

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #256: Identifying When You're Being Overly Restrictive

Hi! Are you so ready to stop binge eating? Do you want me to help you do it? Well, if you said yes and yes then you're in luck because registration for the next round of my Stop Binge Eating Group Coaching Program is opening this Thursday on June 29th of 2023!

You don't have to do this alone. You can get my direct help, and get a lot of my help, and as much as you need and want.

And you could walk away from this program a very different person with very different eating habits and very different thoughts about food and eating.

You don't have to stay the same way that you are. Change is possible. I see it happen all the time and it can happen for you too.

So if you want my help in doing it, join me in this next round.

Go to coachkir.com/group to get all the info and to join the waitlist so you can get notified and sign up and get started on the coursework as soon as registration opens on the 29th.

And if you have any questions that aren't answered on that webpage, email them to info@coachkir.com.

I got you. We can do this together. Let's do it.

Alright, now onto today's topic, identifying when you're being overly restrictive.

So many of us have normalized things that diet culture has taught us that are actually overly restrictive.

I hear it from my group members, I hear it from people in my life, and I used to do it too.

We talk about food, eating, ourselves, and our bodies in ways that just seem factual, or totally normal, or just how it is when actually, it doesn't have to be this way and, this way is actually contributing to binge eating.

One of the main reasons why people binge is because they're being overly restrictive.

They're restricting themselves in ways that not only do they not have to but in ways that are hurting their relationship with food, eating, themselves, and their bodies.

They're depriving themselves of what they want and what their body wants and a normal reaction to deprivation is to go to the opposite extreme of overconsumption.

You go from not enough, or none, to too much.

You go from eating none of something you like to eating excessive amounts of it.

Or not eating enough food to fuel your body to eating more than enough and over-fueling your body.

Most people who binge eat do this at one time or another and it might be the main reason why they binge.

Now, the simple solution here would be to just stop being too restrictive and be more flexible, relaxed, and permissive but that's of course easier said than done.

There can be so many things tied up in their restrictions, so many thoughts, beliefs, and feelings, that it's hard to let them go.

But before you can even start doing that work to let them go, you have to be aware that you even have them, are even doing them.

Awareness is always the first step and sometimes, we have no idea that what we're thinking is overly restrictive for us or that it's diet mentality. Again, we sometimes just think it's fact, or normal, or we don't even stop to question it at all.

We just say it and think it.

So in this episode today, I want to talk about ways that people can be overly restrictive without even knowing they are.

You might find that you're doing the same, or maybe not and if not, that's great! But if you are, it's time to acknowledge this thinking work on changing it.

Now, before I go into specific examples of how this could look, I first want to talk about what makes something overly restrictive.

And what it comes down to is that the restriction causes you to do something that deprives either you or your body.

And when I say depriving “you” I mean you’re telling yourself you can’t have what you want and you’re doing it because you think you should, or you have to, or you’re afraid not to.

And depriving your body means you’re not fueling it properly.

This is important to know because not all restrictions are bad as we are sometimes led to believe.

One person may restrict in a certain way and love it and having that restriction in their life is helpful for them.

While another may have the same restriction but hate it, feel restricted by it, and feel resentful, all of which is not helpful and will most likely lead to rebellion.

And that right there is what you want to watch out for.

How you feel having a restriction in place.

Now, you have to be careful here because sometimes you may feel a little of that deprivation or resentment while having a helpful restriction in place.

For example, you may have decided to restrict yourself by only having one slice of cake at a party and then you’re feeling restricted and resentful about having made this decision.

But, you also have reasons that you like for only having one slice, reasons that are more important to you than simply getting more cake pleasure, such as still feeling good and energized instead of too full and sluggish, or because you want to engage with people and not be so focused on eating cake, or because it’s close to bedtime and you don’t want the extra sugar to affect your sleep.

Ultimately, for you, the reasons to not eat more than one slice outweigh the reasons to eat more and you know that not eating more is what you want most. Eating more is just what you think you want in the moment.

This can happen with helpful restrictions all the time.

I have a pretty regular bedtime and sometimes I don’t want to go to bed at that time. I want more fun and pleasure. But, I also know that going to bed at that time is what I really want, it’s my true want, and I’ll be so happy that I did once I actually get in bed and when I wake up the next day feeling good, having slept enough.

So how I identify being overly restrictive is if you feel resentful or restricted by your eating decisions or you feel mentally or physically deprived. And again, it’s not temporary where you have a moment of, “But I want that” and then remind yourself that it’s not what you really want. It’s just straight up deprivation, or sadness, or self-pity.

So instead of doing what you think is truly best for your mind and body, and is truly what you want, and is what's best for your well-being, you do what you think you should do or what you think you have to do.

