

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #246: Becoming an Intuitive Eater

Hello! Quick reminder before we get started for anyone who is going to join the Stop Binge Eating Program for this upcoming round, registration is opening in just over a week on Thursday April 27th of 2023.

This really could change your eating habits, change you, and change so much of your life. And I say this because I've seen it happen for myself and for so many of the people I've worked with.

Eliminating binge eating from your life, and doing the work that makes that happen, can just open up so much mental space in your mind, create peace with food, and help you to feel so much better in general.

So if you're wanting that, and you want me to help you do it, come join me in The Stop Binge Eating Program. You can go to coachkir.com/group to find all the info about the program but if you have any questions that aren't answered there, send an email to info@coachkir.com. And also join the waitlist while you're on that page so you can get notified as soon as it opens so you don't miss out on the limited time workbook bonus I'll be offering that will only be available for those who sign up by Monday May 1st of 2023 at 5pm ET.

Let's do this and let's do this together!

Alright, now are you ready to talk about becoming an intuitive eater?

You've probably heard the term intuitive eating, you might have read the book "Intuitive Eating" which I do recommend you read, it's very good and helpful, and maybe you've even dabbled in intuitive eating.

But do you know what it actually means to be an intuitive eater?

I know for me, I had the wrong idea when I first heard about it.

I thought it was just the concept of eating when you're hungry and stopping when you're full.

But there's so much more to it.

When you look to the women who literally wrote the book on Intuitive Eating, Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch, I hope I'm saying their names correctly, here's what their definition is that I found on their website, intuitiveeating.org:

“Intuitive Eating is a self-care eating framework, which integrates instinct, emotion, and rational thought.”

Before I learned more about intuitive eating, I didn't think that rational thought and emotion would be a part of it but the truth is, it is.

When we think about intuitive eaters, another term that we might use instead is “normal eaters.” I know for me that was how I described the way I wanted to eat back when I was binge eating and how I described the people who's eating habits I envied.

They seemed normal.

And in that normalness, were times for them when they would eat according to emotions and rational thought.

It wasn't just them eating when they were hungry, stopping when they were full, and only eating the best foods for their body.

There were times when they ate joy food just because they wanted to and ate what they were in the mood for even if I wasn't the healthiest option.

It seemed so easy for them.

And I wanted that. I wanted that ease and that normalcy.

But what I learned, was that going from being someone who binge eats and has a lot of diet mentality and rules and has a strong desire to lose weight and who relied so heavily on calorie counting, to being someone who ate intuitively was not something that was going to happen overnight.

It takes time to let go of all that because even though you understand the concept of intuitive eating, understanding something and actually doing it are two different things and actually doing it is going to be challenging if you have a lot of thoughts and beliefs that go against this way of eating.

So I want to help you make that transition in this episode today.

What I'm not going to do is reiterate what is talked about in the Intuitive Eating book. You can read the book if you want to know what the book is all about and to learn about the principles of intuitive eating.

But what I am going to do today is give you my take on intuitive eating and give you my methodology for making the transition from being someone who binge eats to being someone who eats intuitively.

And I'll start by giving you my definition of intuitive eating.

I define it as making eating decisions based on what you and your body want.

"You" meaning what you mentally and emotionally want and "your body" meaning what you physically need for fuel.

So you're not just doing what your body wants and are only eating when you're hungry, stopping when you're full, and eating only the most nutrient dense foods.

You're also not only doing what you want, eating what you feel like, what you want, and when you want.

Instead, you're incorporating the two and doing it in a way that results in both you and your body feeling good.

So yes, you're going to do what your body wants and you're also going to do what you want and sometimes those will align beautifully and sometimes, you're going to make compromises where you're choosing to eat something purely for the good of your body or something purely for your enjoyment.

And in doing so, neither you or your body will be left feeling deprived. Your body won't be deprived of fuel and nutrients and you won't be deprived of delicious foods that you love that might not be the most nutrient dense.

You get to be mentally happy with how you're eating and your body gets to be physically happy with how you're eating.

So how do you get there?

First, take a look at what the balance is like for you right now between doing what you want and what your body wants.

Are you making too many eating decisions based on what your body wants and not enough based on your wants? Or vice versa where you're making too many eating decisions based on what you want and not enough based on your body's wants?

