

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #254: Shutting Off Your Brain

Hi! Quick reminder that I'm doing a free workshop tomorrow, on Wednesday June 14th of 2023 at 3pm ET called "Drop the Diet Mentality."

You should come if you feel deprived and restricted by your food choices, if you're tired of obsessing about what you are and aren't supposed to eat, if you feel guilty after eating, if you binge because you're still hungry at the end of the day, or if you know that so much of your thinking about food and eating is wrapped up in diet mentality.

I'm going to help you let go of your diet thinking and feel relaxed about what you're eating and not eating.

You can register for the workshop by going to coachkir.com/workshop and there will be a recording available for a limited time afterward and if it's still available when you're hearing this, you can access it on that same webpage.

You don't have to keep thinking the way you do about food and eating. Let's work on changing it together.

Alright, now let's talk about shutting off your brain.

What I mean by this is that you're distracting your brain or are zoning out so you stop thinking about whatever it is you're thinking about.

It's something most of us have done while we've binged when we basically just zone out and don't think about anything except the food.

You're not thinking about your life, yourself, your body, your problems, your future, your feelings, none of it.

Your brain is completely shut off from all of it and you are zoned in on the food.

But we don't just do this with food and I actually got the idea for this episode from someone who doesn't binge eat.

They play video games or they watch movies or they go for bike rides and although sometimes they do those things simply because they enjoy doing them, they also told me that sometimes they do them because it's a way of shutting off their brain.

They have so many thoughts going around in their mind, they're thinking about how they're feeling or what they're not happy with or what they're stressed about or overwhelmed with and their solution for stopping all of it is to engage in an activity that allows them to shift their focus and shut off all that they don't want to be happening in their brain.

They want a break.

And it works. That's why they keep doing it.

Just like how when you binge, you might be wanting a break from thinking about bingeing, or just thinking about eating, or maybe you're not even wanting a break from something binge or food related but a break from other thoughts going on in your mind. And when you eat, you get that break. It works.

It's like your brain has shut off.

But here's where the problem can lie.

Once you stop eating, or doing whatever it is you're doing to shut off your brain, your brain will turn back on.

Those thoughts you were trying to get a break from will start back up again.

Maybe not immediately, but they will.

And then you'll just keep repeating the cycle.

You have thoughts that are bothersome to you, you shut off your brain by eating or by doing something else that will pull your attention and focus, the thoughts come back, you shut off your brain again, then your brain turns back on with all those thoughts again, and repeat, repeat, repeat.

Now, I do want to say that if you're okay with this cycle, if you're okay with handling your thoughts this way, then by all means, continue doing it.

If you're okay with eating or doing something else like the person I talked about, like playing video games or doing some kind of physical activity to take your mind off your thoughts and to shut off your

brain, knowing that the thoughts will come back afterward, and you're then going to shut your brain off again, then you do you and do what you like.

But for most people, they don't want to keep going in that cycle like that.

They want those dang thoughts to stop. They don't want them to keep coming back.

But if they don't actually do anything to stop them from coming back, then they will.

Shutting off your brain, distracting yourself, zoning out, taking a break from them, isn't going to stop them.

It's like you're putting them aside for the moment but they're still there.

So if you want them to not be there anymore, or at least not be so loud and constant, then you have to work on them.

You have to address them, listen to them, then change them, and find solutions.

Instead of shutting off your brain and eating when you feel an urge, address it. Listen to what you're thinking, understand why it's there, look for what need or want you have, beyond eating food, that the urge is trying to provide to you by eating food, something like entertainment, connection, love, calmness, or happiness.

And then you go give yourself whatever it is in a different way.

Now, let's also be clear here that doing this while you're feeling an urge if the urge is intense isn't always a realistic thing to do.

Sometimes we feel urges and we can totally do some mental work when we feel them.

But sometimes it's just not realistic because you're not able to access your rational thinking, and that's okay.

Because you're then going to do this exploration and problem solving afterward if you do eat in response to the urge.

You're not going to shut off your brain again after you eat by moving on to something else.

You're going to be present with yourself, understand yourself, and work on yourself.

Nothing gets solved if you keep avoiding.

So much can be solved when you face your thoughts and do thought work.

You can stop all the mental chatter about food if you take some time to address your thoughts about food.

You can stop all the negative BS that you think about your body if you address your thoughts about your body and work on changing them.

You can overcome what you're overwhelmed and stressed about if you take some time to look at your thoughts and work on them.

And when I talk about working on them, what I mean is that you're first separating out facts and thoughts. You're separating what is neutral and factual, something like, "I have a job" and what is your thoughts, your opinion, your perspective, your interpretation, which is something like, "I will never get this done" or "My boss is an a-hole."

