

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #186: Binge Eating Success Story – Carrie

Hello!

I am so excited to have one of my group members, Carrie on the podcast today!

One of the reasons I'm so excited to have her here is because I know that her story is going to be extremely relatable to SO many of you.

Where she began is exactly where so many of you began, and is where some of you still are, and she's here to show you what is possible for you.

All of you are going to find something in her story that you also see in your own story, maybe even all of it.

And that's why I asked her to be here. As I watched her change and grow and saw her transformation first hand, I was like, people needed to know about this! People need to hear this!

And I was so excited when she agreed to come on!

I share these success stories on the podcast because I want to help you believe not only that it's possible to stop binge eating, change your relationship with food, and make amazing changes in yourself but, that YOU can do it. And I think Carrie will do just that.

So listen to her, be inspired by her, and believe that you can do what she did.

Now without further ado, here we go!

Kirstin:

Carrie, how are you?

Carrie:

I'm great. I'm so excited to be on with you.

Kirstin:

I am so excited to have you here. I think it's going to be really awesome for people to hear your story. I love your story so much that I felt like people needed to hear it. So, why don't you just start by telling us about your background, about yourself, with eating and food, your weight? Just all of the things.

Carrie:

Sure. So, I'm Carrie. I live in the Midwest. I'm 46 now, and I have been struggling with food most of my adult life, probably since my preteen years. And so, what that looks like for me is a lot of diets, a lot of exercise, sometimes both at the same time. I've been everything from a total couch potato all the way to an Ironman triathlete.

Kirstin:

Oh, wow. I didn't know you did Ironmans.

Carrie:

I did. Yep. I did a full Ironman in 2014.

Kirstin:

Oh wow.

Carrie:

And finished. I had seven minutes to spare, but I finished.

Kirstin:

That's impressive.

Carrie:

Thank you. Thanks. Yeah, really, really, really proud of that achievement. So, everywhere in between, starting out as a couch potato, all the way to that, but definitely a cycle. I've never really been able to maintain my weight. Never been able to maintain a consistent diet program. And as a result of that, my weight has gone up and down my entire life.

Kirstin:

How long do you think you were bingeing for?

Carrie:

I can remember my first binges back when I was 11, 12 years old. So, that's been 35 years of my life. I've been dealing with it for 35 years.

Kirstin:

Wow. And then the recent years, about how often would you say that you were bingeing? Just want to get clear picture of what that was like for you.

Carrie:

At its worst every single day, every single day. And sometimes I would get my "act together" and I would have days or weeks or sometimes even months or years. Never years.

Kirstin:

Scratch that.

Carrie:

Stretches where I wasn't bingeing, but I always returned to that. And it was every day for weeks and months and years at a time.

Kirstin:

And why do you think it continued on for all those years?

Carrie:

I think it started out in my childhood. I started bingeing when I was 11, 12 years old and I was just a really awkward kid. I didn't relate well to other children my age and I wanted to, I didn't. I was a gymnast and I'm five eight, so I'm tall. And I was tall for my age at that time and just felt awkward as a gymnast. I didn't look like the other girls did. And so that started a dissatisfaction with my body from a very young age and food was a way for me to feel better. And it was also a way for me to relate to my peers because who doesn't love coming over for a pizza party when you're a teenager. So, I started using food already then as a comfort mechanism, started already at a very young age with a cycle of dieting and restriction as a way to control my body and my surroundings. And I think as I got older, it kind of turned into a habit and that habit turned into a coping mechanism. And that's just how I've dealt with things all this time.

Kirstin:

We use it as a way to help ourselves. Right. You see some kind of benefit in it. Like you were saying, it was a coping mechanism for you. It was a way to fit in. It was a way to handle things in your life. So, it was doing something seemingly good for you, but what was the negative effect of it?

Carrie:

It has affected me negatively my entire life. I struggled to reach out to people. And so I turned to food for comfort, but in the end that just isolated me more because I was reluctant to reach out for people when I was bingeing. That's something that I always did in private and secret. It felt like a secret that I couldn't really share with other people. I wanted to do it alone. So, that further isolated me from other people and just the negative body image, I really struggled with a negative body image that came along with that. So, it kept me from doing things in my life that I wanted to do because I was ashamed of my body, the way that it looked. Always struggling to be thinner, to be different, to be leaner, to be something else, no sense of self acceptance whatsoever.

