THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #178: How to Stop Being Afraid of Your Urges

Hi! Today I'm talking about a very important topic.

It's about being afraid of your urges.

This is important because having a fear of urges is one of the top reasons why people don't allow themselves to feel urges and why they run to food as soon as they feel one.

When you feel fear, you will most likely react with either a fight, flight, or freeze response.

The one I see happen most commonly with people who are fearing urges is the flight response.

They feel the urge, then they feel fear, and they're out. "How do I make this stop? Where's the food??"

They may think that the urge is scary but, it's not.

The urge is just discomfort happening in your body.

It's sensations happening in your body.

There's also thoughts happening in your mind.

These things are not scary unless, you think they are.

That's where the fear comes from. Fear happens when you're thinking scary thoughts about your urge.

You're thinking scary thoughts about what the urge means.

You're thinking scary thoughts about what's going to happen.

You're thinking scary thoughts about what you're feeling.

And this is all in your head. Most likely, none of it is even true. You're just exaggerating, over-dramatizing, and imagining the worst case scenario.

And that's not the way to be thinking about an urge if you want to be willing to feel the urge instead of eating.

You are not going to be willing to feel an urge without eating to make it go away if you're afraid of the urge.

Think about anything else that you're afraid of. If you can find a way to not experience it and get around it, you're probably going to.

With your urges, eating is going to be an easy way to not experience it but unfortunately, it's not without consequences.

So when it comes down to the options of feeling an urge until it passes or eating to make it go away, the better option if you want your future self to feel good and don't want to experience the effects of eating way too much food, is to feel through the urge.

But you won't do that if you're afraid of it.

And what's also important to see is that fearful eating is not going to be calm, slow, mindful eating.

It's going to be fast so you can make the urge go away fast. It's going to be more challenging to slow yourself down when you're feeling fear while eating making it more challenging for you to pause, to actually think about what you're doing and what will happen if you keep doing it, and of course it will be more challenging to actually stop yourself.

Being afraid to feel an urge is in no way helpful for you.

So let's look at why you might be feeling fearful about urges.

First, there's what you're thinking about what is going to happen.

The number one fear I hear is that the urge is going to last forever. It's never going to go away unless you eat food.

That is a scary thought to have – that this discomfort and your thoughts about food and what you're feeling isn't going to stop. No one wants that to happen forever and it's scary to think about it happening.

So once you think that fearful thought, and you're feeling the fear, your flight response kicks in. You can get out of this if you eat food.

So you do.

And now it's gone. It won't last forever anymore.

But now what are you left with? A different kind of discomfort that you have no choice but to deal with. And it's going to last for, I don't know, hours maybe? Depending on how much you ate when you were fearfully and panicked eating.

And honestly, it was all for nothing because, that urge you were feeling, wasn't going to last forever. It was going to pass eventually. But you didn't give it a chance to because you had such a strong belief that it wouldn't.

But tell me this, how do you know that? How do you know that your urge will last forever?

You don't. You can't know that.

You're just assuming it will.

But no feelings do. There is not one feeling that you have ever felt that has existed in your body nonstop.

You feel a plethora of feelings every day and that urge to binge may be one of them.

And all those feelings will subside at some point. All of them. Sure you may feel them again at some point but, it's not constant and always there.

But if your urge is lasting a long time it's most likely for one of two reasons.

Either you're fighting and arguing with it, which is going to cause the urge to stick around and fight back as long as you're fighting it, or you're entertaining the idea of giving in to it and bingeing and therefore keeping the doors open for a binge so the urge keeps urging you since it sees it as an option.

I talk more about this in episode #154 – Why Urges Last So Long if you want to give that one a listen, or re-listen.

So you may think your urge will never go away but that's not true.

So what's going to help you to decrease your fear is telling yourself that this will pass. Having an uncomfortable urge that will pass is way less scary to feel than an urge that will never end.

Another scary thought you may think when you're feeling an urge is, "I'm going to binge." If you really don't want the results of a binge and think that feeling and urge means you're going to binge then you're going to feel afraid when you feel the urge.

But feeling an urge doesn't mean you're going to binge.

Feeling an urge means that you're feeling driven to binge. You still have the choice of whether you follow that drive or not.

You don't have to do everything you feel driven to do.

That includes bingeing when you're feeling an urge.

Because you can feel an urge and choose to feel it instead of choosing to eat. That's always an option for you.

So no, feeling an urge doesn't mean you're going to binge but when you think that you will, you're going to feel fearful, and probably respond to that fear by eating. You make what you're afraid of happening, happen.

And then there's your thoughts about the urge and about what you're feeling.

You think thoughts like,

I'm going to explode.

I feel like I'm going to die.

I can't handle this.

This is too much.

It's like I'm drowning.

Something to that effect where you're exaggerating what you're feeling, you're telling yourself things that aren't true, and you're making it into something bigger than it actually is.

You are feeling a sensation in your body. You are thinking thoughts.

You're not going to die from them, you're not going to explode, and you can handle this.

But you won't handle it well if you're freaking out about it.

Freaking out is completely optional.

You can be calm in the midst of this discomfort.

You can be okay with not feeling okay.

Yes it's uncomfortable but that's all it is.

It doesn't mean anything about you, it doesn't mean you're going to binge, and it doesn't mean anything more than the fact that you are feeling an uncomfortable feeling because you are thinking thoughts about eating a lot of food.

You're going to be okay and you'll be more okay if you feel this than if you binge and end up feeling how you'll feel after doing that.

Being afraid to feel an urge is happening because of what you're thinking about feeling an urge.

It's happening because of the thoughts you're thinking about it, about you, and about what you think is going to happen. And it's probably all lies.

So if you're going to choose to feel your urge all the way through until is passes, and it will pass, then you need to stop lying to yourself about the urge.

Stop assuming the worst.

So many of you don't even know what will happen or how long it will last because you haven't given yourself the chance to find out because you run from it by eating food too quickly.

Give yourself a chance to find out.

Give yourself the chance to find out the truth about your urges.

Go in with curiosity. Explore it. See what happens when you don't tell yourself the worst case scenario and imagine instead that you're going to be fine and you'll get through it.

"I'll get through it" is going to be so much more useful than, "I can't handle it."

And you can handle it. You're going to learn to handle it.

You have the ability to feel instead of eat but you have to remove this fear obstacle first if you're going to even give it a try.

So for you, your homework is to uncover your own personal fears about feeling urges. What are you afraid will happen? Why do you not want to feel it until it passes?

Know what your fears are so you can start finding the truth about them.

Urges really aren't as scary as you may think they are.

And once you allow yourself to feel them several times, it gets so much easier and you'll look back and wonder what the big deal was before.

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