

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #179: Food Scarcity Mindset

Hi! Let's jump right in and talk about food scarcity mindset.

What I mean by this is that you're making food scarce in your mind when it's not actually scarce in your own life.

There are millions of people in this world that have true food scarcity and food insecurity and struggle with having enough food.

Most of you listening, do not fall into that category yet you still experience so much scarcity around food and it's contributing to your overeating and bingeing.

Isn't that so interesting when you really think about it? Scarcity in your mind leads you to eating an overabundance.

And so often that scarcity is totally false, the food is not scarce at all, and something you're totally making up in your mind.

But sometimes, there is food that is actually scarce but, you're making not eating it into a way bigger deal than it actually is.

What I mean by that second one is like if there's a seasonal food that you can only get at a certain time of the year or a food that someone you know makes for one particular holiday. And if you don't eat it when it's available to you, it becomes this huge thing to you.

So, in instances like that, that food won't be available to you all the time. It is scarce. You may only get one chance to eat Aunt Mary's specialty because she only makes it for Christmas Eve. Or you can only buy girl Scout Cookies or pumpkin versions of things for a couple months of the year.

If you don't eat these when they're available, you're going to be fine. You'll live.

But like I said, in your mind, you might be making it into a way bigger deal than it is.

Like it's the end of the world if you don't eat Aunt Mary's specialty this year.

But that's what so many of you make it into, whether it truly is a scarce food or if it's something that's readily available to you all year long.

You make not eating that food into such a big deal.

Then when you do, you might start to obsess about it. You might be so focused on it to make sure you get some.

You obsess about the deadline for the weeks-long options.

You obsess about making sure you get a portion of the specialty.

You obsess about not eating foods that you want to eat, and can eat anytime honestly, but you're making them scarce for yourself by saying you can't eat them anymore.

And it's all coming from what you're thinking about that food and the amount that's available.

Here's some thoughts you might think:

I might never get to have it again.

I'm never having it again.

I can't have it again.

There's not going to be enough.

I might miss out.

I might not get any.

And as I was coming up with that list, I was also reminded about how you all, just as I used to do, make those declarations about foods you binge on.

You personally make them seem unavailable and scarce for yourself because you think that having them in your life will cause you to binge.

When actually the opposite is true most of the time.

Making them unavailable to yourself might make you want them more which may lead you into having the "one last time" mentality where you're giving yourself permission to have them this one time and probably going all in and eat a lot when you do.

But when you give yourself permission all of the time, there is no “one last time.”

There is no scarcity.

There is no deprivation or restricted feelings because you’re allowing yourself to have them at any time.

Now, does that mean you will eat them all of the time if you can?

Not necessarily. I mean, you can if you want to but I bet most of you really don’t want to do that. So you’re going to choose not to.

The option is there but that doesn’t mean you’re going to choose it.

I give myself permission to have anything I want at anytime, I can eat candy, pastries, savory snacks all I want. I allow that for myself. But I choose to eat them infrequently because I won’t feel my best if I eat them all the time.

So, creating scarcity around the foods you like and telling yourself you can’t have them isn’t necessarily going to stop you from eating them.

It might cause you to want them more.

Like if you and I were having lunch and I said to you, “don’t look behind you” you’re probably really going to want to look behind you. I actually made it more appealing for you to look behind you that if I told you that you can look behind yourself at anytime you want to.

That’s a silly example but I like it so I’m going with it.

So telling yourself that you’re never again going to have something you want may make you want it more.

Making it scarce in your mind, may make you want it more.

So you’re not doing yourself any favors by telling yourself you can’t eat that food anymore.

And with that, you’re also reinforcing the idea that the food is the problem.

It’s not the problem. Your strong desire for it is. If you didn’t desire it so strongly, you wouldn’t feel such a strong urge for it and it would be easy to say no to eating it.

You can keep the food around and easily say no to eating it if you aren’t creating so much desire for it, by thinking it’s so important to you and your life.

And that’s also why you’re so consumed with the scarcity of the foods that are actually scarce.

You make it really important that you get the specialty, the seasonal cookies and treats.

Because if you don’t eat them when they’re available, then you’re going to miss out.

Miss out on what??

Pleasure. That's what you think you'll miss out on.

As if this is going to be your only source of pleasure for the day, for the month, for the year, for your life!

You may also think you'll miss out on the experience or if you've never had it before you'll miss out on knowing what it tastes like.

But so what? Why is it such a big deal?

It's just food.

Seriously, it really is.

Like I said before, you'll be fine without it.

