

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #250: My Journal Entries From 2007/2008 and 2010

Hi! It's episode number 250 and I thought this would be the perfect time to share with you some more of my own personal journal entries.

Back in episode number 200 I shared some from 2007 when I was writing fairly actively on an online journal. I had so much fun going through those and people told me how much they enjoyed hearing them so I figured, let's do some more!

What I've found to be really unfortunate though is how little I did journal about my binge eating while I was in it. I really wish I had written more not only because I find it so interesting to see how far I've come with my eating and food mentality, but I also believe that journaling is such a helpful tool.

But of course, journaling is going to be the most helpful if you are journaling about helpful things and if when you're problem solving in your journal, you're focusing on the correct problems, which after reading through so many of my own personal entries, I was seeing over and over and that I was not.

So I recently looked through three of my written journals, one from around 2007-2008, those entries weren't actually dated but I have a good idea of when I wrote what I wrote based on the non-food things I wrote about in there, and two journals for 2010.

I scanned through all that I wrote, which was mostly about dating and men, I had a lot to write about that, also about friends and my social life and work stuff and here and there, I spotted some things about my eating and I'll be sharing with you some of the snippets that I found to be the most interesting and hopefully you will find them to be interesting too!

So let's jump right in.

The first notebook I have was less of a traditional journal and more of like, random stuff that I wanted to jot down.

The first thing I found was actually a few post it notes that had a long list of dates from March 15th until August 7th, calorie totals, and joy foods. I'm assuming I was tracking when I binged, how much I ate that day, and what foods I binged on. Some were smaller binges, where my total calories for the day were around 2,500 and what's interesting about this is that 2,500 for a lot of people is a normal amount of food. But I bet it was seeing it as a binge because I of course was feeling out of control and the behavior itself was binge behavior but also, I was most likely trying to lose weight and was aiming to eat more around 1,500 calories. That's my guess.

Then there were lots of other days where the total calories were in the three and four thousands, the highest being at 4,974 on April 28th of whatever year it was, again I think 2007.

I also wrote a list of the most common foods I binged on during that time and next to each one is a tally of how many binges included that food.

Unsurprisingly, ice cream topped the list while french fries were a close second.

I knew that without even looking at that list.

And there was one other post it in this little pile that doesn't have a title on it or anything but it's just a list of numbers with an average so I'm assuming I listed how many days I went between each binge and then found the average, which if you're wondering was 4.8 days. There were several zeros and the longest was 16 days.

Now, do I think these lists I made were helpful? I don't see how they were. I mean, I binged for years afterward and I also wouldn't suggest to my group members that they do this kind of homework. Although, it could be helpful with confidence building to see if the time between your binges has increased but figuring out which foods you binge on the most and writing out your total calories, not so helpful I don't think.

What I really wish I had done was keep track of how I was feeling before each binge and what I was thinking before each, and why I finally gave in to my urge to binge. Now that would have been some helpful information but at the time, I didn't know to do that.

I was too focused on calories and what foods I binged on.

So, those post-its, those stats, were the first thing I found.

The next entry I found that I thought was interesting was a list of rules I'd set for myself. This was definitely something that I would do a lot.

Now, I don't think it's bad to decide what you want your eating to look like. I don't think it's a problem to consciously put restrictions on your eating if it's how you genuinely want to be eating and it's what works best for you and your body.

I actually think I had written some useful and unuseful ideas in there.

Here's some of what I wrote:

"Only eat one sweet at night, no matter what. And enjoy it."

"Don't eat sweets/junk during the day. Save it for the end as a reward for eating well that day."

"When out, choose what is the cheapest and healthiest that I will definitely like."

"Stay away from salads." (not sure why I wrote that one and I actually crossed it out later which is interesting).

"Get food to go!" (what I think I meant there was to take home leftovers because a few pages later I wrote this:)

"Have what I want and don't worry about finishing something else just to finish it. If it's not going to expire, don't worry, I'm sure I'll want it eventually."

