

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #172: Replacing Binge Eating

Hi! Let's talk about replacing binge eating.

Because if you're not going to be binge eating, what are you going to be doing?

It sounds great and all to just say that you're going to stop binge eating but without a plan for what you're going to do instead, it probably won't work.

I know because that was what I ran into over and over again.

I'd say I'm not going to binge anymore without any plan for what I'd do when the urge showed up.

The plan was to just simply not do it.

It obviously didn't work.

I'd feel the urge and have no plan of action for a replacement.

So I want you all to make sure you have something to replace your binge eating that will turn into your new habit.

In order to do that, first you have to know why you have binge eating as your habit to begin with.

At some point in your life, you found it to be beneficial or useful in some way.

Eating became your way of coping and became a solution.

At some point, you got into the habit of thinking that food was more than fuel for our bodies that's also sometimes just for pleasure.

You began seeing eating as a way to destress, as something fun to do, as pleasurable, as a way to numb, calm down, soothe yourself, or relax, as a way to escape or feel free, or to feel better.

Then, once you got into the habit of eating for those reasons, eating more and more became your way of getting more and more of what you were initially wanting.

When I look back, I can totally see how that slowly happened to me.

When I was a teenager, food was entertainment and food was my friend. Then after overly restricting myself in college, my desire for it became stronger.

Then I didn't just want to overeat on food, I wanted to binge on it.

I wanted a lot of it.

I got into the habit of not just eating a little extra for pleasure but, into the habit of eating for all the reasons.

And the habit stayed because I didn't know how else to get what I was wanting and how to get out of what I wasn't wanting.

I didn't want to feel lonely and yeah I could have called a friend but, eating was more appealing and easier.

I didn't want to feel nervous and I didn't know how to calm my nerves except to eat something.

I felt an urge to binge and I didn't know what to do except eat to make it go away.

In order to get what you're wanting, you haven't found another way to get it besides eating. You haven't found a replacement for eating.

You don't know how else to handle what you're wanting to handle, like your feelings, or, you're choosing eating because it's the habit already, it's easy, and it's the first thing you think of.

So get clear on what it is that you're trying to handle with binge eating, or really just eating in general especially those of you who experience snowball bingeing where you start off innocently with just one and one becomes just one more and just one more until you're bingeing.

What it really comes down to is that you're trying to handle a feeling or several feelings.

Even if you think you're trying to handle a situation that you're dealing with, it's still your feelings while you're in the situation that you're trying to handle.

So say you're in a situation where someone is mad at you. You're not eating to make them not mad or to erase whatever they're mad over, you're eating to not feel upset or whatever you're feeling when they're mad at you.

If you're in a situation where you have to do something you don't want to do, you're not eating to stop you from doing it, you're still going to eventually do it, but, you're eating to stop yourself from feeling how you're feeling in the midst of the anticipation of doing it or you're eating because you think it will make you feel motivated.

You're feeling an urge to make a feeling go away. It basically goes, something happens, or maybe you just see a food, you have a thought about it, that thought causes you to feel something, you then want to make that feeling go away or change it, you feel an urge to eat as the solution to make it go away, and you are driven to eat.

So what feelings are you trying to handle and make go away or change when you're eating and eventually binge eating? Desire? Loneliness? Boredom? Stress? Anxiety?

Figure that out first because that's why you're bingeing.

Figure out what precedes your eating and actually, what precedes your urge.

Then you'll be able to see what you're urging for.

Yes you're urging for food but, why?

What are you expecting the food to do for you?

Whatever it is, it's time to find another way to get what you're wanting.

Which brings us to what you're going to replace binge eating with.

What are you going to *start* doing when you stop binge eating?

Now, there's two things I'm going to recommend.

The first one you've heard me talk about before and I'm going to say it again and forever and ever.

You're going to feel through the feelings.

Instead of rushing away from your anger, your nervousness, or your urge, you're going to allow yourself to feel it.

You can breathe through it. You can focus on how it feels in your body. You can think to yourself that you're going to be okay and that this is temporary.

Feeling through your feelings and processing through them isn't going to be as quick or easy of a fix as eating. But it's one that will leave you feeling better rather than worse.

If you want to handle your stress, eating is probably going to create more of it for you, after the initial calm you experience.

