

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #149: Your Morning Routine

Hi! Let's talk about morning routines.

You may have one and love it, you may have one and want a different one but aren't sure how to change it, or you may not have one and either have tried without success or just don't want one.

This episode is going to be for those of you who either have one you're not consistent with, have one you don't like, or want to have one but don't.

So let's first talk about why it's useful to not only have one but one that enhances your life and your well-being because not all morning routines are going to create the same results.

Before you create any kind of new habit, like a morning routine and like stopping binge eating, it's always important to know why you're going to do it.

There's got to be a compelling reason for you to do something different than you've been doing because different requires energy. If you're going to use that energy you gotta have a compelling reason to do so.

Now, you've probably heard lots of different reasons why morning routines are useful and I'll go through a short list of some of the most common reasons but just know that what's important is that the reason you choose is important to you.

Don't choose it because some successful person said it. You have to care.

So, here's a list.

It can create momentum for healthy habits for the rest of your day.
Sets the tone for your day since you're starting off on a positive note.
You create calmness at the start of your day rather than starting off stressed.
You give yourself time to focus on things that are important to you and again, set the tone for more focus throughout your day.
You create time to do things that are important to your well being before something unpredictable might stop you later or before your energy possibly dips later.
You build confidence in your ability to do what you say you're going to do as you create the routine, stick with it, and prove to yourself that you have the ability to stick with something, even just one thing.
You get to feel accomplished first thing in the morning.
If you slept well, which we'll talk about a little later in this episode, you'll be able to do important things while you're feeling refreshed and awake.

There's more possible reasons and you may have other personal reasons but basically, if you start your day stressed and messy, then there's a good chance you might spend the rest of your day feeling stressed and being messy.

All of that can bleed into your eating habits since most of you eat when you're not hungry because you want to eat to calm yourself down or distract yourself from the chaos of your day or at the end of the day you just crash and want to numb out.

Now, I'm not saying that your morning has to be perfectly zen in order for you to have a good day. For most people, there's 15-17 hours in a day when you subtract sleep hours from the 24, and you can make the choice to refocus, calm yourself without eating, or set a new tone at any time in those hours.

But, it's going to be easier for you if you start off that way rather than trying to change it in the middle of the day if right from the start of your day you've created a momentum of stress or whatever you create for yourself, disorganization, unfocused, overwhelmed, whatever.

It's like with bingeing. It's easier to not start a binge than it is to stop yourself in the middle of one. It's of course possible to do both, you can stop eating at any time but, it's easier to not binge if you don't give in to your urge at all.

So let's talk about how you're going to create your routine and actually do it so it becomes a habit.

After you figure out why you want a routine, you're going to list out all the things you would like to do and why for each of those.

Why do you want to do them at all and why do you specifically want to do them in the morning?

Let me give you an example.

When I moved in with my boyfriend, the weather was nice and I would go for morning walks before work. Then here in New Hampshire, cold weather came and I found a trainer on YouTube who had a ton of free workout videos and I started doing those instead. It felt great to work all my muscles again and build strength I had lost from only walking. I also would do about 15 mins or so of stretching after the workouts.

Now, the nice weather is back. I want to walk again because I love it so much. But, I also love doing the strength training workouts and stretching. I could do all of them but, that's not how I want to use my morning hours. There's a time I want to begin work and if I add in the walk, it's going to push my work start time and I don't want to do that. I also don't want to wake up any earlier than I already do or change anything else in my morning routine.

So, to make my decision about what to do, I went to my why.

I want to move in the morning because it wakes me up and I feel so good afterward so I'm starting my day feeling good and I believe I do better work, better coaching, better everything if I've moved my body in the morning. That's why I want to do some kind of exercise in the morning before work.

Side note, I make sure I don't use that belief against myself too. If I have a doctor's appt or something in the morning and I'm not able to fit in a workout of some kind, I don't tell myself that that means I'm going to not feel good and not work well. It's not that I always don't work well if I don't move my body in the morning, sometimes I do feel great even if I don't move but, more often than not it's just *better*.

So I have my why for why I want to move and then I have my why for why I want to do it in the morning for each of those activities.