You'll tell yourself you can't eat that food or you can't have more or you can't eat even though you're hungry.

You'll tell yourself you shouldn't eat that, or have to eat this, or have to eat this much.

A very clear indicator of being overly restrictive with your eating is telling yourself you "can't," you "have to," or "you shouldn't."

When you tell yourself that you can't have something you want, or that you shouldn't have something you want, or you have to eat something you don't want to eat, how does that feel?

Not great right?

That's when you're going to feel deprived and feel restricted, and maybe other feelings too, and those are feelings that have driven countless people into rebellious eating, overeating, and bingeing.

This is something that shows up for people who diet all the time.

They think they have to eat in a certain way to lose weight so they tell themselves they have to eat this, can't eat that, and shouldn't eat this.

They put all this pressure on themselves to eat in a certain way to lose weight and usually this looks like not allowing themselves to eat certain foods or not eat enough food to fuel their bodies properly.

Because they're doing what they don't want to be doing, which is not eating certain foods they like, or doing what their body doesn't want them to be doing, which is under fueling it, it's not sustainable and again, causes a backlash of overeating or bingeing on fuel for the body or foods they haven't been allowing.

And I want to give an important side note to any of you who want to lose weight. This isn't how it has to be. You CAN lose weight, or maintain your weight, while properly fueling your body and eating the foods you want to eat. You don't have to put all those restrictions on yourself that you don't want to have.

Now, I'm of course not going to go into all this because this is a binge eating podcast, not a weight loss podcast but it is something I work on with people in my program who want to lose weight after stopping binge eating. There is a way to do it without completely undoing all the work you did to stop binge eating and without perpetuating binge eating. I just want you to know that.

How so many diets present weight loss isn't the only way.

Okay, enough about weight loss. Back to restricting.

One of the easiest ways to identify if you're being overly restrictive is if you're using the words, "can't," "have to," or "should," or "shouldn't."

If you ever hear yourself say that about food or eating, and it's not like you physically can't eat because there isn't any food available, or physically can't eat a food that isn't available, acknowledge that it's actually your choice to eat or to not eat.

It's not that you can't, you can. Eating is an option for you. Eating that food is an option for you.

But you're choosing to not eat it.

You don't have to eat that food. You don't have to not eat that food. No one is forcing you to.

You're choosing to eat it or not eat.

And saying you shouldn't eat something you like or want to eat or that you should eat something you don't is only going to make you feel guilty about eating what you like or sad about not eating what you want to.

Truthfully, you should eat what you want to eat, unless you have better reasons, reasons that you like, to not eat it.

When you tell yourself you can but you're choosing not to, or that you're choosing to, it feels so much better. It's now your choice, you're doing what you want to do, and that right there will not cause negative feelings. There's no deprivation when you're doing what you want to do.

Don't tell yourself you can't when you can, don't tell yourself you have to when you don't, and just drop the should's.

And if you're wondering, well what if I have a food intolerance or my doctor said to not eat that, then I recommend you listen to the episode I did on Allergies, Intolerances, and Chronic Illnesses, episode #76.

But basically, you still have a choice and owning the choice you have will help you to not feel deprived by what you decide to eat and not eat.

So those words at the most obvious but then there are some sneaky ways being overly restrictive shows up for people.

Sometimes people say things and it doesn't seem like it's a problem but when we really break it down, it is.

One that comes up a lot is when people label foods as healthy or unhealthy.

Now, this in itself is not a problem. You might just be using those words as a simple way to describe how nutritious a food is.

But, a lot of the time, people are using those words to label what's good and bad.

It's "good and bad" in disguise.

And a lot of the time, labeling foods as good and bad is not helpful.

People think it's going to stop them from eating what they think is bad, but, it doesn't always stop them and even when it does stop them, they might feel deprived because again, they're thinking they shouldn't or can't eat it because it's bad.

And when they do actually eat it, because most likely they will eventually because *they want it*, they feel guilty about eating it.

Deprivation and guilt when it comes to food is not going to be helpful if you're someone who binge eats.

And sometimes when people are trying to get away from calling foods "good and bad," they start using "healthy and unhealthy" but for them, the idea behind it is still the same. They still feel deprived when they're eating the healthy food when they really want to eat the unhealthy food but are telling themselves they can't or shouldn't, and they feel guilty when they do eat the unhealthy food because they're associating unhealthy with bad.

So if you're wanting to categorize foods, notice how you feel when you use each label.

They shouldn't cause you to feel bad about what you're eating.

If you've listened to previous episodes of this podcast, you've probably heard me talk about joy foods and fuel foods and I find this to be helpful because both are good, joy and fuel are good, both serve a purpose, and neither is bad.

So again, watch out for how you feel.

Here's another sneaky one that comes up.

When someone says, "I get to have this."