So I think it was basically like, it's okay to take home leftovers, or to have leftovers at home. And I was reminding myself that it probably won't go to waste because it's likely that I'll eat it another time. That's my guess.

So there's just one of many lists I'd made in those years and again, this was around 2007/2008 and I binged for years afterward so clearly these lists weren't as helpful as I thought they were. They were not the key to not bingeing.

Several pages later, I wrote another list and then did a little writing.

"Only cheat on "purple" days. (I have no idea what a purple day is.)

"151 pounds by North Carolina." (We took a big family trip there in 2008.)

"Breakfast at work, snack, lunch, snack, dinner, snack, 3 hours (I'm assuming it was 3 hours in between each)

"No cereal from a box, ever." (I bet a lot of you resonate with that one.)

Then I wrote:

"I struggle every day. It's time for it to stop. My only choice is to kick ED's ass and get what I really want. I'm ridiculously strong, I just need to live up to my full potential...which apparently I never do. I can try so much harder than I do. Why do I just give up? The thoughts may come, I can't really help what I think about but I can say no. I don't cheat with others, why do I cheat myself? Do I not respect me? Do I not like me?"

And that was the end.

It makes me sad to read that I thought I never live up to my full potential. Also that I'm questioning if I respect and like myself. I can just picture myself feeling so defeated writing that.

And I want to give you all a little tip, that I wish I could give my past self, and I bet if you're someone who has worked with me then you might know what I'm going to say....I might have said it to you.

If you're asking yourself questions, answer them, and not with "I don't know."

I'm asking why I give up and I know my answer that I didn't write was, "I don't know." But had I taken the time to explore why I give up, I could have found some of my obstacles that I needed to overcome.

Instead, I just left that question hanging there, without exploring it, and probably went on to make more lists of eating rules.

So if you're journaling and you ask a question, answer it. See what comes up for you. See what you hear if you ask yourself things like "why do you give up" or "why do you cheat yourself."

I wish I had taken the time to do that myself back then.

Alright, several pages later I have what I thought was a list but as I read through it, I realized it was written like a poem or a song. From reading other entries about other things at this time, I clearly was in a creative phase where I was writing in rhymes, maybe considering songwriting, I don't know. Anyway, here's what it says:

"I feel sick

I feel disgusting

My insides hurt and I sense they are busting

Self-destruction

I did it to me

I'm only hurting myself, stop hurting me please

I wanna stop, so stop.

I can't.

Yes you can.

Can I really? Why not? Be smart like you can."

I mean, not a bad rhyme, right? I totally get where I'm coming from, I remember that feeling of being sick and what it was like, and how frustrating it was that I kept doing it to myself, and that back and forth about whether I could actually do it or not. Sums it up pretty well I think.

On the next page, I wrote what started out as a letter and then continued with a little rhyming and there was a title.

“Goodbye Binge Eating”

So here’s “Goodbye Binge Eating,” a letter with a little rhyming:

“You were my friend, but you’re not

You were always there for me but made things worse

You were so accessible and easy to find

You were there when I was bored, sad, nervous, lonely, tired, hungover, or celebrating

But you were the worst friend I ever had

Worst thing I ever kept bringing to my life

Never again do I want to see you

I don’t want you to be what I turn to

There’s so many great people that are better than you

And I am one of them and much better off without you

I am done with you, I promise to myself

Cuz when I’m with you, I can’t control myself

So I must say goodbye, and this time it’s for good

Cuz I know how awesome my life now will be

I know that without you I can be the real me

I can reach my potential and do anything I want

Goodbye binge eating, thanks a lot....FOR NOTHING!”

I love that last part.

Yeah, that pretty much sums up binge eating for me and again, unfortunately it wasn’t goodbye forever at that point, as much as I wanted it to be.

So that was the last of that random notebook and the next one is in 2010, when I got back to more traditional journaling, paragraph style. I don’t know why I took such a long break from journaling but here we are, a couple years later.

Now, since these are full on journal entries, most of them also go into other life stuff so what you'll be hearing is just the eating snippets. Just wanted to let you know in case it sounds weird that I'm starting or stopping at what might seem like in the middle of something. I was probably talking about something else before or after.