Kirstin:

What kinds of things was it holding you back from doing? What did you want to be doing that you weren't doing because of your body because of your eating? All the things.

Carrie:

Absolutely would cancel plans with friends because I'd rather have a binge by myself. And so, I would cancel plans with friends. I would want to sign up for things, different events, different races, even when I was more active with running and triathlon and stuff and I wouldn't do it because I was carrying more weight than I wanted to. And I was afraid how I would look or that people would laugh at me or just didn't feel like I was the appropriate weigh to be doing the things that I wanted to sign up for. So, I just didn't do them.

Kirstin:

And how did you feel?

Carrie:

Very much stuck, very unhappy, wanted to be doing things, wanted to be engaged in my life. And I felt like food was absolutely ruling my life, food, weight. I thought about it all the time and just a whole lot of mental chatter surrounding food, just very trapped in my life.

Kirstin:

So, what did you try to do to get untrapped? What were some of the things that you were trying to do to stop binge eating, to get your weight down? What were you trying?

Carrie:

For me, it was a cycle of diet restriction. Starting at the age of 12 or 13, already going on diets, already going to the gym or reaching, I was too young at the time. No gym would take me, but as soon as I was able to get into a gym, I was going to the gym. It was always a cycle for me of restriction. I'd be on a diet for a while and I'd do really great, but the minute life happened, I couldn't stick with it and I'd go off the diet. My weight would cycle up. I would feel bad about myself. I'd start exercising or restricting the weight would go down. I always was looking for the thing that could fix it. I just need to figure myself out. I just need to get back on track. I just need to get back on the wagon, but didn't really have the desire to either.

Kirstin:

Why do you think that was? Why do you think you weren't desiring it?

Carrie:

Because it's hard. When I was in those phases, I would spend an entire weekend going through cookbooks to find just the right recipes that had just the appropriate amount of nutrition. And then, I'd put together a meal plan and then I'd go shopping and then I'd spend one whole day cooking to have the food ready for me that was not particularly enticing. So, that wasn't fun. That was work to sit down and do all that stuff. I'd have Excel spreadsheets with nutritional information and I'd keep track of it every single day. And I'd track every single metric of my exercise. How many calories did I burn? How far did I go? Was my heart rate high enough? Was my cadence enough and the data. It all just became so cumbersome that I found myself frozen with indecision fatigue. Like I couldn't make a decision about any of it. I would look at cookbooks and I couldn't pick a single recipe because, it got so overwhelming. I didn't know what was right anymore.

Kirstin:

Yeah. Especially after trying it so many times and not seeing the results that you want, it gets so frustrating. And I think that's what a lot of people do as well is you get so focused on trying to eat the perfect way, trying to exercise the perfect way, because this is an eating problem. We start to look at how can I manipulate the food to solve this eating problem, right?

Carrie:

Absolutely. So, of all of the diets I had done, I had so many food rules, pages of food rules that I would and would not allow myself. And I never imagined that there was another option besides tracking diet and exercise.

Kirstin:

Yeah. So, when that wasn't working, did you believe that you would be able to change this, to solve this problem? Stop binge eating?

Carrie:

No, absolutely not. I figured that was just my burden in life. It was going to be with me forever.

Kirstin:

So, when did that change? When did that belief change?

Carrie:

Well, I signed up for your program in April 2021. So, that's coming up on a year now. And I remember at the time thinking and feeling so hopeless and so helpless and so desperate for help because nothing had worked up until this point. I've spent most of my life trying different things and nothing worked in the long run. And that was the height of the pandemic. So, spending a lot of time alone in an isolation because of COVID and that's the perfect environment for an eating disorder.