It sounds like they're allowing the food, it sounds like they're giving themselves permission to eat what they want but, with that, are there also times when they don't get to have this?

Is them getting to have it conditional?

It's the same with saying you deserve to eat it. Does that also mean there are times when you don't deserve it?

Or even saying, "I can have this." Can you have it now because there are times when you tell yourself you can't?

And that "can" one is tricky because even just a few minutes ago I told you that telling yourself you can is not overly restricting. You *can* have it, and you also *do* deserve it, and you also *do* get to have it.

But if you hear yourself thinking or saying this, check to see if you're saying it because you are 100%, unconditionally allowing yourself to eat that or of if you can because of this reason or deserve it because of that reason, or get to have it for this reason, not just because you want it.

For example, “I get to have this because I’ve eaten so well all day.” So that means if you hadn’t eaten well all day, you don’t get to have this. That’s being overly restrictive.

That’s depriving yourself of what you want because you didn’t earn it or don’t think you should or for some other overly restrictive reason that’s not going to feel good.

When it comes to food, you always can, always do deserve to, and always get to, but you get decide if you *want* to.

And there’s so many other ways that people are overly restricting themselves, following rules they don’t want to follow, and not feeling good about it.

I used to do it with calorie counting. Most of the time I didn’t want to do it but thought I had to. And sometimes the result of that would be me saying screw the whole thing and just overloading on calories.

I thought I was doing the right thing by counting them but it wasn’t really the right thing for me because I didn’t want to do it.

And I didn’t have to do it like I thought I did.

I had other options, like using my body to determine how much is enough or too much for me to eat.

It took me awhile to get on board with that option and now that’s what I do, I’m not adding up calories in an app every day and I’m not gaining a bunch of weight like I feared I would for all those years. I’ve even lost weight not counting calories.

I believed I had to count calories to not binge and to lose and maintain weight and I was wrong. I don’t have to.

Now, let’s be clear that counting calories isn’t inherently bad or wrong. There are some people who love counting calories. They like their reasons for doing it and don’t find it as daunting as I did. So they do it and it’s not a problem.

This just goes to show that it’s not what you’re doing that makes something overly restrictive, it’s your thoughts and reasons behind it that does.

Just like choosing low calorie, low fat, or low carb versions of food. If you genuinely like them, you’re not going to feel restricted or deprived. But if you don’t really like them, if you really want the regular version but think you have to eat these or can’t eat the regular version, then that’s where it becomes a problem.

You’re basically forcing yourself to do what you don’t want to do and when you do this too many times, you’ll rebel and probably excessively rebel.

But, let’s also remember that being overly restrictive isn’t just about you, it’s also about your body.

You might think you shouldn't be hungry, even though you are, so you don't eat and your body gets under fueled, or you might think you can't eat even though you're hungry and you actually can eat you're just choosing not to for weight loss and your body gets under fueled, or you think you have to eat x number of calories and no more even if your body is hungry and you then under fuel it.

Under fueling your body is most likely going to cause you to feel urges to binge, or at least overeat because if your brain senses it's being under fueled, it's going to urge you to counteract that by over fueling.

If you are hungry, don't deny your body of fuel.

If you're hungry, you should be hungry, because you are, so eat, if you are hungry and you can eat, choose to eat, and if you ate x number of calories and are hungry, eat.

Give your body what it needs and what it's asking for.

And give yourself what you want.

Stop following rules that don't include what you want and what your body needs.

Even if the rules work short-term, they're not going to long-term.

Eventually, deprivation will come, either physical or mental, and with that will come overconsumption.

So instead of going from one extreme to the other, do your best to stay in the middle.

And that starts with giving yourself full permission to make decisions based on what you want and what your body wants.

Notice when you're not. Identify those times when you're feeling deprived, resentful, restricted, self-pity, or sadness about what you're eating or not eating. And start making a shift in how you're thinking about your options and what you base your decisions on.

Stopping overly restricting your eating is going to be crucial in your process of stopping binge eating so let's get aware of if you're doing it and how you're doing it so you can start making changes.

And if you want help with this, join me in The Stop Binge Eating Program. I point out things all the time that my group members just don't see for themselves, all those sneaky restrictions they don't realize they have, and I help them make the shift into only having restrictions that they like, that they want to have, and that make their life better.

Again, registration for the next round is opening up this Thursday, June 29th of 2023, you can get all the info about the program at coachkir.com/group, and once registration is open you'll also be able to register on that page but for now, you can join the wait list which just means you'll be the first to be notified once registration opens so you can get started on the coursework ASAP before the program officially begins. And if you have any questions that aren't answered on that webpage you can email them to info@coachkir.com.

Alright, that is all for today and I will talk to you next time. Bye bye!