So, here's an entry from February 3, 2010:

"I feel like I was tested today and I failed. My phone broke and I was unable to send or receive any texts or phone calls. I had plans with Marko tonight and wanted to pick up bud from Matt too. After learning I got to the phone store too late I was VERY UPSET. Grocery shopping while upset is not a good idea. I indulged on a pint of ice cream and A LOT of Triscuits when I got home. Later on, my phone started working again and I was more mad at myself than when it was broken and I ate. It was one of those moments of, "If you had just chilled and waited it out..." When I lost my bday pics I did a good job of just being upset and not eating my feelings but not today. If I keep this shit up, I'm never going to #1 get over this eating disorder and #2 get to my goal weight. I need to cut the bullshit and stop cheating myself. I know I've said this time and time again but it's time for me to buckle down. No excuses, I know what's best for me and what will make me happy. So do it!"

So here, as I pointed out, I needed to just be upset and I didn't. I saw that I had it in me because I'd done it before but the thing was, I didn't really know how to do it. This is something that so many of us have forgotten how to do, so much so that it's a big part of what I teach people in my coaching program.

What I also did, which I did SO MUCH of in my journals, was do the whole, "just do it" thing. It's "I need to do this and I gotta do this" but what I didn't know was that I didn't know how to actually do it. I thought I just would. I thought that if I just "buckled down" as I said, that I would do it. But that's not how it goes, as I'm sure you know.

There was so much mental work that I needed to do that I was completely unaware of. I didn't even know anything about mental work, I was just so focused on my actions and behaviors.

Okay, the next day, February 4, 2010, here's what I wrote:

"On top of that, I'm feeling the effects of my bad eating – on my body. I can feel my legs widening and my waist getting thicker. I was better today but my frustrations didn't help. Nothing drastic but still some poor choices. And god only knows what Marko is serving at his apt tonight. Hopefully it's something I don't like. Lastly, I wanted to go over to his place now cuz I don't want to be here alone and frustrated but he's at the gym so I can't. Ugh. All stupid reasons and I don't know how they could build up to tears but they did.

I just want to live a healthy life without having to cut out things. Yeah I could say no fried foods, no ice cream, etc but really? Is that what's it's come to? Cuz it's not fair. I guess like alcoholics where you abuse and lose privileges but - I can't even finish the but. I've already started keeping track of what hindered me each day to see what my biggest, most common problems are. I think from there I'll start cutting out foods. It's just that studies say that it makes people nuts to cut out foods so I'm nervous it will backfire. But I guess it might be better than constantly overdoing it now. I do recall a time when I would just replace bingeing on a forbidden food with something else. We'll see, I guess it's worth a try.

I'm off to Marko's now. Hopefully this has been therapeutic enough for me to not cry or "binge" at his place. I feel so fat. It's crazy how feeling fat doesn't stop me from eating when I'm [not] hungry. Like I don't make the connection or ignore it. What a vicious cycle I've gotten into. Of course I became addicted to something I can't remove from my life."

Whew. That was a lot and I have no doubt that you can relate to some, if not all of that.

What got me was the part where I said I hope he serves food I don't like. Have you ever hoped that so it's easier for you to not eat at all or to not binge?

And I know almost all of us had wished we could just cut food out of our lives and that would cure us.

And that confusing thing that happens when feeling awful about our bodies doesn't stop us from bingeing. I actually did an episode related to this a few weeks ago, #245 When your behavior doesn't make sense. What I talk about in that episode explains this but on top of it, "feeling fat" isn't enough to stop feeling urges and to stop giving in to urges.

And of course I'm thinking that cutting out foods will help even though I also said that studies showed it won't. There I go thinking it will be different for me.

Spoiler alert, it wasn't.

Now this one that I'm going to share I have to preface by saying that 2 days earlier, on February 15, 2010, I had made a rule that I wasn't going to eat fried foods for a month.

Let's see how this goes.