What it came down to for me is that it's going to be easier for me to motivate myself to do the strength training videos and stretching in the morning. It's too easy to come up with excuses at the end of the work day especially if my energy is drained. I know myself well enough to know that I'm more likely to actually do it in the morning than after work.

Is it possible for me to do it after work? Of course it is. I could create motivation to do it but, if I have the option of morning or evening, I choose morning. If I didn't have time in the morning, I'd probably make evening work because I like how my body feels when I'm consistently active. So I want to make time for it.

But what about the walking? Well, that is easy for me to do after work. I love walking and it's not hard to motivate myself to do that at any time really. So I began creating a new evening routine where I finish work, eat, and go for a walk and I love it.

So see how I first decided that I want to move in the morning and figured out my reasons why and then looked at my options for movement and looked at why I wanted to do them in the morning. I also found a way to compromise so I can actually do it all in a day.

The same thing happened with my Thought Downloads. I don't think I've talked about Thought Downloads on the podcast in awhile but if you've worked with me you know what they are! But for those of you who haven't, here's a reminder. It's like journaling but the emphasis is on your thoughts and feelings more than your actions. Of course you have thoughts about your actions and other people's actions but, you're taking time to look into your mind and get your thoughts out of your mind and onto paper. It's taking a moment to sort through what's happening in your head and to check in with yourself.

I make time on most days to do two of these. I'm a business owner so I'll do one with my business, writing about the backend stuff, about how I can better serve my group members, how I can improve as a coach, work through any confusion or doubts I may have, and clean up my mind so I can be my best

self as a business owner and as a coach.

I'll also do one about my personal life writing about my relationship, my family and friendships, anything going on with me about how I'm thinking about myself or things I want to improve upon myself personally.

These downloads are both so important to me because they help me make sure I don't have any hidden negativity in my mind. I want to make sure it's all out in the open in front of me so I can see it and work on it.

Sometimes I'm able to resolve something in 5 minutes simply by doing a Thought Download and sometimes my download may just be the start of some work that's going to take time.

But either way, I want to do that work.

So it's become part of my morning routine.

There was a time when I planned to do my personal Thought Downloads after work but too often, like with the strength training, it was too easy to come up with excuses and it's easier for me to do it earlier in the day when I'm feeling more focused and energized. Now, sometimes I am still focused and energized at the end of the day but I don't want to chance it. So I schedule it earlier.

And again, if after work was the only time, that's when I would do it.

Actually, I used to do it before bed for awhile but then I decided I wanted to read so reading won as the pre-bed activity and my personal Thought Download moved to earlier in the day.

When you schedule out a morning routine, you get to make sure that some of the important daily things you want to do will get done and most likely that's when you're in a headspace that will make it easier. You can also schedule in the things that you think will enhance the rest of your day.

Then the more consistently you do it, the more habitual it will be and you won't have to put much thought into it.

You won't wake up and think, "Well, what do I do now?" and waste time trying to figure out what you're going to do with your time. You'll just get to doing what you decided ahead of time that you want to do.

I don't even think about working out in the morning. I go to the bathroom, brush my teeth, put on my workout clothes, and pick a video without much thought at all.

Your routine can consist of whatever you want. Don't feel like you have to do certain things or do it a certain way just because other successful people told you about what works best for them.

We're all different and find value in different activities.

One of my best friends reads and meditates every morning.

I don't, and each of our routines works out really well for us.

So what do you want to do at the start of your day? What's important to you that you want to make sure you get done? What will help you set yourself up for success?

Here's some suggestions to get you started in case you're kinda lost. You can:

- Read
- Workout
- Do yoga
- Walk
- Write
- Meditate
- Eat breakfast
- Drink coffee or tea or water
- Just sit in silence with yourself and think
- Talk with someone – a friend, partner, or spouse
- Play with your pet
- Watch or read the news
- Watch personal development videos like TED Talks
- Listen to a podcast
- Do a crossword puzzle or Sudoku

There's so many things.

And here's another question you can ask yourself. How do you want to feel in the morning?

I remember years ago asking myself that question and the first word that came to mind was, “awake.” It seemed so obvious but it was actually insightful for me.

I've never considered myself to be a morning person so my ideal morning was really to just sit on the couch and watch tv for a bit. But that wasn't going to result in me feeling awake. It was probably just going to perpetuate however I felt after waking up, which wasn't awake. It usually takes some time for me to wake up.

