

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #201: Telling People About Your Binge Eating

Hi! If you listened to last week's episode, you heard me share some of my journal entries from 2007 and throughout this entire podcast, you've heard me share tons of stories about my binge eating.

I'm very open about what it was like for me, and I feel comfortable sharing what I did.

But I wasn't always that way.

When I was deep in it, it was a secret. I told 4 of my friends at different times and that was it. And I don't think I went into too much detail, I honestly don't remember exactly what I told them or why I did. But I remember who they are.

I kept it a secret because I was embarrassed. I feared judgement. I was afraid of what people would think about me.

I wanted to be seen as someone who was strong, healthy, and disciplined and I thought that if people knew how I ate when I was alone, they wouldn't see me that way anymore.

They'd think I was weak, unhealthy, and a mess.

I didn't want that so I kept my mouth shut about it.

And then I went to my life coach training and certification and that was when I opened up.

I remember I was sitting at a table with another coach in training and we were discussing who we wanted to work with. One of our trainers came over to check in and I told her I wanted to work with people who binge eat.

She asked if I ever binge ate and I said I had and I still did.

What happened then was life changing for me.

Because I opened up to the right person at the right time, I also opened myself up to learning exactly what I needed to learn.

She helped me understand my binge eating, pointed me toward helpful resources, and it was then that I was able to take what I had just learned in my coach training and apply it to my binge eating.

That right there was the beginning of the end of my binge eating.

Then that evening, a bunch of us trainees got take out and ate dinner in the lobby of our hotel. I have no idea how it came up but at one point, in front of all of those people, I confessed that I binge eat and had been doing it for about 10 years.

And I shared with them what it was like for me and what binge eating looked like for me.

It felt good to share my story. It felt good to talk about it with people who were interested and wanted to understand.

What also felt good, was when two other people shared that they've struggled with binge eating too.

One with just binge eating and the other with bulimia.

I wasn't alone. It felt good to not be the only one.

It was scary to tell that coach and to tell all those people but in the end, it felt good to not be hiding that secret.

Then fast forward a few months. I had been blogging on my website and I wanted to start making short videos to help people with their bingeing.

And the first one I wanted to do, was my story.

I made the video and decided to do something terrifying and brave.

I shared it on my personal Facebook page, for all my friends and family to see.

Now, I did worry about what people would think.

But I also cared more about who I would help.

That's why I did it.

I bet people had all kinds of thoughts from thinking how strong I was to overcome it, to how weird it was that I did that, to not thinking it was a big deal at all. But I have no idea what they were *all* thinking.

The only comments I received were positive.

And I didn't spend my time worrying about what negative comments might not have been shared.

That wouldn't have been a good use of my mental energy and time.

So, after putting that out into the world, it became so easy to keep sharing.

I don't even think twice about sharing any details anymore because 1. it's just part of my story and doesn't define me, 2. my story may help someone, 3. I want to bring awareness to this issue.

Not everyone understands and not everyone cares either.

But I'm ready to speak to those who want to understand and do care.

Now, sharing my story was about other people and about me.

For most of you, it's mostly or all about you.

Most of you don't want to be a coach, don't want to help other people with their binge eating, that's not your path.

But all of you do of course want to help yourselves.

And sharing what you're going through or have gone through can help you gain support, help you gain a deeper connection with someone, and open yourself up to getting help.

People can't support you if they don't know you're wanting or needing support and people want to. They want to be there for you.

So when you tell them, they can do their best to support you in whatever ways you want to be supported, whatever that looks like for you.

And as for creating a deeper connection with people, being vulnerable and sharing stories like this is a way to create that.

Ever notice how on competition television shows the contestants share sad stories, or share the difficulties they're currently dealing with, or times when they overcame challenges?

Producers do this so we feel more connected to the contestants.

Think about how you feel when people in your life get vulnerable and share struggles with you.

People will feel similarly when you do it too.

Now, when you're doing this in your own life, it's important to make sure you're being vulnerable at the right time with the right people and not doing it to force connection. Otherwise, it will do the opposite.

Pick and choose your people and moments when it feels right for you to be vulnerable and build that connection.

And then, when you're sharing your story, you just might be sharing it with someone who can help you.

