

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep 222: Avoiding Food Temptation in Your Home

Hi! Let's talk about avoiding temptation, especially temptation in your home.

Some people don't want to buy certain foods because they don't want to feel tempted by it. They'd rather just not have to deal with the temptation so they avoid the food all together.

Or if they did buy something, after they eat it one time, they don't want it in their home anymore because they don't wanted to be tempted to eat more of it. And in that case, the solution for them ends up being either to throw it away or to just finish it all now.

Now, if you want to, you can not buy the food, throw it away after eating some of it, or eat it all. I'm not going to tell you that any of those are wrong because they're not. They're just things you can do.

But, most people I talk to don't want to do those things.

They want to be able to have joy foods and foods they've previously binged on, in their homes, eat some, put it away, and eat some more another day. They want it to last for a few days, or weeks. That's the goal for so many people.

But because they're not willing to experience temptation in the future, whether it's later in the day or tomorrow, they just do one of those things I mentioned earlier so they can avoid it.

And when they do, they never learn how to handle temptation or, how to not feel tempted at all.

It sounds crazy but yes, you can have joy foods and foods you've binged on in your home and not feel tempted at all.

I know this because I've experienced it myself and other people, people who used to binge eat, have told me they experience it too.

Right now, I have a 48 ounce container of ice cream in my freezer, that I've only eaten like 2 or 3 times, and I honestly don't even know how long it's been there but it's been at least a couple months, maybe more. I rarely think about it and most of the time when I open my freezer I don't even notice it's there.

But years ago, when ice cream was one of my top binge foods, that was not the case.

I would think about it a lot if it was in my home. I'd desire it, urge for it, think about how good it would taste, and think about how fun it would be to eat it.

And if I ate it and either overate or binged, I'd throw the rest away. I didn't want it in my home anymore, I didn't want to think about it, I didn't want to want it anymore.

I removed the food to remove the temptation.

But it was only temporary.

I would be tempted again whether it was with ice cream or something else.

Even if the food wasn't in my home, I would feel tempted.

I'd see commercials or billboards, I'd see food in stores or at other people's homes, or I'd just think of it randomly with seemingly no reason to be thinking of it.

And the temptation was back.

And it didn't have to take long either. I could feel tempted to eat something else right after throwing that ice cream away, or the next day.

That could happen if I threw it away or if I ate the rest of whatever food. Temptation could still arise.

Now, is it easier to feel tempted if the food is right there in your home and it takes very little effort for you to eat it? Yes.

You might be looking right at it instead of just thinking about it or you just know that it would be so easy to get that food. No driving or walking very far, just walk into the next room and open a door and there it is.

But even if it is in your home, temptation doesn't have to exist and here's why.

Temptation is not caused by the food or the location of the food.

It's caused by your thinking about the food.

“Tempted” is a feeling. It's similar to an urge or desire. You feel enticed, you want something.

But the main difference is that you think it's bad or wrong to want it.

Once you think that you wanting something is bad or wrong or that you shouldn't want it, it's going to add another layer of emotion to your desire.

You're now judging yourself for wanting it. You're feeling guilty about wanting it.

So now not only are you feeling desire but also guilt. Not a useful combo.

So first things first, if you are desiring a food, stop telling yourself you shouldn't be or that it's bad or wrong that you are.

That food is delicious so it's normal to want it. Even if you just ate it, feel full, or ate another food, it's not bad to want this food too, it's neutral. Desire is neutral and it's not good or bad until you decide it is.

So if you are thinking it's bad that you're desiring a certain food, why do you think it's bad?

There could be many answers to that question but why a lot of people think it's bad is because they associate desire for a food with bingeing or overeating or with long-lasting discomfort.

It's the associations with desire that make it a problem.

Desire is thought of as bad because bingeing, overeating, or long-lasting discomfort are bad.

So to avoid all that bad stuff, they avoid buying the food, throw it away, or eat it all.

But bingeing, overeating, or long-lasting discomfort are not inevitable if you're desiring a food.

Food doesn't make you overeat or binge, you do.

You decide to keep eating, whether you're aware of the decisions to eat another bite and another and another or not.

And what you're really doing is deciding to react to your desire again and again and again instead of allowing yourself to feel the desire without eating.

But then comes that other association - that the desire is going to be long-lasting. That you're not going to stop thinking about it and you're going to feel discomfort until you finally eat it.

But that doesn't have to be the case.

First of all, desire doesn't always last as long as we think it will. People tell me all the time that when they actually allow their desire to be there, without resisting it or fighting with it, it goes away rather quickly.

So you may think it will be there forever when it really won't be. Don't assume it will be a long time. You don't know so assume it won't be.

And second of all, you have more control over how long that desire is there than you think you do.

The desire you feel is there because of what you're thinking. Your thoughts cause your feelings, including desire, tempted, and urges.

Like I said, feeling tempted is caused by thinking you want something but you shouldn't, or it's bad or wrong to want it.

Desire is caused by thinking you want something.

So as long as that's how you're thinking, you're going to continue feeling tempted or desire.

