THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #245: When Your Behavior Doesn't Make Sense

Hi! Today I'm going to talk with you about those times when your behavior just doesn't makes sense.

What I mean by this is when your thoughts and behaviors don't seem to be aligned.

An example of this would be thinking you hate how your body looks and then you go and eat a bunch of food which of course isn't going to help you change your body the way you actually want to.

You might think that if you hate how your body looks then you'd do something to change it and make it better in your eyes but instead, you make it worse.

It can be so confusing and you might wonder, "Why would I do that?"

When things don't make sense like this, it can get frustrating.

We don't like it when things don't make sense. It's confusing and again, frustrating.

I used to experience this a lot when I was in my binge eating years when I'd think about how I wasn't having enough fun but then I wouldn't go have more fun.

At least, I wouldn't have more of the fun I wanted to have.

I'd binge eat and watch tv alone. That was a the fun I chose.

And it didn't make sense to me.

Why wasn't I having more fun in my life when I didn't think I had enough?

And why are people eating so much when they think they don't like their body and are doing things that make them feel worse instead of better when they think they don't like how they feel, and are spending too much money when they think they don't have enough and are not being productive when they think they have a lot to do?

It's all because of what's between those thoughts and behaviors.

A feeling.

Our feelings are what drive our behaviors so whatever you're doing, you're doing it because of how you're feeling.

And the reason why you feel what you feel is because of what you're thinking.

So what's happening is that those thoughts you're thinking, they're making you feel a feeling that is driving that behavior.

When you think, "I hate how my body looks," how do you feel?

Maybe angry, ashamed, hateful, or frustrated?

Now, those are feelings that are not going to drive positive action.

When you're in the moment of feeling angry, ashamed, hateful, or frustrated, are you then going to go do positive things for yourself?

Probably not.

For most people who binge eat, those are feeling that will drive them to go and eat.

Either they're wanting to make themselves feel better or want to avoid how they're feeling or it drives them into the "screw it" thinking and decide that since they already hate their body, they might as well eat and get some kind of joy for a minute.

When you can break it down like this, and see how your thought is making you feel and see what kind of behavior that feeling will drive you to do, it actually does make sense.

When you can see how this makes sense, you can stop feeling confused and frustrated about what you're doing.

And when you stop feeling confused and frustrated, and you have clarity, that's when you can start changing what needs to be changed...which is your thinking.

This is what I do with my group members all the time.

They come to me confused and frustrated with themselves and I help them to see not only why they did what they did or do what they do, and help them make sense of it, which in itself can be so relieving to have an explanation, but then we work on changing what they do in the future by working on changing their thought that begins it all.

Sometimes we think our thoughts are useful but when we understand the thought > feeling > action process we can see that they're actually not.

It's not going to be useful to think about how much your hate your body.

That's just going to make you feel bad and you'll then act badly.

You're going to react to how you're feeling or you're going to decide to eat to try and change the feeling or you're going to let those feelings drive you to say screw what you want most and get some immediate gratification with food.

And that last one is most likely going to happen for those of you who are overly restrictive with your eating.

So that body example makes sense when you break it down.

When you see how you're feeling between your thought and action, it makes sense.

When I would think I wasn't having enough fun, I'd feel sad and disappointed which did not drive me into action. It instead brought me down and drive inaction.

When people think they have a lot to do they feel overwhelmed and that overwhelmed feeling stops them from doing all those things because overwhelm is a feeling that usually freezes us.

And one I see from people too is when they think about how binge eating has been ruining their life and instead of feeling motivated to change it, they feel sad or angry so instead of going to do positive things for themselves, they self-sabotage or just do nothing.

So what can you do to stop this all from happening?

As I said, it all begins with what you're thinking so that needs to change.

But if I say that and you don't know what else to think, you can work the think > feel > act process backwards.

So you first start with deciding what you want to be doing, how you want to be behaving.

So let's say with the body example, you want to be eating foods that feel good in your body, stopping when you're full, eating when you're hungry, and taking care of your body.

Now, I know some of you are like, "what I actually want to be doing is losing weight," but here's the thing.

Losing weight is not a behavior. It's a result of your behavior. So if you are going to create that result, you'll need to be doing the things I mentioned.

You could of course just go on a crash diet, that's something else you can do but, you've probably tried that and have not had long-lasting results. And it might have been a miserable process.

So let's focus now on just treating your body well.

Now, if you're going to do that, how would you need to feel?

Remember, feeling frustrated, angry, and ashamed are not going to drive the behaviors you want.

But maybe something like calm, motivated, encouraged, or love would drive you to treat your body well.

So let's say you choose one of those, or maybe you chose a different feeling.

What could you think about your body that would make you feel that way?

And remember, thinking you hate it isn't going to do it because of how you feel when you think that.

So what would?

At this point, it doesn't even have to feel true to you. Just explore what thoughts you could think.

And then find something that you *do* believe that's in between hating your body and this new thought.

You can find a bridging thought that's going to bridge the gap between what you've been thinking and what you want to be thinking.

So you're building this bridge with a step that feels just a little better than "I hate my body," so you can feel a little better and act a little better.

So the thought that makes you feel love and calm might be, "I love my body," but if you don't believe that, a bridging thought might be, "my body is okay sometimes," or, "my body allows me to live life," or, "I have a human body."

You're going to then take this new thought, one that will create more desirable feelings to drive you to take more desirable actions and start thinking it more, on purpose.

And you can do this anytime you want to figure out how you can behave how you want to behave.

You work the think > feel > act process backwards.

You decide how you want to act, how you'd have to feel in order to act that way, and what you'd have to think to feel that way.

But before you even do any of this, you have to understand why you're taking the actions you are now, and give yourself the clarity of why what you've been thinking hasn't been working, so you can let it go more easily.

And show yourself how it does make sense so you don't end up thinking there's something wrong with you.

Normalize what you're doing.

It does makes sense if you break it down into thought > feeling > action.

It will be so much easier to accept yourself, forgive yourself, and have compassion for yourself when you do.

And from there, you can think, feel, and act in a way that makes perfect sense to you and is how you want it to be.

When I was thinking that I wasn't having enough fun, it caused me to feel sad and disappointed which then drove me to do nothing. Those feelings just brought me down and I would either go get easy fun by buying and eating food or I would just mope about it.

So to actually do what I wanted to be doing, which was having more fun, like real fun, I had to feel motivated to make it happen and excited about making it happen.

And to do that, I would think thoughts like, "I'm going to have more fun," and "I'm going to make it happen," and those felt so much better than thinking I didn't have enough.

This is all very similar to how people think that being hard on themselves will motivate them and then it doesn't.

It's because when they are hard on themselves, they feel bad and like I said about myself a moment ago, it brings them down instead of lifting them up.

So it makes sense that they're not jumping into action to better themselves.

The don't feel like it.

Their feelings are driving them to do the opposite.

So instead, find the words that actually are motivating for you.

For some people it's gentle encouragement, for some people it's more commanding and pushing but still not mean.

You can be authoritative without being a jerk.

If you've ever had a fitness instructor that you like, that's probably how they were.

It's the, "Come on! Keep going! Keep going!," vs, "you lazy SOB, you're worthless!"

I definitely wouldn't feel motivated by the latter.

So, what you're doing does make sense if you break it down.

When you see the feeling between your thought and behavior, it makes sense why you're doing what you're doing.

Have understanding and compassion for yourself and once you have the clarity, you can start to work on doing what you actually want to be doing by practicing thinking thoughts that will create feelings that will easily drive that behavior.

Alright, that's all for today, I'll talk to you next week.

Bye bye!