But if you handle your stress by breathing through it and allowing the feeling to move through you until it moves out, you'll be left feeling relaxed. That's how it works and if you've ever done this at all, if you've ever not eaten even one time to make a feeling go away, you've seen yourself eventually get to where you want to be.

You will get there, it's just going to take a little more time than if you ate. And you'll see a better outcome.

So the first thing you're going to replace your eating with is feeling. Instead of eating, you'll feel.

Then there's my second recommendation and it's about your actions.

When you're feeling the feeling, you absolutely can just sit there and breathe with it and allow your feeling to move through you. But, you can also actually do something.

You can do something that will help you to fulfill what you're wanting.

Now, I do want to preface this by saying that doing the action without working through your feeling isn't reliable.

Too often people just want to change what they're doing and change their circumstances to change how they're feeling. But it doesn't always work. It can sometimes but, not always because it's not your circumstances, or the people around you, or the food around you that is making you feel how you're feeling. Your thoughts about them are. So you can change your environment or what you're doing but if you don't change your thoughts too, then you're going to be left feeling the same way.

That being said, certain actions can assist you in getting what you want and it's just a part of the solution.

Like if you're bored, yes you can just sit there and feel through your boredom and work on your thoughts about being bored and all that but, it would probably help a lot if you got up and did something you're interested in.

Or if you're stressed, it may really help for you to move your body either by running, walking, dancing, working out, something.

So when you're feeling a feeling you don't want to be feeling, how do you want to feel and what would be something you could do that would assist you in creating that feeling for yourself?

And I can't stress enough that this is assisting in creating it, not just creating it because our actions don't create emotions, our thoughts do.

Now, when you're considering what you could do, I think it's also important to consider the amount of effort you'll need to put in and your desire to do it.

It should be similar to the effort you'd be putting into eating, so not a ton, and it should be something you want to do that you think you'll find pleasure in.

So if you're feeling lonely and you want to feel connected, maybe calling someone doesn't sound like something you'd really want to do or it may seem like too much effort. I used to have so many thoughts about how talking on the phone was very effortful so if that's you, I see you. So two options could be, maybe a text would be better or, maybe just journaling and connecting with yourself would be better.

Or let's say you're feeling nervous and you're feeling the urge to eat. Let's not go clean the bathroom to try and help you calm down. That's not even close to being on the same level of effort or desire as binge eating. But maybe going for a walk would be. Or watching a movie or tv show you've seen before that you love.

I'm just throwing some examples out there but, you can find easy, pleasurable things that you would want to do instead of eating.

You can intentionally spend your time doing something that probably isn't going to numb away or relieve how you're feeling immediately but, it will have a better outcome.

It may not be as highly pleasurable as eating but again, it will have a better outcome.

And if you notice the feeling is still there for awhile, you're going to take a pause, and feel it like I told you before. You're not going to get mad that it didn't go away even though you chose to do something else, you're going to handle the feeling.

So, first you're going to figure out what want your binge eating is supposedly fulfilling.

Then you're going to look at what you're expecting to get from eating. What's the desired outcome?

Then, the next time you feel the feeling you're wanting to get away from, you're going to allow yourself to feel it.

And as you're feeling it, do something that you want to do that takes little effort. Something that you think would assist you in fulfilling the want you're having.

Now, last thing I want to say, don't expect this new habit of feeling and doing to stick right away. It's going to take some time for you to get in the habit and break the habit of bingeing and this is normal. It's how habit creation goes.

But stick with it, be as consistent as you can, and don't give up.

You will get to the place where your binge eating has been replaced with other habits, including feeling.

That's where I'm at now. I'm in the habit of feeling so my brain has forgotten about the habit of bingeing. It doesn't even offer that as a quick easy solution. Does it offer eating something sometimes? Yes it does. But it's easier for me to choose feeling now.

Just like if you're someone who works out, you may be in the habit of working out but, that doesn't mean that sometimes your brain wants you to take an unplanned day off simply because you don't feel like it. Because you're in the habit, it's easier to do the working out but, that also doesn't mean you're perfect at it and that's okay too.

Perfection isn't the goal here. It never is with your eating.

Just do your best to be consistent with choosing feeling and other assisting activities to help you replace binge eating.

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