

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #202: Loving What You Do

Hi! Do you love what you do?

And what I mean by “what you do” is not just what you do for work, although I am asking about that too but, also, what you do with your free time day to day.

We all of course have things we don't love doing like chores, errands, cleaning, and other adulting things, and that's not what I'm talking about here.

I'm talking about when you have free time, do you love what you do with it? For the most part of course, not every moment of your free time is going to be filled with something you love. Let's be realistic.

And although you're not going to love every single part of your job, do you, again, for the most part, love what you do?

If you answered no to either of those questions, or aren't really sure if you do, then this episode is for you.

You not loving what you do with your free time and for work might be making it challenging for you to stop binge eating and to decrease your overeating.

During most of the years I was binge eating, I was definitely not loving what I was doing.

I didn't love most of the jobs I had during that time and I didn't love a lot of what I did with my free time.

It wasn't all awful. There were times I did like my jobs and times I did awesome things with my free time.

But I think the balance between liking and disliking was off.

There was more disliking, and sometimes even hating.

I had several jobs in those 10 or so years and at those jobs, I would sometimes feel happy, enjoy myself, have fun, feel challenged in a good way, and think I was doing something useful that mattered.

But a lot of the time, I'd feel anger, resentment, exhausted, bored, and under appreciated.

And those same feelings showed up in my free time too. Yes I did fun things, I did things I loved doing but, along with those same feelings I felt with my jobs, there was also a lot of boredom, loneliness, and self-pity.

So when those negative emotions were outweighing the positive, those were the times when I was most likely going to binge.

There are probably a few reasons why this happened but one that comes to mind was that I didn't believe it would get better soon enough.

I anticipated feeling more boredom, loneliness, self-pity, resentment, under appreciation, and just plain dislike and hate in the near future.

And I didn't know how to get out of it.

I felt stuck.

I had all kinds of BS reasons why and I never challenged those reasons like I do now.

Now that I've learned so much about changing your thinking to change how you feel and act and have more understanding of how I can change some of my circumstances than I did before, it's easier for me to get out of being stuck.

I'm still not perfect and I do feel stuck sometimes still and do feel negative emotions like all of us do but, it's way less than it was.

But in those times when I felt deep in the dislike of what I was doing in my life, I turned to eating to feel better and to do something that I actually did love doing.

I loved eating. I mean, I still do, eating is great.

But instead of changing my thinking or changing my circumstances to truly change my life, I used food to give me temporary relief that ultimately changed nothing and just added to what I disliked about my life.

I kept engaging in something that I didn't truly love doing. I loved eating but, I didn't love eating a whole bunch of food in my free time for fun.

And the result of doing that would just be me spending more time, feeling unhappy and not doing what I wanted to be doing.

So now that I love my job, again, not every part of it but for the most part, I love it, and I love, for the most part, what I choose to do with my free time, I don't go to food like I used to.

I don't need that kind of escape. I don't need food to make me feel better. It's also not my go-to when I'm wanting to do something I think I'll love doing.

I have other things and I'm doing them.

This is something I've been working on for years, even after I stopped binge eating, and in the last year or so, I've been more intentional about what I do with my time than ever before.

Not long ago if someone had asked me what I did in my free time, I'll say watch tv, go out to eat, and go out for drinks. And I hated that answer but, it was the truth.

Now, if that's your answer and you love that, there's nothing wrong with that. Love it!

But I didn't and I didn't know what else to do.

But now, I'm learning to play piano, I go for long walks, I travel, I go to concerts in the summer mostly, also the beach in the summer and sometimes in the off-season too, I read, I do puzzles, I was taking a weekly tap class but that is no longer in session, I go to barre class, and I do other random things that happen in and around my city.

So many things that I love.

So, when you look at what you do, with your free time and what you do for a job, do you love it?

Are you getting enough pleasure and good feelings while doing what you do that you don't need to supplement with food?

Or are you feeling more negative than positive in doing what you do? Is the percentage of negative higher than the percentage of positive?

If it is, it's probably going to be more challenging for you to do the things I teach you to do to stop binge eating and decrease your overeating.

One of the things I teach that will help you is to allow yourself to feel your feelings instead of eating to change them.

This is because one of the reasons why overeating and binge eating happen is because of emotion avoidance. Eating can be a distraction, a way to numb, a way to feel better.

If you're feeling a feeling you don't want to feel, then you may eat to avoid feeling it and to try and change it.

Now, the less negative emotions you feel, the easier it will be to do this.

I like to teach that the ideal balance is 50/50, 50% on the negative side of the feelings spectrum and 50% on the positive side.

This of course isn't an absolute and you might typically be higher on the positive side and if you are, that's so great for you.

But 50/50 is just a nice way of acknowledging that you're not going to be happy all the time, some of the time you may feel on the negative side of neutral, meaning angry and sad but also bored or just kinda meh.

When you're in a balance of 50/50, it's easier to believe that good feelings will come again soon and you have previously felt good feelings not long ago. It's a simple up and down that will continue to repeat.

So when it comes time to allow yourself to feel a negative feeling, you'll be more willing because you believe it will be temporary and good ones are coming.

