

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #231: When It's a Habit

Hi! How are you? I'm great. Things are great. Life is good and I've been doing some really fun stuff and have some other fun stuff coming up too, and I hope the same for you. If not, get on it and make the fun happen!

Get in the habit of having more fun. That's a great habit to have.

But let's talk about the habits you don't want to have.

We all have so many habits which is great. Habits allow for us to do things without using a ton of mental energy.

But if you binge eat, you have some habits that aren't so great because they are what can make it challenging for you to stop binge eating.

It might be a habit for you to grab food as soon as you get home from work, without even thinking, or to think about food and eating in certain ways, or to think negatively about your body when you look in the mirror, or to eat when you feel stressed or nervous.

It just happens so automatically and quickly and you might not even notice it's happening.

Now, sometimes when people recognize that they have these habits, they feel powerless.

They think that if it's a habit, if it's so automatic, if it happens so quickly, that if they don't even notice they're doing it, then either there's no way to stop it or it's going to be extremely hard to.

But habits *are* changeable and they aren't always hard to change. Sometimes, but, not always and it's not always as hard as we think it will be.

And if you are going to change your habit, you have to stop making yourself feel so powerless when you think about them.

There *is* something you can do. You are not stuck with all of your thought and action habits that you have right now for the rest of your life.

And the first thing you're going to do to change them, after acknowledging that there is something you can do and you're not powerless, is to figure out what your habits actually are and why you have them.

One of the questions I ask my group members often, probably more often than they would like me to, is, "why?"

We gotta get to the bottom of things and asking why is a fantastic way to do that.

So I'll ask them things like, "why do you think you ate when you got home?" or "why do you think you were so hard on yourself after you binged?" and they'll answer by simply saying, "it's a habit."

Now, they're correct, it is, but we can't just accept that answer because it's not going to get you anywhere.

As soon as they say it, again, it's like, well, it's a habit and that's it.

But it's not it, and we can't stop there.

There's more to it.

We gotta figure out why this habit exists so again, I'm gonna come at you with another "why."

Why is it habit?

The habit began for some reason. There was a reason why you began thinking how you do and why you started doing what you do and continued to do it.

That's what we need to know if you're going to change this habit.

If it's an action habit, like eating at 3pm during workdays, why are you wanting to eat at that time?

Most likely, that's the time when you feel bored or overwhelmed or stressed and once you know that, you can do something about it.

You gotta know what the habit is if you're going to change it and the habit isn't just eating at 3pm, it's eating when you feel bored and you're doing that because you don't know what else to do with your time, especially if there's only a little bit of time or anything you think of just is unrealistic to do at 3pm during your workday.

So if you're eating on weekdays at 3pm and you want to know why you do it, notice the difference between, "It's a habit," and stopping there vs, "I do it to give me something to do when I'm bored at 3pm," or "I do it because I'm stressed and it relaxes me."

Don't just settle on it being a habit, get down to why you keep engaging in this habit. Find the trigger. Find the purpose.

Then there's thought habits like when you think negatively about your body or about yourself.

Why have you been thinking how you've been thinking?

Why are you thinking so negatively about your body or about yourself?

Sometimes it's because other people influenced us to think how we think and we just clung onto it.

Sometimes it's because we somehow think it's helpful and motivating to be so hard on ourselves.

Sometimes it's because we just don't know another way to think about our bodies or ourselves so we keep repeating all that we know.

Whatever it is, know the why behind your habit.

It's not just a habit, it's a habit for a reason and when you know the reason, you can work on that reason.

There is always another way to think about your body and about yourself, you can come up with ways of talking to yourself that will actually be helpful and motivating no matter how your body looks and no matter what you've done, and you can let go of lessons that other people have taught you and choose to believe something different from now on.

Okay? So you're going to stop stopping at "it's a habit" and dig into why it's a habit. That's how you're going to start changing the habit.

You're going to decide what you're going to think or do instead of the habit and you're going to use that reason why it's a habit to come up with what you'll do that's different.

Then, there's the action of actually changing the habit.

In order to do that, you'll have to replace your habit in the moment but, if it's so automatic and quick and you don't even realize you're doing it, how are you supposed to do that?

Two things.

Awareness and trigger preparation.

If you know what your triggers are, be prepared for them.

Be ready for 3pm, be ready before you get dressed in the morning, practice how you'll think to yourself if you binge or overeat, mentally prepare as you're driving home from work or before you walk out of your home office.

And be aware of yourself.

Awareness is always the first step toward change. Pay attention to yourself. Pay attention to what you're thinking, how you're feeling, or what you're doing. Pick one. Pick them all.

But just give yourself attention.

I know it can be hard when there's so many thing going on but, you matter, you have goals, and you deserve your own attention.

Take a moment to check in with yourself and if you know when your triggers typically happen, you'll prepare yourself for it and start being aware of yourself before or when it happens.

Now, ideally, you'd notice the trigger and before the thought habit or action habit happens, you'd be proactive and replace with your new one before the old one happens.

But that's not always how it goes, especially in the beginning and sometimes even after you're in the new habit for awhile.

Your brain or your reflexes beat you to the punch.

And that's okay. Do not decide you've failed, don't give up on changing, just do it as soon as you can.

If you just said 5 mean things about yourself, as soon as you notice that you did, say what you really want to be saying, something compassionate, encouraging, kind, or motivating.

If you eat a bite of food and notice you did, make the conscious decision to do the other thing that you want to be a habit for you.

This is something we all do sometimes. We wake up and notice what we're thinking or doing, and when we do, we have two choices.

Allow it to continue, or do or think something else.

It's like if you move and you notice yourself driving to your old home. You come to be aware of what you're doing and you change course.

You can do the same thing with your thoughts and actions and it's all going to begin with you having awareness and then making the decision to do or think something different.

When something is a habit, you don't have to feel powerless.

You can change it. You can change all the habits you have that are leading you into a binge – thought habits about food, about your body, about yourself, and actions that seem so automatic like grazing, picking at food, and avoiding feeling emotions.

But you gotta know what those habits are and why the habit is there so don't just settle on it being a habit. It's a habit for a reason. Know what its trigger is and why those specific thoughts or actions are happening.

Then, practice changing it by responding to your triggers differently or by catching yourself in the habit and redirecting.

Redirecting is always going to be more useful than just staying on the path you don't really want to be on.

It may be a habit but, there's so much more to it.

Explore what it is for you and get to work on changing it.

Alright, I'll talk to you again soon. Bye bye.