

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #244: How to Stop Calorie Counting

Hello! There's something really exciting coming up soon. Another round of The Stop Binge Eating Group Coaching Program!

Registration will be opening on April 27th of 2023 and you can get all the info at coachkir.com/group.

And I gotta tell you, I've been running this program since January of 2020, making updates all the along the way, and with each round, it really has been getting better and better.

Not just the content but, the results I'm seeing from the people who go through it.

And not just that, but I believe that I've grown so much as a coach and as a leader in the group and as I hope you are, I'm always learning about how I can be better.

And it's all coming together to make this program the best it's ever been, I truly believe that.

I started the most recent round in January and the changes I've seen in my group members has been so amazing to watch.

And it's happened because they're showing up for themselves, they're committing to the process, and they're not giving up on themselves.

We're working on this together, we're both showing up for each other, and it's making a huge difference for them.

So if you're ready to work together on this and make some big changes in your eating habits and in yourself, join me in the next round.

Again, registration will open on April 27th of 2023 and you can get all the info at coachkir.com/group. That's also where you'll register on the 27th when it opens.

And, you can get on the waitlist to be notified as soon as it does open so you can register and get access to The Stop Binge Eating Course that's inside of the program ASAP so you can get started right away.

And, I'll be offering a workbook bonus as I have been in the last few rounds for those who register before May 1st at 5pm ET and that bonus means you'll get printed workbooks mailed to your home making it easier for you to do the work inside of the program.

So don't wait! The sooner you get yourself signed up, the better.

And if you have any questions that aren't answered on that info and registration page, feel free to email info@coachkir.com and ask anything.

Alright, now onto today's topic, how to stop counting calories.

Now, the first thing I have to say is that you don't have to stop counting calories if you don't want to.

It's not required.

There are people who stop binge eating while still counting all kinds of things, calories, points, macros, and this is because it's not whether or not you're counting that matters.

What matters more is why you count and what you think about counting.

One of my group members told me at the beginning of our program that she finds it helpful for her to count calories so that she knows she's eating enough. One of the most important things you need to do to stop binge eating is to make sure you're eating enough so you're not creating biological urges, which happens when your brain senses that it's not being fueled adequately and urges you to eat a lot of food to make up for a period of perceived starvation. So her counting calories to help her see she's eating enough was helpful for her. It was also helpful because she didn't have any negative thoughts about doing it. It was no big deal. And she also didn't have a set goal that she needed to hit, it was more just an observation.

Now, she has since stopped doing it but for a period of time, she found it to be helpful.

I've also had people who are counting macros because of their fitness goals and again, as long as their thoughts were neutral to positive about it, they were fine.

But then there's people like myself who used calorie counting as a way to try and control how much we eat.

For me, a lot of the time, I'd either be too controlling and not allow myself to eat if I was hungry because I'd already reached my calorie goal for the day or, I'd completely let go of control and overeat

or binge if I'd gone over my goal, because, you know, that all or nothing mindset where I've already gone over so I might as well keep going.

So it wasn't actually doing what I wanted it to be doing for me.

And on top of that, most of the time I didn't want to do it, even though I was.

It was a chore, it was not how I wanted to be spending my time, inputting what I ate into the app and doing that math to figure out how much I could eat and when in order to spread it out during the day, and all that.

I didn't want to be doing it but, I thought it was helpful, and let's be real, at times it was. There were times when I would eat according to my goals and I didn't hate counting calories and all was good.

But I don't believe it really helped me with stopping my bingeing because if you're going to stop bingeing you need to put your focus on your urges – particularly what causes them and how to allow yourself to feel them all the way through and counting calories didn't help me to do either of those.

But because it was helpful sometimes, on days when I didn't feel urges to binge and on days when my hunger aligned with how many calories I was allotting myself, I kept doing it.

And I kept doing it for reasons that I know a lot of other people do it for too.

Control, safety and comfort.

Back when I first started counting calories to lose weight, back when I was in college, I actually had some fear about not counting them.

I feared that if I didn't count them, I wouldn't lose weight or would gain weight.

Throughout my twenties and into my thirties, counting calories made me feel safe because I thought that doing it was what would create weight loss or maintenance, whatever my goal was at the time.

I felt a sense of control when I counted calories, because in my mind, doing it would control my weight.

And it felt safe and comfortable because I was so used to it. It was familiar and again, I'd seen it work for me before back when I lost 40 lbs in college.

But here's what I didn't know for a long time.

Counting calories isn't what made me feel in control, safe, and comfortable.

It was my thoughts about counting calories that did.

Our thoughts are what cause us to feel in control, safe, and comfortable.

This is why two people can be in the same situation and one can feel that way and the other can feel out of control, unsafe, and uncomfortable.

The difference is what's happening in their minds.

I don't count calories like I used to and I feel in control, safe, and comfortable.

And it's because of how I think about what I do now...which is listening to my body to determine how much and when I eat.

Now, to be clear, that doesn't mean I always, 100% of the time eat only when I'm hungry. I eat for enjoyment sometimes when I'm not hungry. But, I listen to my body to see how full I feel when I eat those foods.

And when I'm eating regular, fueling meals, I do my best to wait until I'm hungry to eat.

So why do I feel in control, safe, and comfortable eating this way?

It's because I believe that my body knows what's best, and that's why I feel safe.

I believe that if I eat according to the hunger and fullness feelings in my body then that's how I'll feel my best and if I'm being honest, how I'll maintain the body size I have.

Having this trust in my body's ability to send me signals that aren't going to sabotage me but instead will be what's best for me and it is what creates safety for me.

And I feel in control because I'm choosing to eat this way, and I believe that I have the ability to wait for hunger and to stop when I'm full.

