

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #195: Reintroducing Binge Foods

Hi! I'm so pumped today. I have a coaching call with my group members today and I just love coaching them so much and helping them make the mental shifts they need to make to stop binge eating and create their ideal eating habits. So that's awesome. And! I just started working with a new group of awesome people who are going to stop binge eating and the changes they're going to make over the next several months are going to be amazing, I can't wait to see it! I'm so excited for them.

Helping people change their relationship with food is one of my favorite things, I love it so much, and just to let you know, if you want my help with this, registration for my next group will open in August of 2022.

And before that group starts, over the next few months, I'll be doing a complete assessment and evaluation of my program. I did this in 2021 too when I revised the course content, created new content, and made some changes to the structure, added some things in, and I think it's important to do this from time to time because even though I've been coaching on binge eating for several years now, I still learn and grow with each group I do and I come up with new ideas and I want to try new things and let go of things that aren't needed and I'm just so excited to see what the next version of the program looks like. I'm just getting started on this revamp and I can't wait to share it with you once it's done!

So keep your eyes and ears peeled for updates!

Alright, now let's talk about reintroducing your binge foods.

This episode is for those of you who don't bring your binge foods into your home, unless you're bingeing on them.

You're afraid to buy them and to have them around at home and maybe even feel worried when you see them at parties and holidays.

There's this underlying fear or concern that you will binge on them if you eat them, especially if you're alone at home with them.

And this fear make sense because there's probably been many times that you have binged on them when you've eaten them and when the've been in your home. Probably more times than you've eaten them without bingeing on them.

So what happens is that you think about all those times you binged on the food and now the story you tell yourself about that food may be, "I can't have that in my house or I'll binge on it," or "Once I start eating that food, I can't stop," or "It's too tempting and I won't stop thinking about it if it's in my home."

I thought that way about several foods.

So I wouldn't buy them during my regular grocery runs. Or I'd buy single servings of them, I did that with ice cream a lot.

But I wouldn't usually buy just one because I couldn't decide which flavor I wanted or I'd buy them to eat throughout the week. I'd buy a few flavors and sometimes I'd eat one at a time and sometimes I'd eat one and then another, and maybe a third, really defeating the purpose of having bought those little single servings.

So I'd go back and forth between not allowing myself to buy the things I'd binge on most often, and testing myself by buying either the regular size or single servings hoping that this time I'd be okay and not binge.

And most of the time when I'd actually buy them, I'd eventually binge on them. Maybe not the first or second day, but, maybe it *would* be right away.

And when I did, I was back to not buying them at all anymore. Off limits.

I really wanted to be able to have them in my house. I liked those foods, I wanted to be able to eat them without bingeing, and I wanted to be like what I considered a "normal person" who could have those foods in their home without eating them all in one day.

I wanted to be able to enjoy them one day, let them sit in the cabinet or the freezer for a few days and then have them again.

And I know a lot of you want that too.

But you've probably been doing what I did.

Not allow them in your home but then buy them if you feel an urge to binge.

Then test yourself by bringing them in but binge on them at some point.

So I get asked a lot by people, especially at the start of my program, if it's better to keep them out of the house or bring them in.

And this is what I tell people.

If at first you want to keep them out of your home to make it easier for you to get some wins under your belt, then do that.

But if your goal is to be able to have them in the house, eventually, you'll need to bring them in and work on having them there.

And here's what I caution you *not* to do.

Bring a whole bunch in at once and not mentally prepare yourself.

First let's talk about the amount.

If you want to make this easier on yourself, ease into it. Take your time.

As with everything I talk about in this podcast, this is a process.

This is a process of learning, building trust, and building skills.

There's no need to rush it.

Start small and don't overwhelm yourself.

Think of this like exposure therapy.

You expose yourself to what you're fearing gradually.

It's like if you're afraid of the ocean, you're not going to jump right into a deep sea dive.

Start by standing near the water. Just do that however many times until you feel more comfortable being there.

Then when you're ready, you get close enough that the water just brushes on your feet. Do that however many times and then move on to stepping a little closer so the water goes a little higher on your feet.

See what I'm saying?