And so, it just absolutely exploded during the pandemic. And I can't remember exactly what it was, how I came to you because I had listened to some of your podcasts, but wasn't a religious listener and somehow got a hold of an email that you were going to be doing a free week of classes. And so, I signed up for that free week of classes and it spoke to me and I had a little dialogue with myself. Should I, should I not? I've tried all these things. Is this going to be the thing, but I needed help so badly. And I knew I couldn't do it by myself and I decided to pull the trigger.

Kirstin:

So, why did you think this was going to be the different?

Carrie:

Well, I didn't know just exactly how different it was going to be at first. And you'll recall before the program, before I signed up for your program after the free week, I reached out to you and was so skeptical because I had tried so many things. I paid for programs before that turned out to just be another diet and explained a little bit and said, "I don't know if this is for me. Can you tell me what's different about it?" And you did. And that's really why I decided to proceed is because it wasn't another diet. It wasn't another nutrition plan. It wasn't another exercise plan. I've gotten dozens of those over the years and that didn't help in the long term.

Kirstin:

So, what was it like when you first started? Walk me through the beginning of the process for you? The first few months of this.

Carrie:

Initially I was still really super skeptical. And my two biggest hangups I think about the program in the beginning, was the fact that it wasn't a diet plan. It wasn't a nutrition plan. It wasn't an exercise plan. And I wanted that control. I wanted that control and not having it, I was almost angry at first. Like no way is this going to work, that you can be a moderator. I was always an all or nothing person. It was either all on the program doing it perfectly, whatever program I happened to be doing or way off the wagon. There's no way that I can moderate and have a slice of pizza, a cookie like Kirstin is telling me I can do like, there's no way that's going to happen. That was number one.

And then number two, was getting over the idea of other people. What other people think of me? What other people are going to say? What other people are going to treat me? And recognizing that my opinion is the only one that matters. So, if I want to go swim on the beach in a swimming suit, I need to not worry about what other people are going to think about that. Or if they're going to like it or not like it. And I need to put on the swimming suit and I need to go do it. So, just really doing the things that I wanted to do, regardless of what other people thought about it. And that was a huge hangup for me. I really had trouble processing those two pieces of it.

Kirstin:

So, what do you think was the moment of change? The turning point, that's what I'm looking for. What do you think was the turning point for you? Like going from the skepticism and knowing what you need to let go of and then actually being all in and making those changes for yourself. When do you think that happened?

Carrie:

Well, it happened for me, the switch didn't happen right away. I was really skeptical even through the first month, month and a half off of the program. And finally I thought, what I'm looking for or what I'm wanting out of this is the same thing that I've done for 35 years and what I've done for 35 years, hasn't worked. So, why don't I be open to what Kirstin is saying and actually follow the program like it was meant to be followed because what do I have to lose? And it was letting go of that control of doing the things that I'd always done and being willing to try something else. Even though at first, I didn't think it would work and just seeing what would happen.

Kirstin:

Yeah. So, even that was the most challenging for you just actually like getting on board with what we were doing.

Carrie:

Absolutely. Yep.

Kirstin:

Yeah. So, then once you started getting into the program and doing the things, what do you think was the most challenging part after that?

Carrie:

So, the most challenging part for me was recognizing that there's going to be discomfort in your life. There's going to be urges. You're going to have urges, you're going to have feelings. You're going to have unpleasant sensations. And I had spent my whole life trying to escape those sensations. That's why I turned to food is because I didn't want to deal with it. And one time we had a coaching session and this was the linchpin for all of it for me. And you said, "You've got to be willing to feel that discomfort, whether it is the discomfort of an urge or the discomfort of grief or whatever that is, you have to be willing to feel it and get to the other side of that." And that for me clicked, and that was the turning point for me.

Kirstin:

Now what do you do with your discomfort?

Carrie:

I sit in it, I feel it. So, for the first time in my life, I'm in my forties now. And I realized that I never had an emotional vocabulary. I didn't know what it was to identify the emotions. And the big ones for me are grief, loneliness, fear, confrontation. The idea of disappointing someone or having to talk about a difficult subject. Those were big ones for me and not recognizing those as feelings that you feel and you can get through them and now when those things happen, I recognize it as, "Okay. I'm worried about this particular situation or I've got a little bit of fear going on about this situation. That's what this sensation is. And I'm just going to get through it and figure out why I am feeling this way and handle it in a productive way."