Or there is a fact that you have a body and it weighs X number of pounds. Then you have thoughts like, "It's disgusting," or "I can't believe I did this to myself," or "I'm never going to be able to feel comfortable in my body."

You have a job and you have a body that weighs x number of pounds and those are things we can all agree on and aren't changeable in this moment. Unless of course you quit your job but assuming you're not going to in this moment.

And then everything else is optional. You don't have to think any of those other thoughts. You don't have to. You have other options and if you keep choosing these options, you will keep feeling crappy when they come up and they will keep coming up because your job and your body are going to be very present in your life.

And then you might do exactly what I've been talking about. You try to shut it off by eating food. Which isn't going to change anything.

So the first part of the work is recognizing what your thoughts are and seeing them as optional, not factual. Your body isn't factually disgusting, you're just thinking it's disgusting. You're choosing the word, "disgusting" to describe it.

And then you can start to explore other words and thoughts about your body that don't feel so crappy. They don't have to be super positive but they can be slightly less negative, so you're at least moving toward neutral.

Regardless of what your thoughts are that you're wanting to shut off, it is possible for you to change them.

And sometimes you'll be able to do it more quickly than other times. Sometimes it may take awhile but what matters most is that you're putting in the effort to do it. You're not just avoiding them. You're being proactive.

And even that can help with the thoughts going on in your mind.

You're working on it. You're working toward a solution. You're doing something about it.

So often I have people tell me that they feel relief after just signing up for my Stop Binge Eating Program simply because they've taken a step toward a solution. They haven't even started anything in

there but we can begin to feel better when we stop doing nothing and start doing something or stop doing the same thing that's not working and start something new.

And I know it's hard sometimes to see any options for how you can change your thoughts. I've been there with eating and with other things in life. But there is, I promise you. Sometimes we just need help seeing it and that's why I offer my help in my program. It can be so helpful to have an outside perspective from someone who is not in your head looking at all the things you are. You see only what you see and I can see things you can't see.

It's sometimes the idea of, "You can't see the forest for the trees." You see the tree and you get stuck on that, meanwhile, I can see the whole forest.

But if you are doing this on your own, this is how you can start working on your thoughts instead of just shutting off your brain to shut off your thoughts.

You look at your turned on brain.

You can lay down and close your eyes and see what thoughts comes up.

Or you can do a meditation and see what thoughts come up.

Or you can put pen to paper and write about whatever is on your mind and see what thoughts come up.

Or, if you're trying to do something else and keep getting distracted by thoughts, notice what's coming up on repeat for you.

All of these can help you get clear on what the thoughts are that you want to shut off. Awareness of the problem is always the first step.

And then, acknowledge that you have other options. You don't have to think about it this way. Even if you don't know how else to think about it, which happens a lot when we're so deep in believing what we're thinking, just know that it's true that other options exist.

And then you can start to explore other options, even if you don't believe them.

You can think about what you'd tell a friend if they told you they were thinking that thought. You can try to find different words you could use that don't feel as bad. You can question if what you're thinking is really true. You can also ask yourself why you think that and see what comes up. You can ask yourself what you want to do about it or what you could do about it.

With all of those, you're just looking for other options and when you do, you just might find one that you like and that could help you to stop the thought swirl and move you forward toward a better mindset.

Change is possible. But you have to be open to it and open to changing what you're doing.

And doing that work may be hard, and it may not feel good, but in the end, having changed something you don't like feels so much better than staying stuck in something you don't like.

And one last thing about this.

I want to reiterate that taking a break and shutting off your brain isn't a bad thing.

Sometimes we need the break. Sometimes we don't have the energy to do the thought work.

So don't beat yourself up or be hard on yourself or feel guilty if you're not doing the work all of the time.

It's okay.

Take a mental rest. Shift your focus to something else if you can.

But please, make sure that you're not doing something that will cause more problems for you.

Do what you want to do but just don't do it to excess.

And promise yourself that you will get back to work when you feel up to it and mentally recharged.

Then turn your brain on, see what's there, do what you can with what you find, and get help if you need it.

Alright, that's what I have for you today and a reminder real quick about the free workshop I'm doing tomorrow, Wednesday June 14th of 2023 at 3pm ET. "Drop the Diet Mentality," and this will actually tie into what I talked about on this episode today. I'm going to help you shift your thinking about food and eating so you can feel more relaxed about it.

So go to coachkir.com/workshop to register and attend the workshop live or to access the recording if it's still available when you're hearing this.

Okay, I'll see you there!

Bye bye.