So I brainstormed about what I could do to feel awake and I changed from watching tv to going for a walk in my neighborhood. At the time I was living in LA so that was fortunately feasible on most days all year round. And that's what I did on the days when I didn't work first thing in the morning.

So decide for yourself and map out what an ideal morning looks like for you. Just make sure you're being realistic and don't try to make any huge changes all at once. Like if you usually wake up at 9am, don't try to make your routine 6am. Start where you are or if you do want to get up earlier, be realistic about what time you will wake up having gotten enough sleep and feeling refreshed. Then try it and see how it goes. If you need to tweak it, tweak it but again, don't try to make too many changes at once.

You can also have different routine for different types of days. I have different routines for work days and days off. If you have differing work schedules you can create different routines for those different days. If you have kids, you can also create a plan b in your routine in case you get interrupted. Make it work for your circumstances and what you want.

And don't give up on yourself if you're not perfect at it right away. This is new and it's not going to be a habit right away. Habits take time. Be patient with yourself.

So the last thing I want to touch on here is your nighttime routine.

I like to think that our morning routines don't begin when we wake up, they actually begin before we go to bed.

One of the most common reasons why people don't have the morning routines they want is because they think they don't have time in the morning or some days they have more time in the morning than others. It's not consistent.

Now, everyone's schedules are different and everyone have different things they would like to do with their days so without talking with you personally I'm not able to give you specifics about your situation. Unless you're one of my clients in my group program then you come talk to me about your specifics!

But what I can say is that a lot of you don't have the time you want in the morning because of how you're using your evening and night time.

You're spending your time eating too much food or you're doing things you don't even really find to be enjoyable.

If you went to bed earlier instead, that time could be re-allocated to the morning where you can make time to do things you want to do while you have more energy instead of when you're tired at the end of the day, and do things that will enhance your well-being, be fulfilling, and help you to feel good about yourself, and feel good physically and emotionally.

So if you think you don't have enough time in the morning, look at what you're doing with your evenings and nights.

Are you using that time the way you want to to?

And are you allowing enough time for sleep? If you want to feel good when you wake up so you can more easily get the things done, adequate sleep will obviously be really helpful.

And with that, consistent bedtime and wake up times will be very beneficial as well.

Your brain will get used to going to sleep and waking up at the same time and you create a sleep routine that will help you follow through on your morning routine.

They all really bleed together. Your evening or nighttime routine affects your sleep routine which affects your morning routine which affects your day.

When you figure out how you want to be spending your time and why, you can place everything in and work on being consistent so it all flows beautifully.

And if the thought of having that much routine makes you feel restricted, I'd question your thinking on that.

I can't tell you how many times people have told me that they binged or overate because they were out of their routine or they worry about an upcoming vacation because they'll be out of their routines or they're starting a new job or school or something that will take them away from their routine.

You may tell yourself that you don't like routine but I'm gonna bet that you like it more than you think.

It just makes it so much easier to make decisions and to not worry when a routine is in place. You know you're doing what you want to be doing and what works well for you when it's in your routine. As long as you like it of course.

So before you poo poo on so much routine, look at what happens for you when you don't have routine. Are you happy with the outcomes? Maybe you are and that's awesome if you are so you keep doing that.

And I do want say though that even if you think you don't have a morning routine, you probably do. It might be going with the flow, that's your routine. For some of you it might be to run around rushing, trying to get yourself together, and being chaotic. If that's what you do most mornings, that's your routine.

But if you're not happy with the outcome of what you're considering to not be a routine, creating some structure for yourself that you want to follow might be something that you'll find to be incredibly useful.

So, what do you want to do with your time and why? And why specifically do you want to do it in the morning? And how do you want to feel in the morning?

These whys are what will motivate you to do the things you want to do. When your brain says to not do them or do something else or wait until later, your why's are your reasons to do them now.

Write down all your answers to those questions to get yourself started on your morning routine.

Then schedule it out, being realistic about what will fit where and what time you will wake up having slept enough.

And take a glance at your evening and nighttime routines as well. Make sure you're using your time wisely and are doing things you want to be doing and are important to you.

Be intentional about your time and how you're using it so you set yourself up for success.

Alright, bye bye.