Kirstin:

Instead of eating to make it go away.

Carrie:

Instead of eating to make it go away. And I had always been unwilling to do that. I figured it meant that I wouldn't have urges anymore and that's not realistic.

Kirstin:

Yeah. Because we're all going to feel urges. You may not feel urges to binge, but you're going to feel urges for food. You're going to feel urges for lots of things. And we need to be able to process through them and work through them and let them pass because they will. So, how do you think, because some people get this idea in their mind that feeling their feelings and experiencing discomfort is going to be

horrible. It's going to be terrible. And that eating food is the better option. So, what do you think is the better option and why?

Carrie:

Well, for me, it's the longest time. I was on board with that. I did not want to feel those feelings and push them away and just really struggled to sit through that. And as a result of going through this program, it has helped me in so many other areas of my life, not just sitting through the urges for food and wanting to binge, but I've experienced a lot of grief. The last, maybe eight or nine years of my life, I've lost a lot of people that are close to me and had some unresolved grief issues that I was unable to resolve. And as a result of going through this program and being willing to feel that grief, it's kind of helped me process through that grief as well. It's helped me recognize that I have no boundaries and I'm a people pleaser instead of having a confrontation with a coworker or a disagreement, instead of addressing it in a productive way, I'd go eat some candy.

Kirstin:

What's that going to do?

Carrie:

What's that going to do? And so, learning to address those things in a productive way, rather than turning to food, developing acceptance in my life that life isn't always going to be rainbows. Life is going to happen. And it doesn't mean it has to be a horrible experience. Just having some acceptance that bad things happen and you can get through them, but you have to be willing to sit with it.

Kirstin:

Yeah. So now that you are willing to sit with it, what does your eating look like now?

Carrie:

So, I no longer go through cookbooks for hours on weekend to try to put together an eating plan.

Kirstin:

Thank goodness.

Carrie:

Yep. Thank goodness. I'm not tracking calories. I'm not tracking carbs. I'm not tracking metrics in way whatsoever. I would not allow my binge foods in the house, before because if I had them in the house, I'd eat them all in one setting until I was sick. And so, now I can have that stuff in my house. I have a pie in my freezer right now that's been there since Thanksgiving and I have no desire to go in there and eat it. I've got cookies and chips and crackers in my pantry. I couldn't have that stuff in my pantry before, because I couldn't leave it alone. And so, just the mental chatter is much reduced. The time and energy that I spend thinking about food is much reduced. And I feel very much like I'm in the driver's seat of my life again, versus letting life happen to me and kind of getting unstuck. I felt so stuck before and I'm getting unstuck.

Kirstin:

So, awesome. That's so awesome. I love it. So, when was the last time you binged?

Carrie:

I can't even remember. It would have been sometime last year, maybe in September or October of last year.

Kirstin:

In a while. It's February.

Carrie:

Yep. I was an every day, every day binger.

Kirstin:

Is it hard for you to not binge now?

Carrie:

No, it's not. Finally now that I've got a little bit of distance from it, I recognize just how much it was affecting my life in so many negative ways. And now I've got a more productive way to cope with my feelings and I don't ever want to go back to being stuck and unhappy in a cage that I built myself with food.

Kirstin:

Oh my God. That's so amazing. So, what about your body? What about how you feel about your body and your relationship with your body? Because before you were saying that that held you back from so many things. So, what's that like now?

Carrie:

So, it's been a big shift. It doesn't come easy. My relationship with my body, it's definitely something that I am still working on, but for most of my life, I hated my body just wanted to change. Would do anything to change it. And now I'm in a place where I'm so proud of what my body can do, especially given the punishment that I've put it through these last few years, very much trying to develop a partnership with my body and developing a mind body connection. My body before was just a tool that I used to get whatever I wanted. And now I'm recognizing that it's connected. My mind is connected to my body. It's all one thing. And just trying to foster that connection to my body.

