

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #165: Secret Eating

Hello! This is a very exciting week because....registration for The Stop Binge Eating Program will open this Thursday September 30th of 2021!

I'm so excited to meet and work with those of you who are taking this next step with me and are investing in your binge-free life.

It's going to feel so good to know you have a plan, to know that you're doing something that is going to help you, and to get help when you feel like you need it.

And, of course any time is a great time to stop binge eating but, if you join this program that's starting soon, we will be working together through the holidays so you'll have me to help you navigate that. I know a lot of you have difficulties with all the extra food every where, food gifts, and seasonal foods so I want to help you to not binge just because that's all happening.

So if you're ready to work on your binge eating with me so you can have the life that binge eating is holding you back from having, go to coachkir.com/group to get all the info about the program and on Thursday, you'll be able to register for the next program.

I'm so excited!

Alright, enough about my excitement, let's move on to secret eating.

A lot of you do it. I did it. A lot.

I did it with roommates, I did it at work, I did it at my parent's house, I kinda felt like I even did it with the people I was buying food from because I'd lie about the food all being for me. Like if I was at the convenience store I'd be on my phone pretending to text or talk to someone.

I remember being at my parents' house doing laundry and eagerly waiting for my mom to go to bed so I could eat their food.

I'd eat my roommates' food when they weren't there.

I'd eat in my car so whoever I was driving to, a friend, a roommate, whoever, wouldn't know about what I was eating.

I'd hide in the back at work, when I worked at restaurants, hoping that no one would see that I was eating MORE bread.

It all felt terrible and dishonest.

And one of the worst parts about it is that it takes away the pleasure of eating the food.

I wasn't hungry and eating this food was all about getting pleasure. Maybe it was about avoiding feelings too, especially at work but, for the most part, I just wanted the good tasting food.

And when you're eating joy foods who's only purpose is to bring you pleasure, and you're feeling guilty or ashamed while you're eating it, you're ruining the experience.

You're not even getting the pleasure you intended to get which could lead you into more eating because a) you think more eating will give you the pleasure you didn't get and b) you're feeling guilty or ashamed and want to avoid feeling it.

But really, if you don't clean up your guilt and shame then you still won't get pleasure from more eating and if you eat to avoid it you'll probably end up creating more of it after you've finished.

So eating more isn't really going to help anything and being secretive about your eating isn't either. It doesn't actually provide you with the pleasure you're wanting because you're mixing your pleasure with guilt and shame.

So let's talk about why you're doing it. Why are you eating in secret?

What it basically comes down to is that you want to eat the food and you think that what you're eating or how much you're eating is bad or wrong. Or that you're wrong or bad for eating.

You think you shouldn't be eating it and you don't want people to know so you're going to do this bad thing and be bad in secret.

You don't want them to judge you but here's the thing.

You don't even know if they'll judge you. They may not care, they may not notice, they may have no opinion about what you're doing.

So all the secretiveness might all be for nothing.

But maybe they do have a judgement. Maybe they have some thoughts about what you're eating or how much.

This is only going to be a problem if you have judgement about it.

I remember one day last summer when I was at my family's lake house and I had brought a donut with me. When I pulled it out and started eating it, two people were so surprised and were like, "You're eating a donut??" It was like it was something I'm not supposed to be doing because I'm supposedly healthy in their eyes and they have this idea about how I'm not supposed to be eating donuts because of the work that I do.

Now, when they caused this little scene, I could have felt ashamed and guilty about what I was doing. I could have felt judged and worried about how they were perceiving me. I could have agreed with them thinking it was wrong and I was bad for eating it.

But I didn't. I can eat a dang donut if I want to. And to be clear, they were confused about my work because I don't tell my group members to not eat donuts, I teach them *how* to eat them and not turn it into a binge.

My thoughts about what I was doing allowed me to eat that donut without any guilt or shame, even though two people were judging me, because I didn't think I was bad or doing anything wrong.

If I did think I was bad or doing something wrong, then yeah, I may have hidden inside the house to eat it so no one would see.

So what this is really about is what you're thinking about what you're doing.

It's not about the other people.

They can have all the judgments they want but if YOU feel okay with what you're doing then it doesn't matter who sees it.

So you need to work on being okay with what you're choosing to eat.

You need to work on dropping the guilt and shame, and own your decision to eat what you're deciding to eat.

With that, you're going to drop the labels of "good foods" and "bad foods" because that's not helping you at all.

You may think it's useful to label your foods that way but it's not. Calling a food "bad" doesn't stop you from eating it, maybe sometimes but not all of the time, and when you do eat it, because you like it and want to eat it, then you're bad for having eaten it and now you did something bad.

When there are no bad foods then you don't feel bad about eating any foods.

You eat them, enjoy them, accept your decision to eat them, and you move on.

You feel confident in your decision to eat them because it's what you want to do and there's nothing bad about it.

Me eating a donut wasn't bad. Even I had eaten 3 or 6 it wouldn't have been bad.

Amounts of types of foods are not inherently bad. We decide if they're good or bad and we can also decide they're neither good or bad.

It's just 1, 3, or 6 donuts and that's it.

It doesn't matter what your goal is whether it's stopping binge eating or losing weight or maintaining your weight, you still don't have to label the amount of food as bad.

It's simply not useful and will work against you because again, you eat a bad food and then you're bad.

And you're going to eat them because you like them and want to, you've seen yourself do this over and over.

I had lists of bad foods, that I called my "off-limits" foods when I was bingeing and having them on that list didn't stop me from eating them. Sometimes, but also not sometimes.