I know so often we want to test ourselves and go all in, I've done it I can't even tell you how many times and I've seen it happen too many times with my group members.

Just recently I had someone in one of my groups who was doing so well. They were making such great progress so they eased up a little here and a little there and along came a binge.

They jumped ahead too soon.

And no matter how many times I tell people to take it slow and not rush ahead, they still sometimes do it.

I guess they just need to learn for themselves and that's okay. Sometimes that's how we learn best, by making our own mistakes.

But again, if you want to make this easier for yourself, do it gradually and cautiously.

And what's going to matter even more than the amount you bring it is what's going on in your mind.

Mental preparation is huge.

I never mentally prepared myself for my tests with food.

I'd just say, "I'm not going to binge on it this time," and that was about it.

Not very useful.

What would be useful is to anticipate specific obstacles that may come up.

They might be thoughts you usually think when that food is around, or feelings that come up when it's around, or urges.

Something I hear come up for people a lot is that they just think about the food all the time. They can't stop thinking about it.

If that's you, get specific. What are the thoughts you keep thinking? What I see happen a lot is that it's not a ton of thoughts but just the same few thoughts over and over and those few thoughts are your obstacles that you're going to strategize for.

Write down each of the thoughts that you anticipate will come up when that food is in your home and for each of those thoughts, write one thought that you want to say back to that thought.

One thought might be, "There's crackers in the pantry and they're so good." You just keep thinking that.

What would you want to say to yourself if that thought comes up?

Maybe something like, "Yes, and I'll have them later." This is a good one because you're not telling yourself you can't have it but showing yourself that you will have a chance to eat them, it's coming, and you're not depriving yourself of them.

You could also say, “Yes but, not right now because...” and insert your reason for why. Is it because you want to be hungry for your next meal? Is it because you’re doing something else at the moment and don’t want to be eating? Is it because you already had some today?

You can take all the thoughts you anticipate will come up, and I bet you already know what a lot of them will be, and prepare yourself with counter thoughts you want to respond with.

You don’t have to just let the thoughts swirl in your mind over and over. You can respond to them in a useful way and even shut them down.

And you can prepare yourself for how you think you’ll feel too.

Think you’ll feel an urge? How do you want to handle it?

Think you’ll feel anxious, worried, scared? If those feelings come up, how are you going to handle them?

Be ready for anything you think might happen within you, thoughts and feelings.

Because when you are managing your thoughts and feelings, then the food isn’t an issue.

I don’t have fears about bringing food into my home anymore and it’s not because I don’t think about the food or feel desire for it when it’s here, it’s because I know how to manage my thoughts about the food and my desire for it.

And I’ve learned how to manage them over time with practice. I decided how I wanted to think about them and I practiced thinking that way.

You can train yourself to think a certain way with practice so start practicing how you want to think about the food, about your thoughts, and about your feelings.

Mentally prepare yourself with how you’re going to handle it when you think about the food and feel desire or an urge.

Before you even bring the food into your home, you’re going to get your thoughts in order.

It’s like if you’re preparing for a conversation you’re going to have with another person. You might anticipate what they might say and what you’ll say if they say it so that you’re ready.

Be ready with yourself.

And with your mental preparation, make sure you’re also working on your thoughts about the food being bad or thinking you’ll binge on it.

The food is not bad. It’s just a food. Don’t make yourself feel bad for eating it by telling yourself the food is bad. It’s a joy food, something to be enjoyed. That’s it. Enjoy it guilt free.

And stop telling yourself you're going to binge on the food. Stop telling that old story, it's just going to make you feel worried, scared, anxious, or panicked and will make it harder for you to successfully not binge on it.

Instead, start writing a new story about you and this food. You're learning to have it in your home. You're going to enjoy whatever amount you've decided to eat and that's it. That's the story you're going to tell now.

You *are* going to have foods you used to binge on, in your home without bingeing on them. Take it a little at a time and mentally prepare yourself before you buy them and keep practicing thinking how you want to be thinking while they're in your home.

The more you practice, the easier it will get and it will be so much easier to have them around.

You got this. You can do this.

Alright, bye bye.