On February 17th I wrote this:

"I accidentally ate fried tortilla strips that came on the salad I ordered today. I didn't realize until I was halfway done. So I decided to start tomorrow since it's only been 2 days and I wanted to have a solid 30. So then I ate Sarah's fries, some onion strings, a pint of ice cream, and Jack in the Box fries and chicken fingers. Gross. I CAN'T DO ALL OR NOTHING. And, I need to get myself away from those habits. I think I should exclude ice cream too for 30 days, 1 month. Just gotta break the habit. Then I can move on to my once a week, or start with a month of having ice cream with people. I always compare my compulsive eating with alcoholism and here's one more. I shouldn't be eating these things alone. Just social treat eating. That's it. It's hard for me to not just wait to be healthy until I move, I can't do that! (side note, I was moving in a few weeks) I need to start now. My clothes are getting tighter, my arms and waist bigger, and I don't want people to notice I've put on weight, if they haven't already. It's official, no fried foods and ice cream for 30 days. Now is the time to get healthy. Now."

I learned nothing from what happened here. Nothing. When I saw that I wrote that I can't do all or nothing, I thought I'd realized that cutting foods out is more detrimental than helpful but nope. So I have no idea what I meant by, "I can't do all or nothing." Clearly it wasn't that it isn't working for me since right after I decided that I'd add in ice cream to what I was going to cut out for the month.

Also, the idea of only eating joy foods while I was with other people is something that came up a lot for me. But it never stuck because I'd be alone, feel the urge, and eat them. It was just another rule I came up with to try and control what I ate that didn't work. And for the record, I now eat joy foods alone

often and it's not a problem at all. So I don't have to force myself to wait until I'm with someone else, thank goodness.

Alright, and now the last entry I have from 2010 that talks about eating, or at least that is interesting and talks about eating. I came across plenty that talked about eating but they were boring and not worth sharing, or just the same "I gotta do it" speeches I would give myself or talking about how good I ate, or just a quick few sentences about how crappy I ate, while not taking the time to write when I probably needed it most – while I was in the struggle and after a binge.

But anyway, here's a little snippet from my entry on September 1, 2010:

"After that, I hit a wall. It was like I was so happy and up and then just dropped. I think it was cuz the things I had to do I didn't want to do – like laundry. Or maybe cuz I realized I was super hungry. I don't know. Regardless, I OD'd on ice cream before and after James' show tonight. Ugh, Come on. Just don't buy the shit. AND don't smoke before taking a CVS trip. Duh. I know this and I do it anyways. Stop. I never care about how I'm gonna feel after. Just during."

Again, going back to my usual "don't buy it" plan. Also just telling myself to "stop" and "don't do it" as my plan for not doing it. So helpful Kirstin.

And the last part, about not caring about how I'll feel after, just during. It's what so many of us do. There were so many times when I would say, "I don't care" and I know a lot of you, if not all of you have done the same.

But we gotta think about and care about how we'll feel later. It matters. You will care when you are there. So consider your future self. Care about them because you will become them.

Alright, so that is it!

I hope you found some of this to be relatable and know that you're not alone in what you're going through and the things you do. And also know that whatever you did resonate with, it's not just you and me but tons of other people too.

When I work with people in my coaching groups, they're constantly seeing themselves in the other members and I also have people tell me all the time that when I talk about stuff on the podcast, it's like I'm in their head.

So it's not just you. You are more normal than you think you are.

And if you want to get to a new normal, one without binge eating and all the crap that goes along with it, you can do it.

It's possible for you.

I am so not at all the person in these journals anymore. I did the work to change and so can you.

So keep working on it and also, get help if you need it. I wish I had gotten it sooner than I did but, I did what I did for reasons I thought were right for me at the time.

And if you want my help, I do offer a group coaching program that you can get all the info about by going to coachkir.com/group. There, you can also sign up for the waitlist for the next round of the program, and get some helpful tips until the next program opens up.

Alright, so there's a little insight into past me. I hope you enjoyed it and I'll talk to you again soon.

Bye bye!