Kirstin:

So, I want you to tell everybody about the time that you went swimming in a bathing suit. You actually put on a bathing suit in front of people.

Carrie:

Yeah. So, I live not too far from a lake and was reluctant to get out and do things outside, anything outside, because I was really so afraid that people were going to point and laugh or have unkind things to say, or whatever horrible scenario I had dreamed up in my head. And as a result of going through this program, I recognize it doesn't matter what those people have to say. The people that love me and that I want in my life, love me and they don't care that I have cellulite on my legs. So, I put on a swimming suit and I went to the beach and I swam on the lake and started doing that regularly last year and just enjoyed myself and it was fun. It was so much fun.

Kirstin:

And going from the point where you were not willing to do that to the point of when you were willing to do that, did your body change very much at all?

Carrie:

No. It didn't from the point of saying, "Absolutely no, I'm not going to do that" to, "Okay, maybe I'll do that." I maybe lost 10 pounds in that timeframe.

Kirstin:

So, not a huge change.

Carrie:

Not a huge change. The shift was mental. It wasn't a physical change. It was a mental change.

Kirstin:

Yeah. So, you don't need to change your body a ton, or even at all to be more comfortable being in it and showing it to people. Because so much of that just happens in your mind. You just stop hating it, you stop being embarrassed or ashamed of it. You start being accepting of it. Like this is the body I have and I'm not going to let it stop me from doing the things I want to do.

Carrie:

I can't say it anybody better.

Kirstin:

And that's not the only cool thing that you've done. What else have you done?

Carrie:

So, as a result of going through the program, you suggested that food is an enjoyable experience, a pleasurable experience. So, by not binging, it's important to find other sources of joy in your life with different things. And so, I really started the search for things that I might like to do. Things that I thought might be fun. And I signed up for a bunch of classes that I didn't know if I would like, but I just thought that they were interesting. And so, one of the things that I did was took an archery class and I found out I really enjoyed that.

And another thing I signed up is karate. I've got no history with martial arts, never done any martial arts. It was always kind of something that I wanted to do, but I was really afraid to do it and signed up for a karate class. And I've been taking karate now since October. And I love it. I absolutely love it. And it helps foster that mind, body connection that we were talking about. And I don't go as a way to change my body, but rather as a way to appreciate its strength and what it can do and I love it.

Kirstin:

Wow. So, just Expanding your life and again, not letting your body hold you back. Can you share the story of that at first class that you went to?

Carrie:

It was so awful. So, I knew karate... I can't tell you why it appealed to me. It just did. And I found a description for a class at our local, I'm not even going to tell you where I found a class somewhere that sounded super low key. And I wanted low key because I wasn't looking for Cobra Kai, right. I just wanted to go and see if I liked it. And so, I walked into this class and it was full of black belts. Everyone there was already a black belt and here I am walking in the street.

I've never done any karate and the pace of the first five minutes, the first person that saw me said, "We're getting ready to start a class here. You're you're not in the right place." I'm like, "No, really, I am in the right place because I can see from your black belt that you're here to do karate." And there were some other questions after that. It wasn't the experience I was looking for and I clearly remember at the time thinking these are not my people. This is not where I belong, but I deserve to take up space here. I might not be a black belt, but I deserve to be here and I deserve to take up space and I'm not going to let this experience keep me from doing something that I wanted to do.

And so, I looked for a different studio and I found a different Dojo, not far from my house, with the most amazing people. I'm getting emotional because they have been so supportive and so encouraging. And I enjoyed this so much and they don't know what it means to me that I'm there because I'm trying to change my life. I'm trying to find myself again, after 35 years of dealing with an eating disorder and it's been such a fantastic experience and I would have never done this before this program. I would've never done it. And to have such a life changing experience, I would've been missing out on this.

Kirstin:

Ah, I'm getting emotional. This story, I think of past Carrie who probably wouldn't have even signed up for the class to begin with.

Carrie:

No way.

Kirstin:

And what it would have been like for past Carrie in that first class.