The worst that may happen is that you continue to think about it but, that will only happen if you continue making it into a terrible occurrence that you didn't eat it, and regret it, and think that you missed out on something important.

You won't continue to think about it if you accept the fact that you didn't eat it and choose to be okay with it.

Because being upset about not eating a certain food is going to cause you to experience the opposite of the pleasure you were wanting.

You're for sure then going to miss out on pleasure and miss out on experiencing the joys of your life if you're so caught up in that food you didn't eat.

Instead, go find pleasure elsewhere. You can find it with a different food you enjoy if you want to but, I suggest you find something enjoyable that's not food. There's no need to get so caught up in food as your only source of pleasure and when you are, that's when you're going to be hyper-focused on food.

So let's say that Aunt Mary brings her famous whatever specialty and you don't get any. It was gone by the time you made your way over to eat some.

You're going to be fine.

And most likely, she'll bring it again next year and you can have it then.

Or hey, maybe you can ask if she can make it another time.

And if she never makes it again, you're going to be fine.

There are other foods in the world that you can enjoy and other activities besides eating food that you can enjoy.

You can also reminisce about how good it was when you had it.

Did you know it's possible to enjoy the thoughts of food, without eating the food, without feeling deprived?

I can look back at the desserts my brother and sister in law brought to Thanksgiving and remember how dang delicious they were. And I can appreciate them. And I can not start thinking about how I want them or need them now. Because honestly, I don't. I have other foods to eat.

And the real truth here is that I could actually go buy both of them, right now, if I wanted to.

They are not actually scarce at all. They're available to me right now and will probably be for awhile.

But I'm choosing not to buy and eat them for reasons of my own that I like.

You can appreciate the foods when you did have them.

You can eat other foods.

You can find other sources of enjoyment.

You can eat whatever you want when you want.

Making foods scarce in your mind is making you feel restricted, deprived, and panicked. It's making you hyper focused on what you're imagining is scarce.

It's leading you to overeating because you think you have to get as much as you can while you can.

But really, stuffing yourself with as much as you can, isn't going to create much more pleasure for you than would eating just a moderate amount until you're comfortably full.

Overeating or bingeing on it isn't going to make your experience of it any better than if you ate just a moderate amount.

The food is available now, so have it now and make the memory of having it a good one, where you enjoyed it and walked away feeling good.

Not a memory where you ate it so fast that you don't remember what it tasted like or ate so much of it that you felt uncomfortable full and really didn't enjoy the final bites because you were so uncomfortable. It's hard to experience pleasure when you feel so full.

Now, I do want to touch on something that many of my group members in my Stop Binge Eating Program have brought up as we do work on this.

It's about food being scarce for them as children where they didn't always have a lot of access to food or siblings would eat their food whether it be at meals or eat their joy foods.

That was then. This is no longer the case.

So it's time to let that go and tell yourself the truth about how it is now.

No one is taking your food away.

You have enough money to fuel your body properly.

You have food available near to you that you can buy.

For all of you who are creating food scarcity in your mind that doesn't reflect true, food insecurity in your life, you're creating panic and stressing yourself.

Stop it.

You're not going to be miserable for an entire year if you don't get to eat Girl Scout cookies this year. Unless you create that misery by moping about them all year. Don't do that.

You're not going to starve if there isn't enough food at the dinner you went to. You can pick up something on the way home or eat when you get home.

You're not going to miss out on pleasure if you don't get a serving of the specialty. You'll get pleasure elsewhere.

Food is most likely abundant for you.

Treat it that way.

You will eat that food again, someday.

But even if you can't because it's going away forever, you're going to be fine and you'll find pleasure elsewhere.

Will your life be less enjoyable if that food isn't in it anymore? If your answer is yes, then we need to do some work on finding more enjoyment in your life.

Let's stop creating false scarcity and create more abundance.

Create abundance of pleasure in your life.

Create abundance even with the foods that are here for a limited time.

It's as simple as shifting it from "I only get it once a year" to "I get to have it once a year."

You can create excitement instead of sadness. You can make once a year be abundant rather than scarce. It could be every 10 years so once a year is great!

There's so much that you only get once a year and you're totally fine with that.

I rarely, but honestly, I probably never hear people complain about Christmas or Thanksgiving or their birthday only being once a year. Instead, most of us appreciate that we have it at all.

Or my friends that I love that I rarely get to see because they live so far away. I appreciate it so much when I do see them and don't spend tons of time moping about not seeing them very often.

Why not be like that with the food?

It's possible for you.

Make the decision to be more abundant in your thinking about the food in your life.

Stop creating so much false scarcity in your mind.

And I'll talk to you next time. Bye bye!