not

enough time and too much to do, or that you're not going to be able to take care of everything.

You will, if you calm yourself down and figure out how.

Now go create your new life in the midst of your new circumstances.

Bye bye