I know for me, I would kinda go back and forth between the two.

There were times when I wouldn't allow myself to eat foods I wanted to eat because I feared bingeing on them or I was trying to lose weight.

But there were also times when I was being too cognitive about how much and when I'd eat. Instead of listening to my body's hunger and fullness cues and eating according to them, I was eating based on what I thought was best for my body instead of letting it tell me what was best for it. And it does know. It knows better than I do. Yet there I was, telling it that it's not supposed to be hungry, or that it should be hungry, or that it should be full, or that what I'm eating should be enough, or that it shouldn't be full yet.

So once you know which way you lean, or if like me you bounce between both, you'll want to understand why.

Whatever it is that you're doing, ask yourself why and see what reason comes up.

Most likely, you'll uncover some diet mentality, some fear, or something you were taught by someone else that doesn't actually align with intuitive eating and what works best for you and your body.

Like I said for myself, I had fears about bingeing or weight gain or just not losing weight, and I thought that I had to deprive myself of what I wanted in order to not cause those fears to be realized.

I also had some diet mentality that I'd retained after years of reading about how to lose weight. So many do's and don'ts that stuck with me.

And I was hung up on using calorie counting as a way to determine how much food was right for me to eat and would spread my calories out in a certain way throughout the day to determine how much was a good amount to eat at one time. And that meant that there were times when I wouldn't allow myself to eat when I was hungry and times when I'd stop eating before I was full.

So once you know what your reasons are for doing too much of what you want or too much of what your body wants, you'll know what it is that you need to work on.

You'll be able to see what it is that you need to let go of in order for you to find more of a balance between the two.

And balance means that most of the time you're making decisions that align with what both you and your body want and then sometimes are just making decisions that align with one but, that decision is a compromise.

So let's say you decide to eat a brownie. You're not hungry, it's not a nutrient dense food, your body does not need it and might not want it at all. But you do.

So you do what you want, but, not without regard for your body.

You still take into account how your body will feel and you don't overload it so you're physically uncomfortable. You have what you want and the compromise is that you only eat until you feel full, or stop before you feel full.

And to be clear, that's just an example. You can also eat something that makes your body feel uncomfortable if you want to, you of course have the option to do that, but, the compromise is that you're not going to keep doing it with everything you eat that day and into the following days. You

compromise by feeling physically uncomfortable this one time and the next time you eat, you'll do more of what your body wants.

It's like compromising with your partner where today you might do what you want even though they really don't want to but, tomorrow the roles reverse and you do what they want to even though you don't want to. Then after that, you do more of what aligns for both of you.

And when it comes to your body's wants, there may be times that you choose to eat solely for the purpose of fueling and you're not really getting much enjoyment out of it. And that's okay. Just make sure that the next time you eat or tomorrow, you're eating something that's also for your enjoyment.

Okay, so going back to how you make this transition. Once you know what your obstacle is for why you're not eating in this intuitive way, you're going to work on overcoming that obstacle which means you're going to make a shift in how you're thinking and what you're believing.

Sometimes it's as easy as just acknowledging that how you've been thinking isn't useful and you focus on the kind of thinking that is. So when you hear that old thinking come into your mind, maybe it's some kind of unuseful diet mentality, you dismiss it and replace it.

But sometimes it can be harder to let go of what we have been thinking for years and if you find yourself in that position, I'd highly recommend you work with me to help you. As your coach, I can help you to not only uncover the unuseful thoughts and beliefs you've been holding on to but, also help you to let them go and help you to find more useful thoughts and beliefs that will actually help you to eat how you want to eat without resistance or without using willpower.

Now, if you're someone who is very disconnected from your body's signals and don't notice them or don't honor them or if you're someone who has a lot of diet mentality that drives your eating decisions, then I want to suggest you ease intuitive eating by making decisions ahead of time and planning which can be a very helpful tool.

What this looks like is you making a plan for how you want to eat, how much you think will be enough both for each meal and snack and for the whole day, and what you think you'll want to eat.

And to be clear, you're going to make sure that you're not making these decisions based on the unuseful thoughts and beliefs that you uncovered.

You're making a guess at what your body will want and what you will want.

But then, you're not going to just do whatever your plan is just because you made the plan.

