

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #161: Habit Replacing and Buffering

Hello! So a couple days ago I realized something that I forgot to mention in last week's podcast. The Stop Binge Eating Podcast's three year anniversary!

The first three episodes were released on August 21st 2018 and here we are, 3 years later, still doing it! How fun!

Thousands of people have been helped since then and I'm so honored to be a part of your stop binge eating process. It warms my heart so much to know that people are being affected by what I'm teaching so thank you to all of you who have reached out to let me know and to those of you who have left a review if you listen on an app that allows them.

There's still so much more to go and I'm excited to see what year four brings!

Happy Anniversary Podcast!

Now, let's talk about today's topic. Habit replacing and buffering.

Habit replacing is pretty self-explanatory. You stop doing a habit that you don't want to be doing and you replace it with another habit.

This can be something useful or not useful and we'll get more into that in a minute.

Then there's buffering which is a term you may or may not have heard of.

It's a term that my teacher Brooke Castillo came up with and buffering is when you do something to avoid fully experiencing your life that has a net-negative consequence. Net-negative meaning that the

ultimate result is negative.

So with binge eating, the initial result is that you feel good or better when you start eating but the ultimate result, the net result when all is said and done, is negative.

Buffering is basically when you do something to excess at your own expense.

So, what I want to talk about today is replacing your habits with buffering habits which are unuseful and replacing with useful habits.

What replacing with a buffering habit would look like is replacing an excessive habit with another excessive habit.

So like an excessive alcohol habit with an excessive eating habit.

Or replacing an excessive eating habit with an excessive exercising habit.

Or replacing an excessive eating habit with an excessive social media scrolling or excessive shopping habit.

Basically, you're trading one habit that is negatively affecting your life for another one.

This is something you may have already done. I hear that from people sometimes that they used to do drugs, smoke, or drink heavily and they don't anymore but, they've replaced it with eating.

And the reason why this happens is because the cause of the habit hasn't been addressed.

There was a reason why they had a habit of drug use, smoking, or drinking. There was a reason why they would consume those things excessively.

And as we've talked about with binge eating, it's most likely because they want to feel a certain way.

They want to feel better, they want to feel relaxed, they want to escape from whatever they're thinking and feeling and think and feel something different.

I can speak from experience that that's what I've done.

I used to smoke a lot of marijuana and the reason for it was always to feel different. I wanted to feel high, I wanted to feel happy, I wanted to feel comfortable in a social situation, which I know is the opposite of what happens to some people but for me it was a comfort zone, or I just wanted to feel good because how I was feeling was low or blah or just neutral and it was an easy way to feel better.

And I've done it with alcohol countless times. I drank excessively to feel comfortable, to feel uninhibited, to feel confident, to feel happy, or to feel happier if I already felt happy, again, to feel different than how I felt without drinking.

The period of time when I was doing this the most was also the period of time that I was binge eating, which is not a surprise to me when I think about it.

Because I would use those three things to avoid feelings a lot of the time.

It's how I would temporarily escape my life, my thoughts, my feelings.

Now, I didn't know that was what I want doing at the time.

I thought I just liked it. I liked smoking, I liked being drunk, I liked eating. They were fun.

That's about as far as it went in my mind.

But the truth is, it was all avoidance.

Now, there's nothing wrong with smoking, drinking, or eating, or anything else like those if they don't result in a net-negative consequence. If you do them in whatever amount you do and it's not a problem for you then it's not a problem. Go ahead and eat, smoke, or drink to feel good if you want to.

But what I'm talking about here is the excessiveness that negatively affects you and your life.

Now, if you have a habit you don't want to have, the solution isn't to replace it with another habit you don't want to have that's going to be a buffer.

It's to replace it with one that you do want to have.

Now, when I say that, you might start trying to think of activities you can do instead of eating. And that's great, if there's things you like to do that you want to make a habit of, then go for it.

And that's going to be rather important for all of you who need more pleasure outside of food in your life. Bring more non-food, net positive, pleasure in.

But I'm going to make a suggestion for you that isn't necessarily an activity.

And you may already know what I'm going to say, especially if you've been listening to the podcast for the last 3 years and if you're one of my group members.

It's the habit of feeling.

It's the habit of facing your problems and resolving them instead of avoiding them by buffering.

Instead of escaping, it's being present.

That's where I am now and where I teach my group members to get to.

If I feel a feeling or if something comes up in my life, I go through it.

I don't run to food. I actually don't even think about running to food because that's not my habit anymore.

I also don't run to marijuana or alcohol.

Those aren't my habits anymore.

My habit is feeling.

Now, I'm not perfect, I still sometimes procrastinate to avoid and I may overeat to avoid but I don't consider them to be habits. They're just things I do sometimes.

But most of the time, I feel and then I do what I want to be doing.

Like I said earlier in this episode, there's useful and not useful replacements.

I choose the useful one because that's the one that's actually going to result in a net-positive.

Instead of being positive now and then ultimately negative, it's negative now and then ultimately positive.

Or really what's happening is instead of comfort now with ultimate discomfort after, it's discomfort now, with ultimate comfort after.

That's because instead of avoiding and letting the problem simmer and not be resolved, I go through it to the resolution.

Escaping doesn't solve anything.

Learn to feel, face your thoughts and problems, and be present.

I know that buffering is the easy way to handle things.

But it really doesn't handle anything. It just puts it off.

Yes I can go drink excessively to avoid feeling or thinking about something but, when the alcohol leaves my system, not only do I still have that feeling and the thoughts but now a hangover.

Now, you might say that you're not avoiding anything. You're just doing it for fun, like I used to think.

And you are. You want to have fun so you eat something for pleasure. You want to enjoy the experience of buying something new. You want the little rush that comes from gambling. You want the pleasure of sex.

And that's fine if you do it and get a net positive result so you feel good about it afterward. But if it becomes excessive, and you notice net-negative results, you're not feeling good after and how you're expecting to feel, that's when you want to evaluate what's really going on.

You can ask yourself what would happen if you didn't buffer and do things to excess.

There's something there.

Like, what would happen if you didn't eat excessively? You'd feel an urge, you'd feel an emotion, you'd feel bored, you'd feel lonely, you'd feel stressed.

That's what you're avoiding and you probably think that eating just one serving wouldn't be enough to make the feelings go away. You need more.

If you're feeling down, buying just one thing won't create enough happiness for you so you buy more and more.

You think a lot will be better but when the result is a net-negative, it sure isn't.

So instead of finding a new buffer to replace your old one with, figure out what exactly it is that you're buffering away and work on that.

Most likely, it's feelings.

So you're going to work on feeling your feelings because feeling will give you a better result than avoiding with excessiveness.

I can say that from experience and my clients who have stopped bingeing would say the same.

Feeling is ultimately better than eating excessively.

But you gotta be willing to go through the ick to get to the good stuff instead of jumping to the good stuff and then getting a whole lotta ick.

We can't just think about the now. We gotta think about our future selves. We will become them soon and when we do, we want to feel good.

And the more you do it, the stronger your net-positive habits become.

It's like getting in the habit of working out. You might not do it because of how you'll feel doing it but because of how you think your future self will feel after.

That's why I do it. Except walking, I love walking when I'm doing it, and dancing, and some sports, so okay, I mean exercise like strength training and cardio that gets my heart rate high, those things that I don't think are very fun exercise. I don't love that. But I do it because I want to feel good after.

So today, start working on creating more net-positive result habits.

And the one I can't recommend enough is feeling discomfort. It's one that will allow you to create so much amazingness in your life that not allowing discomfort would stop you from.

Alright, that's all for today, I'll talk to you next time. Bye bye!