But when you're off balance and the percentage of your negative emotions creeps up higher and higher, and you don't believe you'll feel better anytime soon and you haven't felt much good for awhile, that's when you go to food for a quick pick me up.

In your mind, it might be a reliable quick fix.

I know I thought it was.

So if you want to make it easier for you to allow yourself to feel your feelings and feel your urges, get yourself into the 50/50.

And there's two ways to do this.

You change how you're thinking about what you do or you change what you do.

Your thoughts cause your feelings so you feel how you do because of what you think and if you want to change how you feel, you change how you think.

One of my group members is currently in school and when it comes time to study, she feels dread and sadness.

We uncovered that it was happening because whenever it was time to study she'd think, "Here we go again..." and not in an excited way. In a dreadful way.

So we coached on this and now she's going to think about why she chose this. She chose to be in school, she chose to study what she's studying and knew it was going to be very time consuming. When she thinks about what it's all for, the purpose behind all of it, she feels better about doing it.

When she changed how she thought about what she was doing, she didn't feel so much negativity toward it.

And you can do the same with what you do.

You can spend time thinking about what you don't like about your job or spend time thinking about what you do like.

You can stop thinking about the mundane or the tedious and think about what it's all for and the purpose of it.

You can appreciate the things you do with your free time instead of thinking they're not good enough or not fun enough or are boring.

Take a look at how you're thinking about what you're doing now and see how you could think about it differently.

You might not need to change anything but your attitude.

But, sometimes, it's going to take a lot of effort and thought work to love something.

Especially if deep in your bones, you know it doesn't align with your true wants.

It's possible to still love, or just like what you do, there's so many different things you could focus on and things you could accept without creating so much negativity about it.

But if the option of simply changing what you do is there, you could choose to take it.

And I think there's an important word that needs repeating.

Choose.

Whatever it is you are doing for work, you chose it.

No one forced you into it, you chose it. At least, that's probably the case for 99% of you.

Why did you choose it?

And with your free time, you choose what you do. Why are you choosing to do what you do?

I think it's important to evaluate your choices and your reasons behind them.

Do you like those reasons? If you do, stay and work on your thoughts. If you don't, know that staying is a choice.

Do you see what you do as a choice?

There was so much I didn't see as a choice. Like I said, I felt stuck and in feeling stuck, I didn't think there were other options.

Or at least, other options I wanted to choose.

And as I look back, I can see that was totally untrue.

In those 10 years, I had like 10 jobs. Clearly I had options that I wanted to choose.

Every new job was a new choice I wanted to choose.

And what was so interesting was that I didn't think I could do life coaching when I first wanted to. I didn't think it was an option.

My reason was that the training was too expensive.

But then when I became unemployed and the training was even more expensive than when I originally inquired, I did it.

I took the risk because I knew it was what I truly wanted and believed I would love it, and I do.

And when I was spending my free time watching tv, going out to eat, and drinking and I thought there was nothing else to do, that was totally untrue.

There were tons of other options that I was closing myself off from seeing.

And once I opened myself up and started looking, I found so many things. And I know there's more to come.

What you have done you have chosen to do.

Every day, every weekend, you choose what you do with your time.

If you don't love what you've been doing, be proactive and find something else to do.

If you don't love what you do for work, explore options for something else.

Now, I get that there might be multiple reasons why changing your career or workplace might be a challenge or just isn't the best thing for you to do right now, or maybe ever and that's okay.

I'm not telling anyone to change their job, I want to be clear about that.

But, I am telling you to watch out for saying it's not an option.

It is an option but, it might be one that comes with risks.

I remember taking a risk when I chose a job that I knew I would make less money at but would be happier doing.

And I don't regret it for one second. It was actually that job that led me into the one I have now that I love more than any job I've ever had.

I know you may have lots of circumstances that make changing your job seem like it's not an option, and your risks might be riskier than mine but, if you don't love what you do, and changing how you think about it is extremely challenging for you, here's a little exercise you can do.

Write down all the reasons why you think you can't change it. What are the things you think would happen?

Then go down your list and ask yourself for each thing, if you did change it and that thing happened, what would you do?

And don't say "I don't know." Answer that.

Most of the time, we can figure out how to make it work and be okay.

It may not be ideal but, in the end it may be one of the best decisions you ever made.

I can for sure say that about choosing that lower paying job.

I can also say that about spending my entire saving on coach training while I was unemployed.

It all worked out great in the end and was totally worth the struggles I went through while I was working toward doing what I love.

How worth it would it be to you if you didn't end most of your days feeling drained, exhausted, and dying to escape how you feel?

And again, you don't have to change what you do to make that happen. The work to change how you think about it could be so worth it.

Yes we're all going to feel stressed sometimes.

Yes we're all going to dislike some things we do sometimes.

But how much?

You have more control over that than you may think.

Choose to love what you do so you're not impulsively going to food to pick yourself up, to try to fulfill yourself, or to try and make yourself feel better.

Change how you think about what you do or change what you do.

Create a life you that you love, that you don't want to escape from.

Starting right now.

You deserve to love what you do.

Bye bye.