THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #260: Emotional Eating Isn't Bad

Hello! Let's talk about emotional eating and in this episode I'm actually going to be talking about why emotional eating isn't bad and why it's important to not think that it's bad.

But first, let's get clear on what emotional eating is and how I'm defining it here.

And also what overeating and binge eating are so we're clear about what I'm talking about today as I'm talking about emotional eating because these are all not one in the same.

Now, how I'm defining these might be different or the same as how you've heard them defined before but so you and I are on the same page in this episode here, here's my take on it all.

So the first part of my definition of emotional eating is when you're eating for any reason other than hunger.

You're not eating to fuel your body, you're eating because you desire to eat and I classify this kind of desire as an emotion. It's a desire that you feel that is not originated in the body but in the mind.

You might be desiring to eat because you simply want the pleasure of the food or you're desiring to eat because you are wanting to numb, distract from, or change another emotion you're feeling like anxious, sad, lonely, bored, etc.

Emotional eating is driven by your emotions either desire to feel one or desire to change one.

Emotional eating can also be eating what you feel like eating when you're hungry. What I mean by that is that you're choosing to eat what you feel like, what you're in the mood for, what you want, instead of choosing what is going to be the best option for your body.

You might be eating for hunger, you are actually hungry, but you're eating according to your emotions instead of solely eating according to your body and it's needs.

There are emotions that are driving your decisions and therefore, it's emotional eating.

So that's my breakdown for emotional eating.

Then there's overeating, which is also almost always emotional.

Overeating is when you're eating more food than your body requires for food.

You're over fueling your body.

This is emotional because you're eating more because you want more.

It's desire driven, or driven by another emotion.

You're not eating more than your body needs because it needs the fuel, it's not hunger driven, it's emotionally driven.

So overeating is emotional eating but, emotional eating doesn't always mean overeating.

You can eat emotionally and not overeat.

But if you are overeating, you are emotionally eating.

And then there's binge eating.

Binge eating is when you are eating large quantities of food in a short period of time, are feeling out of control while you're eating, and then after you've eaten you physically feel extremely full, and emotionally feel intense disgust, guilt, or shame.

Some people may or may not have other ways that they define if they binged but these are the most common indicators for most people.

Binge eating is urge driven, and an urge is a strong desire.

That desire can come from your brain desiring fuel, from you desiring what you've been overly restricting from yourself, or from you desiring to feel differently if you're feeling an uncomfortable emotion.

So binge eating is excessive overeating but not all overeating is binge eating.

And binge eating can be emotion driven and not all emotional eating is binge eating, or even overeating.

So all are intertwined but are not one in the same.

And I think this is important to understand because when I talk about the topic of this podcast, which is that emotional eating isn't bad, I want you to understand what exactly it is that I'm saying isn't bad.

Eating according to how you feel emotionally isn't bad.

Eating according to what you feel like, even if it's not the most nutrient dense option isn't bad.

And eating because you want to experience a pleasurable feeling, or because you want to feel differently isn't bad.

None of these things are inherently bad meaning that they're not always bad.

They're not always going to create an undesirable outcome for you.

Sometimes, you will be totally fine.

And sometimes, eating emotionally is actually exactly what you should do.

So many people binge eat because they're depriving themselves of what they want.

Emotionally, they want a certain food but they're not allowing themselves to have it because they think it's bad, or too unhealthy, or it will cause them to binge.

And after not giving themselves what they want for too long, their desire builds into an urge and they eventually excessively eat what they haven't been allowing themselves.

Had they just eaten what they wanted, what they felt like, what they were in the mood for, that wouldn't have happened.

So in that case, emotional eating isn't a bad thing. It's actually a good thing to do in order to prevent a binge in the future.

Also, what if other people are all eating cake at birthday party or are going out for ice cream? They're not eating for fuel, it's just for pleasure, they just want it. They're emotionally eating. Is that bad?

Not if it's what they want and if it's not going to have any negative outcomes for them.

Most people I know want to engage in eating activities like this. They want to be able to eat something for fun. They want to eat a piece or two of their favorite candy.

And if they're thinking this is bad because they're not hungry, and they should only eat food as fuel, and food that is nutrient dense, and only when they're hungry, then they're going to feel guilty for eating it.

And feeling guilty for what you're choosing to eat is a common overeating and binge eating trigger.

Once they're doing something bad and eating something bad, they're gonna go all in on being bad before they start being good again.

Or, they're feeling guilty and want to numb it or distract from how they're feeling so they keep eating, causing themselves to overeat or binge.

And ya know what, if you're feeling bored or feeling down and you want to eat some ice cream to entertain yourself or to feel better and you're able to eat it without overeating or bingeing, so you're stopping before you notice any negative physical effects, then you go for it.

It doesn't have to be considered bad.

It can be fine.

We don't have to demonize emotional eating.

Is it something we want to do exclusively or all the time? No. But you still don't have to say it's bad.

You don't have to make yourself feel bad about doing it.

People emotionally eat all the time without making it mean anything bad about themselves or about what they're doing.

And you don't have to either.

For most people, when we look at what emotional eating actually is as I defined it a few minutes ago, they don't want to never do it.

For most people, it's just not realistic.

They want to eat that birthday cake or go out for ice cream or eat a piece of their favorite specialty candy when they're out and about and are nearby where they sell it, or want to eat for entertainment or as something fun to do.

They don't want to only see food as fuel.

They want to be able to eat joy foods, and eat emotionally sometimes.

It's normal and it's okay.

It's also part of a having a good relationship with food because a good relationship with food includes allowing yourself to eat what you want when you want.

Now, that doesn't mean you're going to go ballistic and eat everything and anything that comes into your mind because that's not what you *really* want.

It means you're taking both what you want and how your body will respond into account when deciding what you truly want.

You don't *want* to eat anything and everything because you would feel like garbage if you did. When you consider the outcome of doing that, you realize it's not what you really want.

So when you're allowing yourself to eat what you want when you want, you're telling yourself the whole story of eating it.

What will happen as you eat it, right after you eat it, and soon after eating it.

What most people want to happen is that they eat something, enjoy the crap out of it, and still feel good afterward.

If that's you, then that's what it means to eat what you want when you want.

And sometimes what you'll want is to eat according to your emotions and if you're not going to have any negative physical effects afterward, then why not eat it?

So I hope you can see that not only is emotional eating not inherently bad but it can also be helpful for you to allow yourself to eat emotionally.

Allow yourself to have what you want while still having regard for your body.

It will help you to stop binge eating, to decrease your overeating, and become more of the eater that you truly want to be.

Alright, that's all for today and I'll talk to you next time. Bye bye.