Now, I don't believe I have control over what my body does as far as when it sends signals and when it doesn't but it's okay if I don't have that control because again, I believe my body knows best.

But I do want to say that sometimes our bodies do get confused.

When we eat certain foods, for most people it's sugar and flour, our hunger hormones can get a little out of whack and we might experience what some people call false hunger which is when you feel hungry but your stomach isn't actually empty.

This does happen to me sometimes and when it does, if I do notice that I probably shouldn't be hungry because of how much I've eaten and when I last ate, I can make the decision to feed that false hunger or not and neither or right or wrong.

But I'm in control of which I decide to do.

And with all of this, because I've been practicing eating this way for years now, I feel comfortable. I've gotten used to it and it's become my new normal.

Now, some of you might hear all of this and think it sounds wonderful but feel so far from being in this place without counting calories, or whatever you're counting, and just relying on yourself and your body.

You haven't eaten according to your body's signals in years, you don't trust your body, or you don't trust yourself.

And I get that. It can be scary to step away from something that you feel in control, safe, and comfortable with when you're lacking trust.

But just know that you don't have to jump right into it, and trust can be built.

You don't have to try to do anything that feels too out of reach and I recommend that you don't.

Baby steps can be such a better approach so instead of jumping from comfort to discomfort, you stay somewhere in the middle with a little comfort and a little discomfort.

So what that can look like is continuing to count calories but while you're doing it, pay more attention to what your body is doing.

You can have the calories as a crutch while also starting to make more decisions based on what you feel in your body.

And see what happens.

When you take it one baby step at a time, you ease into this, like having training wheels on your bike.

Sometimes you're on the training wheels and sometimes you're not. But as you go back and forth, you're learning how to ride the bike even though you don't have full trust in your ability to balance on it or maybe even full trust in the bike itself but you're getting used to it.

And one day, after you've built that trust, and you've gotten used to it, and you're spending more time balanced on the bike and not on the training wheels, you feel comfortable letting go of the training wheels completely.

You can count the calories you eat and eat according to your body, and see where you end up with calories at the end of the day.

Then, you might feel comfortable not counting calories at a meal, or maybe not counting calories for a day as you're only relying on your body's signals and your decisions to start and stop eating according to them.

And eventually, you get used to it, you build trust in your body's signals and in yourself, and you let go of counting the calories altogether.

Now, there's a couple things I do want to say about this because when you're doing something like this, it can be too easy to get freaked out and stop progressing forward.

One reason this might happen is that there might be days when you eat according to your body's hunger and fullness and you eat more calories than you've previously been allowing.

This is okay and it's normal. One, because our bodies need different amounts of energy each day. Our calorie requirements aren't always going to be exactly the same.

And also, take into consideration that maybe the amount of calories you've been eating has been too low, and maybe that has been a reason why you've felt urges to binge.

I'm not saying that's the case for everyone but, it's something to consider.

And also, you are learning a new way to determine how much and when you eat and you won't be perfect at it. So maybe you are eating more than your body requires for fuel sometimes because you're not noticing your fullness signal right away or you're confused about whether or not you're hungry sometimes, and that's okay.

Give yourself some space to not be perfect and space for trial and error and learning.

Some of you are learning what it even feels like to be hungry or full and some are learning to honor those feelings and that can take some time to get good at.

And with that comes the second thing I wanted to mention.

It might be possible that you gain weight when you start doing this.

Do not let that stop you from doing it though if it's something you want to do.

Remember, you are learning, it's a new method that you're practicing and getting used to and again, you're not going to eat so that you're perfectly fueling your body without a calorie to spare.

With practice and awareness and learning you will eventually get to the place where you're eating more and more closely to what your body wants.

But know that perfection is not the goal here.

I know I personally don't eat perfectly and no one I know does either.

Like I said, I sometimes eat more than my body requires because I want to eat for enjoyment. I eat according to my wants, and that's okay. If I do, then I'm going to eat according to my body's wants afterward.

It's never supposed to be just about fueling your body or just about eating for pleasure. You can find a middle ground between the two where you'll feel your best both physically and mentally.

Finding that balance between what you want for pleasure and what your body wants for fuel and paying attention to and caring about how you feel is what will be the most helpful in finding that balance.

I know that weight gain is a big concern for people when they begin to work on letting go of calorie counting and I couldn't understand that more.

But just like when you're working on stopping being overly restrictive with your eating and starting to be more permissive with what you eat so you can stop binge eating, weight gain might be a byproduct of the work you're doing.

And if it is for you, or if you're worried about it being something that will happen to you, I highly recommend you check out Episode #59 – “Fear of Weight Gain,” and Episode #177 “Your Thoughts About Weight Gain,” to help you with this.

So if stopping counting calories is something that you want to do because it's not actually helping you or because you just don't like doing it, take baby steps away from it.

Start paying more attention to how your body feels and use that as your indicator for starting and stopping eating while still having your crutch of calorie amounts.

See how x number of calories feels in your body.

See how you feel when you eat certain amounts of food.

Just pay a little more attention to how you feel when you're making your eating decisions instead of only considering how many calories you have planned, how many you have left, and how you can divvy up or save up calories for the day.

You can learn to rely on yourself and your body instead of relying on numbers.

Take small steps that put you in between your comfort and discomfort zone as you learn to do it.

Alright, that's all for today and I do want to remind you real quick that if you want my direct help with doing this, or with anything that's related to your binge eating or eating habits, registration for the next round of The Stop Binge Eating Group Coaching Program will be opening on April 27th. Go to coachkir.com/group to get all the info.

I'll see you there! Bye bye!