But if you're aren't judging yourself for what you want, are accepting of your wanting, and then tell yourself all the reasons why you don't want it more than you do, then that desire and temptation will slip away.

You're not tempted by things you don't want.

Now, you might hear that and say, "But I DO want it! It's soooo good!"

Well if that's the case, then eat it and enjoy it. If you have no good reason to not eat it, then eat it.

But you might then say, "But...." and now you have a good reason, or more than one to not eat it. And if those are reasons you like and they're important to you, that's what you need to be thinking about if you don't want to feel tempted.

If you don't want to eat the food more than you do want to eat it then that feeling of being tempted isn't going to be as strong.

Part of the reason why I'm not tempted by that ice cream in my freezer is because of how I think about that ice cream.

When I do see it or think about it, I'm thinking more about how it would make me feel than how good it would taste.

Most of the time when I eat what I consider to be a serving of ice cream for me, which is this little glass bowl that usually ends up being somewhere from $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup to a cup, it doesn't sit well in my stomach. That's what I'm thinking about.

And here's the thing. Sometimes I'm willing to feel that and I eat the ice cream. But most of the time I'm not.

And since that is the association I've made in my mind with ice cream, that ice cream = a weird feeling in my stomach, I don't desire it that much.

But maybe that's not the case for you with the foods you get tempted by. Maybe they sit just fine in your stomach.

But you may have other reasons for not wanting to eat them. Maybe if you do you won't be hungry for dinner later, or you won't sleep well, or you have things to do and you're going to stop procrastinating, or it's just not aligned with the person you want to be.

Those are my reasons a lot of the time too, not just with the ice cream but also with other Joy Foods I have in my home.

So just that kind of shift in your thinking can ease the temptation.

But if it's not, it's time to investigate.

Why is that food so important to you?

A lot of the time we desire food so strongly because we think it will give us something that either we don't think we can get elsewhere or we think that trying to get it another way will take too much effort.

Like if what you're really wanting in that moment is connection, it's easier to connect with the food that's right there than it would be find a person to connect to.

Or if you're really wanting something fun to do, eating that food that's right there, and that you know will be delicious, will be easier than doing other things that you might find to be fun that might require you to go somewhere or to get yourself all set up to do it or to find someone to do it with.

Or maybe you have no idea how else to calm yourself down, or get pleasure, or feel better, or entertain yourself, or something, and that's why that food is so important to you right now.

You're wanting something and in your mind, eating that food is the only way to get it so you get fixated on it.

But no matter what you're wanting, unless it's to fuel your body when it's hungry, there is another way to get what you're wanting.

When you know how to get what you're wanting, eating that cookie, those chips, that pizza won't be as important.

I have better ways to entertain myself, to get pleasure, to feel how I want to feel, so that ice cream is way less important to me than it used to be when I ate it for all those reasons.

Now, it's just a delicious food that doesn't sit well in my stomach. That's it.

That's how you stop feeling so tempted by food that's in your home.

You change how you think about it.

This is going to be so much more useful than not bringing it home, throwing it away after eating it once, or eating it all so it's not there anymore.

Those are just avoidance techniques and when you keep doing them over and over, you continue to live in fear instead of building skills, trust, and confidence in yourself.

When you do the work in your mind, that's when you'll be able to truly ease the temptation you feel instead of avoiding it.

You'll be able to ease the temptation, even not feel it at all, and be able to have those foods in your home, eat some, and not obsess about them or feel tons of temptation until you eat it again.

It doesn't have to take over your mind.

You can do work with your thoughts to not feel tempted.

Now, you may hear all of this and it makes sense but you don't feel ready to keep the foods around in your home.

The fear you have about bingeing or discomfort or overeating might be really strong for you and if it is, you don't have to do this work yet.

Like I said in the beginning of this episode, it's not bad to avoid the food and avoid the temptation.

If that's what you feel comfortable doing right now, then keep the food out of your home or throw it away or even finish it if that's what you really want to do.

But be clear with yourself about why you're choosing to do this and own your decision to do this.

You can choose to avoid if you really want to but if you don't, know that there is another option that I just laid out for you here in this episode.

This work will eventually need to be done if you want to stop those behaviors.

Doing this work is how you will grow, and learn how to handle temptation and desire, and become better at eating how you truly want to be eating.

Living in fear of foods will not.

But again, only step into this work when you feel ready to overcome your fear.

Do what is doable and what you feel ready for, you don't have to rush into this or force yourself. The time for you to do this will come.

Do what you feel most comfortable with at this point in your process.

So, if you want to not feel tempted by foods in your home, face the temptation. Keep the food around, don't judge yourself for wanting it, accept your wanting as being normal, allow yourself to feel the desire, tell yourself why you don't really want it and why it's better if you don't have it, and if you're really stuck on wanting that food, figure out why it's so important to you. Once you know what you're wanting from that food, you can figure out how to get it elsewhere.

Once you know how to handle temptation and how to decrease it's intensity, sometimes down to nothing, you won't use the fear of temptation as a reason to throw your food away, eat it all, or not buy it.

Alright, I'll talk to you next time, bye bye.