When you see any food as being okay to eat and see any amount as okay then there is no need to eat anything in secret.

I know it can be challenging to see them as okay because you have goals and ideas about what needs to happen in order to achieve your goals.

But, there's more useful ways of thinking about what you're eating besides just good and bad.

You can just call it out for what it is and be factual about it. 3 donuts. Not good or bad. You can also see it as aligned with your goal or not but still, make sure you're not attaching morality to your alignment or lack of. It just is or isn't.

The more neutral and factual the better because that's when the guilt and shame subside and you can just eat as you please. No hiding is necessary when you feel okay about your eating decisions.

Now, it's one thing to make this mental shift around a donut or a serving or two of something or basically just a normal amount of food or a little more than what you'd consider to be normal.

But what about a binge? What about a large amount of food?

Something that you'd consider to be an embarrassing amount of food.

Most people binge in secret most of the time because they're embarrassed. They'd never want anyone to see how much they eat.

That was for sure me but, once in a great while I would have a spread out binge in front of people at a party or holiday. I'd eat the same amount of food that I would normally consider to be a binge but it would be over a longer period of time than if I was doing it at home or in my car alone.

It would be spread out as I'd just keep going back to the food and eating more and more and more.

And I'd probably eat more after I left too, probably stopping somewhere on my way home or eating something I had at home.

But yes, binge eating is usually secret eating.

You're doing it because you're ashamed of what you're doing and feeling guilty about what you're doing.

And the thing about feeling guilt and shame when you're eating is that they don't stop you from eating.

They actually usually fuel more eating.

You feel them and give up on yourself, you give up on even trying to stop eating, because you're thinking you're bad so you're just going to act bad. You may even speed up your eating so you can get it done quicker so you can stop feeling so bad, which isn't how it works because you'll probably ruminate about how bad you are and how bad it was after it's all over.

Now, I'm not going to suggest that you feel great about what you're doing and do in front of everyone. That's obviously not realistic.

But what you can do is be more neutral about it when you find yourself in a binge or even wanting to binge.

What this means is that you recognize that this is a decision you're making and you take ownership of it.

You drop the good and the bad and see it is simply a decision to eat all this food.

Again, you don't make it a moral thing. You don't make it mean anything about you. You keep it neutral and factual.

This is what I'm doing.

One of my group members wrote about doing this in our wins channel recently. She was saying how just taking ownership of her choices and being honest is helping her get more clear about what she wants to be doing ultimately and how to get there.

She's still feeling desire to binge and when she does, she tells herself it's okay to do it, so she's not telling herself it would be bad, it's just a choice, and she's going to own the choice if she decides to do it.

The reason why this is useful is because it keeps her in a more neutral emotional state and therefore able to be more clearheaded about the decisions she's making. She's able to think it all the way through til the end more easily so she can assess the consequences. When you're feeling guilt and shame you're definitely not doing that. You're just too focused on how bad the present is.

She's not making her decision to binge mean anything bad about her, it's just a decision she's making. She's not making her actions mean anything bad, they're just actions she decided to take.

So no guilt, no shame, and the upside of that is that there's less likely a chance of having residual guilt or shame for a period of time after the eating has finished.

I know this might be a challenging concept to wrap your mind around, that you could feel neutral about bingeing as you're doing it but, it's possible because it all depends on how you're choosing to think about it as you're doing it.

Are you going to beat yourself up for deciding to give in to your urge or for deciding to eat another bite and another? Or are you going to own your decision?

Those are the two likely choices you will have if you do give in to your urge and binge.

So whether it's secret bingeing or secret eating in smaller amounts, check what you're thinking about what you're doing.

If you look at it as simply a decision you're making, you'll be less emotional and be able to think more clearly about your decision.

You can consider why you're choosing to eat it or to eat more.

You can look at your reasons and decide if you like your reasons.

You can find what the problem is that you're trying to solve with food and consider how else you could handle the problem.

It's when we're feeling neutral to positive that we can think clearly and see ourselves more objectively.

And then you may decide that yes, you do want to eat that delicious food and you want to have that amount. Or you may decide you'd rather feel through your urge or desire to eat and not eat.

So intentionally create less guilt and shame around what you're doing by letting go of the good or bad or right or wrong labels.

When there's no guilt or shame, there's no secret eating. You can be open about what and how much you're eating.

Or how much you ate.

This is why I'm able to talk so freely about my binge eating past with literally anyone. I don't have any guilt or shame about how much I used to eat so I can talk about it like it's just something I used to do.

I know some people who have stopped binge eating don't want to share their eating history with people and that's totally fine, it's their decision to make. But if you want to be able to share your story with other people, whether past or present, you have to stop making it mean you're a bad person, or weak, or flawed, or disgusting or whatever you're making it mean about you.

You're a person who binges or has binged. That's it. Not bad or good, not right or wrong, it's just a thing.

And that goes for just feeling your urges too. A lot of you judge yourself for even feeling urges and feeling an urge doesn't make you a bad person.

You're just a person feeling an urge. That's it.

Alright, so I know this one may be a bit tricky for some of you to implement but for now, at least notice when you're creating the guilt and shame around what you're eating. Notice when you're thinking you're doing something wrong or that you're bad for doing what you're doing and start with having that awareness.

Awareness is always the first step and from there you can start to make changes.

And of course, if you want help with stopping secret eating and stopping binge eating and stopping any of the undesirable eating habits you have, come join me in the next round of The Stop Binge Eating Program.

Again, registration will open this Thursday September 30, 2021 and all the info is at coachkir.com/group and that's where the sign up link will be as well once registration opens.

I can't wait to see you in there!

Bye bye!