

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #155: Intentional Thinking

Hello! How are you? I'm so good. I just had a super fun weekend down in Providence Rhode Island at a wedding where two of my good friends got married! And I got to see some friends that I hadn't seen in such a long time and I made some new friends and I danced a lot. I thought it was funny because I was concerned about the reception being semi-outside and being too cold but yeah, that was not a problem because I was sweat-ty.

Anyway, it was so nice to take a weekend away and have such good times with friends and check out a city I've never been to!

Yay for the world opening up!

Now, let's talk about intentional thinking and also unintentional thinking.

There's the thoughts you think on purpose that you want to be thinking and the thoughts that just come into your mind that you don't want to be thinking.

Whether you want to be thinking certain thoughts or not will usually come down to how you feel and act when you think that way and ultimately the result you get from thinking that way.

Your thoughts don't just stand alone. How you think will affect your feelings, actions, and results and if you aren't purposeful with your thinking, you won't be purposeful with how you feel and act..

When you binge, there is some unintentional thinking going on before the binge begins. There's also unintentional thinking going on throughout your whole binge even if you don't realize it.

A lot of the time people tell me that they're not thinking anything when they're in the midst of a binge but, there are some thoughts happening even if you don't realize it. If you take a moment to pay attention, you'll hear something.

Here's some thoughts you might hear:

“I need more.”
“I can't stop.”
“I'm gonna have some of that now.”
“I'm so disgusting.”
“This is so gross.”
“I shouldn't be doing this.”

Those are some unintentional thoughts. They're thoughts you're not thinking on purpose and they're also ones that aren't going to necessarily stop you from eating more and you're not going to feel good when you think them.

If you think you can't stop, you won't stop. You'll feel defeated or hopeless and just keep going.

If you think you shouldn't be doing this, you're not making a definitive decision to stop eating. You're just making yourself feel guilty about what you're doing and that guilt isn't driving you to stop.

Then there's the unintentional thoughts you might think before a binge:

“This one time won't hurt.”
“I already ate all that so I might as well keep eating.”
“This is my chance to eat all the food.”
“I have to do it.”
“I can't feel this urge anymore.”

These ones are making binge eating sound urgent and important or they're justifying it and because of that they're also thoughts you probably don't want to be thinking.

You don't want to excuse and justify bingeing and you don't want it to be something that's urgent and important.

But sometimes you think thoughts like these and like the ones I listed that people think during binges.

You think them, you believe them, and you begin or continue to eat.

They may seem so true, especially because they're coming from your own brain.

But just because your brain said it doesn't mean it's true.

You don't have to believe everything your brain tells you and you don't have to agree.

But the problem is that you might actually agree a little.

Even when you're outside of the moment when your brain is telling you these things and when you're outside of the moment that you're feeling an urge, you might believe them somewhat.

That's why it's hard for you to dismiss those thoughts away and call BS.

There might be a part of you right now when you're not feeling an urge that thinks you can't stop eating

once you start or that when no one is around you kinda do want to eat a bunch of food or that you can't feel an urge all the way through.

If you're believing those right now, even a little bit, it's going to be more challenging to dismiss them and choose to think the opposite when you're feeling an urge to binge.

Then there's the ones that you see as true right now and you think the opposite isn't true. "This is disgusting and I shouldn't be doing this." That may sound legit but, it's not going to be useful. Like I said before, those are not going to stop you. What stops you is deciding you're going to stop. "This is disgusting so I'm stopping." "I shouldn't be doing this so I'm stopping." and following through on that decision.

When you think, "This is disgusting and I shouldn't be doing this," although you may believe it to be true, it's not useful to think that. It's just going to make you feel bad about what you're doing.

So, when it comes to binge eating, you're unintentionally thinking thoughts that aren't useful. They're making you feel bad, they're justifying binges, and they're making binge eating seem necessary in your mind.

You're just going along with what you're brain is saying and believing the thoughts it's giving to you.

So if you want to not binge and not continue eating and not start eating, you have to be the decider of your thoughts.

