

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #158: Being Alone with Your Thoughts

Hi! I'm so happy to be here talking with you today. I am recording this episode on my first day back to work after a vacation!

In case you're wondering, I did a staycation and it was wonderful. I went to the lake, to the beach, saw a play, saw live music, did some trail walking and city walking exploring in my city, hung out with friends and family, relaxed, and it was just exactly what I needed and wanted.

So I feel refreshed and rejuvenated and so so good. So ready to be back here with you all, back with my group members, and as I'm recording this, I have a new group starting in a couple days and I can't wait to meet them and get to work!

And if you missed this round of my program and want to join the next one, registration will be opening on September 30, 2021 and you can get all the info about it at coachkir.com/group. You can stop binge eating, you can do it with me by your side guiding you, and you can have the life that binge eating is stopping you from having.

Now, let's talk about being alone with your thoughts.

Some of you are quite afraid of doing that because you fear what you'll find.

You fear there will be a lot of negativity and you won't feel good if you spend too much time alone with yourself.

So you avoid it. And of course the easiest and most common way for you to do that is by eating food.

You use eating as a distraction and as something to focus on rather than focusing on yourself.

You may also try to keep yourself super busy and possibly burn yourself out leading you to exhaustion where you then try and eat to energize or feel better.

But the biggest issue here is that when you avoid yourself, nothing gets better.

All that negativity, self-loathing, self-doubt, whatever you don't want to experience doesn't just go away on its own.

It stays there, lurking in your mind.

And whether you consciously see it there or not, it's going to affect you.

Those negative thoughts are going to create negative feelings that will lead you to negative actions and results even when you're not fully aware of them.

So when you constantly avoid what you don't want to see in your own mind, change doesn't happen.

I like to think about it like an extremely disorganized, messy room that you have in your house, or maybe even a closet.

Now, unless you're someone who is totally fine with that and has no problem with messiness and disorganization and tons of clutter, when you go in there to get something, there's this feeling that comes over you. You want it to be clean and organized, you want to walk in there and feel good. But it's not going to clean and organize itself on its own.

And neither is your brain.

You're not going to all the sudden one day have all your negativity turn into positivity.

You have to do the work to make that happen.

But to even do that, you have to go in there and see what's there.

With the room or closet, you have to start going through it all one thing at a time.

Same thing with your brain. You start going through your thoughts one at a time.

Now, I know that if you imagine there will be too many negative thoughts up there then you'll not only feel overwhelmed but also fearful of the discomfort that you'll feel going through it.

It's not comfortable to look at yourself and deal with what you don't like. It's not comfortable to face your thoughts when they're thoughts you don't like and that cause you to feel bad.

But you know what else is uncomfortable? Continuing to live with those thoughts existing in your mind. And how you feel after binge eating to avoid yourself. And feeling that urgency to be busy so you can avoid yourself and the exhaustion you experience from trying to be busy all the time.

So just as with urges and binges, there's going to be discomfort. How about you choose the discomfort

that will help you, not hurt you more?

When you take time with yourself, just you and your thoughts, you get to see what's there.

And again, you may not like it but it's good to know it's there so you can work on it.

And then it's not just noticing it but also then taking the time to work through it and change it.

You may notice, for example, that you think you're not capable. That thought comes up for you, you hear yourself think it, and then you just avoid it or feed into it. If you're feeding into it, you're looking for evidence to prove it true.

That's not the direction I suggest you go in and if you're afraid to be with your thoughts, it's most likely exactly what you do. You continue the conversation with yourself about how incapable you are and create more negativity. You create more discomfort for yourself.

What I suggest is that you work toward not believing that about yourself and instead of looking for how it's true, look for how it's not.

So here's two simple question you can ask yourself to help you do that and I'll just stick with the example I gave about not being capable but you can insert whatever it is that comes up for you.

What do you want to think about yourself and how are you that way already?

So your answer could be, "I want to think I'm capable and I am capable because I've done hard things in the past, I'm capable of doing hard things."

You're probably really good at thinking about how you're not capable so challenge yourself to come up with at least one reason why you are.

And you can do this with anything you think about yourself.

Whatever it is you think about yourself, consider what you want to think and find at least one piece of evidence to prove that you are that already.

And don't shoo this away by saying there is nothing, no evidence to support it. That's not going to get you anywhere. Spend some time considering what an answer could be. And it doesn't have to be anything huge, it can be a little thing.

For example, say you think you're hopeless. You want to think that change can happen for you. Your brain may want to give you all the reasons why that's not true but you can find one thing in your life that you've changed. One time in your life when you made your life better. One reason why you can change.

One thing you can think of to prove to yourself that you can change.

And let's relate this to binge eating while we're here.

You may not have fully changed your binge eating, you may have tried and failed many times but, find

an instance when you felt an urge and didn't binge. Even if it was because other people were there, there was still a time when you didn't give in to your urge right away or didn't at all. It may have been only one time but you've shown you're capable of not giving in to an urge as soon as you feel it. And if you can do it for that amount of time, you can do it for longer.

And as far a change, maybe there was a period of time when you didn't binge. Say you typically do it every day and there were two days you didn't. You changed for those two days. There was something you did to change your behavior in those two days. What was it? Once you know, you can repeat it to change for more and when you've done it consistently enough, it becomes a permanent change.

So you can change your perspective of yourself.

But you have to be willing to look at what your current perspective is first.

You have to see what you're thinking is true right now, first.

And you have to be willing to be uncomfortable as you do it.

It will be so worth it if you do.

Imagine if you never worried about having downtime or about being alone without distraction.

Imagine if you could just be with yourself and not feel the need to do something else.

I've actually been doing this more recently when I go for walks and it's been really nice.

I think I may have mentioned it on a recent episode, but there's been several times I've taken walks recently, on the street and through trails, without listening to any music or podcasts. Just my thoughts and what's going on around me and I really enjoy it.

I also went to the beach alone on my vacation and spent a few hours there, just me, the ocean sounds, and the people around me. Never once did I put in my air pods to listen to music or a podcast.

But here's what I will say about how it may be for me vs how it may be for you.

I regularly work on my brain. I regularly face my thoughts and work on them. So when I've have those times alone with my thoughts, it's not so bad. Unless I have something going on in my life that's challenging and that's causing me to feel a lot of emotions of course but, that's okay too.

Because those times where I'm feeling a lot of emotions and have a lot of thoughts I'd rather not be thinking, I don't run from it.

I experience it. I think about it. I write about it.

I take it as an opportunity to learn what I need to work on and then work on it when it's time.

Those thoughts you're avoiding, that's your work and you're avoiding the work because you think it will be too painful.

But what will be too painful is not doing the work.

It's just like with binge eating. It may be uncomfortable to do the work to stop but it's a hell of a lot more uncomfortable to stay in binge eating.

It may be uncomfortable to face your thoughts but it's going to be more uncomfortable for you if you don't.

So be willing to start the work of not avoiding yourself. Just one thought at a time.

There may be a lot at first but the more you go back to your mind, the more you'll clean out, just like that messy disorganized room. It may be a lot to go through at first but once you do the big load of work to clean it out, from there it's just maintenance.

Do the work on your mind upfront so you can get into maintenance.

Handle your thoughts, don't avoid them.

Grab a pen and a piece of paper and write down what's in your mind. Get it all out. Then start with one thing.

What do you want to think about that one thing and how is it that way already? Whether its about you or something in your life.

There's always another way to look at things. Find out how you're looking at yourself and your life now and work on finding a new perspective.

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