Being vulnerable in this way was how I got the best help I ever got. If I hadn't told that coach I was binge eating, she wouldn't have helped me.

I didn't know she knew anything about binge eating and I only learned that once I told her about me doing it.

Maybe some of you even found this podcast that way. You told a friend and they recommended it to you.

With my group members, I encourage them to open up and share and be vulnerable because if they don't, we might miss something that could be exactly what needs to be worked on for them to stop binge eating.

Now, I'm not going to tell you that you have to share your story with anyone.

That is not required. You can keep your binge eating to yourself whether it's in the past or you're currently binge eating.

You don't have to tell anyone if you don't want to.

But I know a lot of you do want to.

You don't want to share it with the whole world but, you want to share it with people you're close to – your partner, your best friends, your family. The people you want to be completely open and honest with.

You don't want to have this secret. You don't want to be hiding part of you from them.

It takes energy to hide that you listen to this podcast or to hide any journal writing you do about it or hide that you're watching a training or video.

Not a ton of energy probably but, it still creates emotion for you to hide what you're doing, especially if you're hiding it from someone you live with.

So if you do want to tell the people you're closest to, why aren't you?

Most likely, you're afraid.

You're afraid of judgement, you're afraid they'll think differently of you.

And here's the thing about other people.

Sometimes we're right and sometimes we're wrong.

Sometimes we think we know how a person will respond and we're wrong.

And what I see time and time again when I talk with my group members who are struggling with whether or not to tell their partners is that when I ask if they think their partner will judge them or think differently of them in a negative way, they say no.

They're imagining this worst case scenario but when it really comes down to it, they don't believe they would react that way.

They see this person as loving and supportive. And they know that what is more likely to happen if they share is that that person will still love them and do whatever they can to help.

Now, if you do truly believe someone would respond unsupportingly, then maybe that's not a person you choose to share this with.

Again, you get to choose.

The 4 friends I told while I was bingeing, I believed they would be supportive, and they were.

I also believed the coach trainer and my fellow trainees would be supportive, and they were.

And when I stopped bingeing and told all my Facebook friends, I believed people would be supportive.

Whoever it is that you want to share your secret with, take an honest look at how you really think they'd respond.

And you choose who gets to receive this information from you.

Now, even if you think they'd be supportive, you might still be hesitant.

And it's not because of what you think they'll think, it's what you think.

When you're struggling with bingeing, there's usually shame and embarrassment accompanying it.

Shame and embarrassment drive you to hide.

So if you're feeling those feelings, you're going to try and hide what you're ashamed or embarrassed of.

And the shame and embarrassment are coming from what you're thinking about you.

You think there's something wrong with you.

You think you're unworthy.

You think you're lesser of a person.

You think you're weak, have no self control, are disgusting.

You think that way about yourself, you feel ashamed of yourself, so you hide yourself.

I understand why you might be ashamed or embarrassed because I felt that way too.

I thought those thoughts I just listed. Not all the time but they came up.

But I'm here to tell you that none of those shame inducing thoughts you're telling yourself are true.

If you are someone who binge eats, you are not automatically unworthy, lesser of a person, weak, or disgusting, it doesn't mean there's something wrong with you, and it doesn't mean you don't have self control.

All it means is that you're in the habit of doing things that create urges to binge and are in the habit of giving in to your urges to binge.

That's it.

It doesn't mean anything about you as a person.

There is so much that is right about you.

You are worthy no matter how much you eat.

You are no lesser of a person than you were before you started bingeing.

You are strong, have self control, and are beautiful, or if beautiful is a stretch for you to believe, you're okay.

You can find examples of all of these things in yourself and in your life if you look for them.

But you're not going to look if you just decide that you binge eating means you're unworthy, there's something wrong with you, and all those other things.

So if you do want to be open with more people about your binge eating, whether you're binge eating currently or your bingeing is in the past, work on how you think about yourself, being a person who binges or binged.

And tell yourself how you really think those people will respond.

Be honest with yourself about who you are.

Binge eating is not you and you are not a bad or worse person because you've done or do it.

You are amazing, even if you binge.

And the people who love you will agree with that.

Alright, I'll talk to you again soon.

Bye bye.