Instead of being on autopilot and letting your brain's thoughts take you down the path toward binge eating, you tell your brain what *you* want to think that will take you down the path away from binge eating.

Autopilot is a choice. Awareness and paying attention is a choice.

You can choose to observe your thinking or not.

You can choose to talk to your brain or just listen and agree.

One of the most amazing things about being a human is that we get to have conversations with ourselves and not just be instinctual all the time and not just do everything that comes to our mind. We get to make decisions and we get to think intentionally and tell ourselves what we want to be thinking.

We get to be intentional about how we feel and act because we get to be intentional about our thinking.

Now, that doesn't mean we can always convince ourselves of new beliefs in an instant or change how we feel in an instant.

We're not going to have full control over every single thought we think or every emotion we feel.

But, you have more authority over it than you're giving yourself credit for.

Your thoughts are not set in stone and you don't have to agree with every thought that comes into your mind.

Especially your thoughts about binge eating being a good idea or something you have to do.

So this is what I recommend you do.

Just as I did a few minutes ago, make a list of all your unuseful, unintentional thoughts that you think before a binge that drives you into a binge and the ones you think when you're bingeing.

Then make another list of the useful thoughts that you want to intentionally think on purpose.

What do you want to be thinking?

Think what you want.

Deliberately put thoughts into your mind that you want to be thinking.

Tell your brain what you want to be thinking.

And don't just wait until you're feeling urges to teach your brain how you want to be thinking, take moments to teach it all throughout your day.

It's like if you're trying to teach a toddler a new way of doing something it's going to be better received if you do it when they're calm, not when they're all worked up and emotional.

The same goes for your brain. It will better retain your intentional thoughts when you're teaching them to it in a calm state rather than an urgey state.

Too often we get stuck in cycles of just thinking a certain way that isn't serving us without making any attempts at changing because we think the thoughts are just true and that's just how we think.

But you can intentionally change it, even when it comes to your binge thoughts.

You can teach your brain new ways of thinking, you've already done it many many times in your life.

And the good news when it comes to binge eating is that you don't even have to convince yourself of a lot of what you want to be thinking.

You already believe it.

You already believe that you don't have to throw in the towel if you eat a dessert or snack off plan.

You already believe that bingeing isn't what you want to be doing when no one is around.

You already believe that you'll feel awful if you binge.

And if there's thoughts you want to be believing and you want to intentionally think that you don't believe yet and it does feel like you're trying to convince yourself, then that thought just isn't your next step.

Your next step is a bridging thought that you do believe that's somewhere in between those thoughts.

So if you don't believe you can feel an urge all the way through until it passes, you can intentionally think something like, "I am learning to feel my urges," or "it's possible I can learn to feel my urges."

Those will feel better than just thinking, "I can't feel my urges" and will put you in an emotional state that will more likely allow for you to actually practice allowing urges.

So be more intentional about what thoughts you think to yourself.

Choose to pay attention to your thoughts and listen to yourself and when you hear a thought that isn't useful, intentionally think what you want to think.

And one last thing about thinking intentionally. You may think something intentionally about bingeing or about your capabilities but, it doesn't override the previous thought, that unuseful unintentional thought, and you still feel an urge to binge.

At that point, you can intentionally choose how you want to think about feeling that urge.

A lot of you just start thinking about how awful it feels and how unbearable it is and how scary it is.

Those thoughts will make it more difficult for you to allow yourself to feel it until it passes.

So if you're intentionally thinking about your urge in a useful way, what are you going to choose to think?

Teach your brain a new way of thinking about urges so it's not jumping to thinking how scary it is.

It's okay to feel urges, they won't kill you, you are capable of feeling, it's just temporary, those are just some options for you but you can find what you believe is true about your urges that will be more useful than the unintentional unuseful thoughts that have been coming up for you.

Alright, so be more intentional about the thoughts you put into your head and the thoughts you dismiss away as unuseful.

Be the manager of your thoughts. Pay attention and be deliberate about what goes in and what stays when it comes to what you think about yourself, about binge eating, and about your urges.

Okay I'll talk to you next time, bye bye.