Carrie:

Oh, I would've said this is not for me. I would've used it as evidence to prove there's something wrong with me. There's something wrong with my body. I don't belong here. I can't do this. And I would've gotten a pizza on the way home and eating the whole thing. So, very different, very different.

Kirstin:

Yeah. That's what I love about it so much. How you went in there and it wasn't what you were expecting and it wasn't your level. Like clearly you were looking for beginner, they're expert, but you stuck it out and you probably felt uncomfortable, yet you stayed and you did it and you didn't let it deter you from finding something else. So, awesome, gosh, that story. Thank you for sharing it. I just think it's so inspiring and it's so cool to see how you handle it now versus how you would have handled it before the transformation that you've had. So, with that, how do you think your relationship with yourself has changed?

Carrie:

So much, when you're dealing with an eating disorder and binge eating, my world was so small. It was about food all the time. When I'm going to get it, where I'm going to eat it, how much I'm going to get, when's my next meal? Where can I go and do this in private? And then repeat, every day over and over for weeks and months at a time. And this the past year for me has all been about growth and authenticity, dropping the perfectionism and the mask that I wore to hide the person that I was ashamed to be because for me, there was so much shame and secrecy surrounding binge eating. So, trying to become my most authentic version of myself and doing the things that bring me joy and happiness, even if it's hard, even if it's little bit uncomfortable and acceptance of where I am now and gratitude for where I am now.

Kirstin:

I love that. So, how is your life different now?

Carrie:

Oh gosh. Everything is different now. My relationships are different and better. I'm more engaged in my life. I feel like I am in the driver's seat of my life, steering it in a way that I want it to go. That brings me joy and happiness. My relationship with food is so different. I never thought I'd be in this place. Everything's different.

Kirstin:

I love that. I love that. So, if you were talking to someone who has been in your shoes, who has binged like you were, who was doing it as often as you were, as long as you were, had the doubts like you had, what would you say to them?

Carrie:

I would absolutely say if I can do it, so can you. I would say don't give up on yourself. I would say ditch the shame and the guilt if you are experiencing that. I would also say, let go of the things that aren't serving you in your life, whether it's an eating disorder or relationships or things that you're doing, that don't bring you happiness, let go of those things and find the things that bring you joy and growth.

Kirstin:

Yes. Beautifully said. So, is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you want to share?

Carrie:

No, I don't think so. I'm really so grateful to you and for this program, because it's absolutely been life changing and I can't wait to see what this next year brings for me.

Kirstin:

Yes. Me too. I'm so excited to see what happens with you. I already love what I have been seeing so much. It's just going to keep going and keep getting better and Carrie 2.0.

Carrie:

Woo. Bring it on.

Kirstin:

Bring it on. Well, thank you so much for being here and I, again, cannot wait to see what's next. This is just the beginning.

Carrie:

Thank you so much for having me.

Kirstin:

Yeah, you're welcome.

Was I right? Isn't she so inspiring and relatable?

She was just like the rest of us, I even see so much of my story in her story, and she made changes in herself and her life that she never imagined she would. So amazing.

She did it, she got what she came, for, and I truly meant what I said there at the end – this is just the beginning for her. She has set herself up to make the rest of her life even better than it has been. So good!

Now, are you ready to do the same?

You heard her mention “the program” a few times in there and what she was referring to was my Stop Binge Eating Program, which you may or may not have heard me talk about here on the podcast before.

Registration for the next round of the program is opening up in less than a month, on Thursday March 10th of 2022 and if you want help creating a life just like Carrie did, come join me.

You don't have to do this alone and I will be there with you to give you perspective, point out mistakes you're making that you aren't seeing, give you feedback, answer your questions that come up along the way, and help you to not quit on yourself.

Right now, the program includes The Stop Binge Eating Course, Eating Workshops, 3 options for coaching, accountability, and so much more.

I've put together everything you need to stop binge eating all into this program and I truly believe it will help you, just it did for Carrie.

You can get all the info at coachkir.com/group and if you have any questions that aren't answered there, email info@coachkir.com to get them answered.

Alright, I hope you enjoyed hearing Carrie's success story. Now go create your own success story!

Talk to you soon. Bye bye.