In the moment, you're going to check in with your body and check in with yourself and see what you notice.

Then you make your ultimate decision based on what your body and you want.

Now, the reason why the plan is helpful is because it's giving you a starting point. That way if you do wait to eat until you're hungry, you're not left there, panicked, trying to decide what to eat with endless options available to you, or at least, several. You already gave yourself one that you think will fit the bill and so now all you have to do is ask yourself if it's what you and your body want. If the answer is

yes, eat it. If it's not, just ask what you do want if it's not that and most likely, you will hear a clear answer.

And don't judge your answer. Don't tell yourself it's not healthy enough or it's bad. Just simply look at whether in this moment it's more important that you do what your body wants, what you want, or that you align the two.

And as a side note, it's helpful to consider your future self as you think about this as well. But if that sounds like too much for you right now, that's okay, you can add that in as you get more comfortable. But thinking about your future self and how they'll feel is always a good idea.

So making that plan will help you to start the process of considering what you might want and when you're in the moment, having that plan can make the final decision easier because you've given yourself your first option, and it's an option that you chose ahead of time so you know it's an option that will align with how you want to be eating for you and your body.

And if honoring hunger and fullness is a challenge for you, especially if even knowing when you're hungry and full is a challenge, then having this plan can help to ease any worry you might have and help create a sense of safety for you.

Sometimes if we have issues with hunger, we panic about what and when we'll eat. We worry about not being able to satisfy the hunger. But the plan will show you how you will and that it will happen.

Which is similar to if you're worried about stopping when you're full because essentially you worry about getting hungry again. This plan can again show you that more food is coming and it will be food that you like and your body likes.

You will be okay.

And remember that what you're going to do is have these decisions about what and how much you'll eat decided ahead of time but in the moment, you're going to pay attention to how you feel to make your ultimate decision for what you eat and when you start and stop eating.

You'll pay attention to your body, notice what hunger feels like, notice what full feels like, and if you don't honor those signals perfectly do not beat yourself up or be hard on yourself.

You're learning and even after you've gotten good at this, you're never going to be perfect.

I consider myself pretty darn good at this and I still am not perfect at eating when I'm hungry and stopping when I'm full.

And it's okay. I forgive myself and move on and do better the next time I eat.

So planning can help and it might be something you do to make it easier for you to listen to you and your body's wants for a period of time or maybe you'll do it forever.

Personally, I still plan a lot of the time just to make it easier for me to make decisions in the moment. It's easier when I've already made my decision, before I get hungry.

But it's of course totally up to you.

And one last thing that I want to say is that there's also a lot of you who might get confused about what you mentally and emotionally want when it comes to food.

You do not even know.

And what I'll say about that is when you let go of overly restricting your eating, making foods off limits, labeling foods as good or bad, telling yourself you can't or shouldn't want or eat certain foods, and when you fully embrace the idea that you can have anything you want, the foods you like are abundant in your life, and no food is inherently, morally, good or bad, then you'll feel relaxed and at peace and when you do, it's so much easier to access what you actually do and don't want.

So that's why it can be incredibly helpful to let go of the diet mentality and overly restrictive behaviors and thoughts that you might be holding onto.

So, where you are now might be a place where you're hearing mostly thoughts about what you want and about eating all the food but, you're going to intentionally think more about your body, it's wants, and how it will feel in the future.

Or where you are might be a place where you're hearing mostly thoughts about only eating for your body and what its wants but, you're going to intentionally give yourself more of what you want and eat more of the foods you want to eat while again, having regard for how you'll feel in the future and also having regard for your body.

After you're more intentional about doing this, and maybe you're using planning as a tool to help you, you're going to get better and better at finding the balance between aligning you and your body's wants, while compromising sometimes when it comes to what you want and what your body wants.

It will become easier and more natural and of course, more intuitive.

You are going to become an intuitive eater. Take it one belief and one thought at a time, plan if it helps you, and if you make a mistake, learn from it and do better in the future.

You can do this and again, if you want my help, registration for the next round of The Stop Binge Eating Program is opening next week, on Thursday April 27th of 2023 and you can go to coachkir.com/group to get the info and to join the waitlist.

I can help you, we can do this together, and you can become the eater you want to be.

I'll see you soon.

Bye bye!