

# THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

*with Kirstin Sarfde*

## Ep #258: When You Don't Know Why, How, or What

Hi! Let's jump right in and talk about those times when you just don't know why, how, or what.

This is a topic that I've touched on here and there throughout the podcast and I decided I wanted to give it its own episode because it's something that I see causes people to get stuck sometimes.

There's so many things that I hear people say they don't know, that they need to know, as they're working on stopping binge eating.

There's the "how's" where they don't know how to stop binge eating as a whole, how to stop overly restricting themselves, how to feel an emotion, how to feel an urge without giving in to it, how to change their thoughts.

There's also not knowing what other options they have like another option for how else they could be thinking about something or what else they could do.

And then not knowing why they did what they did because they don't have awareness of their thoughts or feelings or not knowing why they even feel urges to binge at all.

Having these answers that they don't know are part of the answer for how they'll stop binge eating.

When they know the "how" then can then work on doing it. When they know what the other options are, they can choose and practice one. When they know why they did something, or what they were thinking or feeling before they did it, then they can have understanding of their motives, decisions, and drivers and work on changing their motives, decisions, and drivers.

But when they don't know, they can't change anything. Or at least not change what needs to change in order to have effective change.

They won't know what to change and what to do differently to have the proper direction or guidance.

And if they don't, then they won't do anything differently or, they'll try to do different things but it might not be the right thing for them.

I sometimes see people work on a "how" that isn't the right "how" for them, it's not the right method for them, their issues, their struggles, and for their personal self and what they need.

A common way this shows up for people who binge eat is when they go on a diet to try to stop binge eating, or try to eliminate foods from their life. Those aren't going to be helpful "how's" for pretty much anybody who binge eats and will most likely exacerbate the problem.

But if they don't know what to try, because they're simply saying something like, "I don't know how to stop binge eating," then they're not going to find out how and therefore, not learn how to do it.

Same for thinking, "I don't know how to feel an urge or emotion without eating to make it go away." if they're thinking that, they won't find out how and learn how so their same eating habits will continue.

Then there's not knowing what your other options are. If you don't know what they are then you'll keep choosing the same option and you're obviously going to keep getting the same results.

If you're familiar with what I teach about stopping binge eating because you've listened to other episodes of this podcast, so much of it revolves around your thoughts and feelings.

How you're thinking is going to be key in understanding and changing what you're doing and how you're behaving.

Your thoughts cause your feelings and your feelings drive your actions.

So if you want to do differently, you have to think differently so you feel differently and those different feelings will drive different actions.

But sometimes, people have no idea what they could think instead of what they are thinking. They get so stuck on what they've been thinking that they can't even see other options.

And if they don't see other options, they'll keep choosing what they've been choosing.

And example of this shows up a lot in body image where we keep using the same word, a word that feels terrible, to describe our body and how it looks.

But that word is only one option, and it *is* an option, and if you don't see another option that still feels true to you, then you're going to keep using the same one, something like disgusting, flabby, ugly, unattractive, and keep feeling terrible which will drive you to act terribly.

That's one of those confusing series of events that people have a hard time understanding, when they hate their body and end up bingeing which obviously isn't going to help change their body like they want to.

They're most likely bingeing to avoid their thoughts and feelings about their body or to distract or to make themselves feel better instead of changing how they think because they don't know how else to think.

But there are always other options. We can always find a different perspective if we want to. We can always use different words if we want to.

But if we simply say, "I don't know what else to think," then we'll be stuck thinking what we've been thinking and change nothing.

Then there's knowing why you binged, knowing what happened and being aware of what was going on before a binge.

This is going to be crucial in understanding your patterns and what needs to change for you.

There is a moment that you made the decision to start eating. What did the decision sound like? Why did you make the decision? What was going on before you made the decision that influenced your decision?

If you just say you don't know then you're not going to uncover why the binge happened, and what is most likely the reason why most of your binges happen.

Or if you don't know what you're doing that is causing you to feel urges to binge in general, which is going to be a driver for binge eating, then you won't know how to stop them from showing up.

And if you don't know these things, if you don't have this understanding, then you won't even know what thoughts to change or what it is you need to do and then you'll do what I mentioned a moment ago – keep thinking the same thoughts and keep trying things that aren't addressing the root causes of your bingeing.

And what's also really important to note here is that when you think "I don't know," for whichever reason, you're going to feel defeated, hopeless, or confused.

Those are feelings that will most likely stop you from doing anything. Those feelings drive people to give up. They drive inaction.

And of course, that will not result in you stopping binge eating.

So, "I don't know," can't be the answer you settle on.

When I ask my group members a question and they respond with, "I don't know," I don't let them stay there.

Sometimes I'll ask them to take a guess because what happens sometimes is that they don't see what they think is the right answer so they say nothing at all. But when we open up the option of being wrong, where we're just brainstorming ideas, then it's getting the brain looking for the answer.

Have you ever been trying to figure something out, like someone's name, and at first you have no idea but then you take a guess at what you think the first letter might be, and you guess a name beginning with that letter but decide that's not it, and then take another guess based off that first one, maybe you realize it's not that letter or you try another name beginning with that letter, and although you haven't gotten it yet, you start taking more guesses until you finally figure it out?

It's like that.

We get the ball rolling with a guess and I can't tell you how many times I've seen my group members start guessing and talking after they initially said I don't know and they eventually get to the ah-ha where they say something and then say, "That's it!"

They get there because instead of accepting that they don't know, they were willing to explore.

And because they did, they found the answer and it's so liberating when you understand something. And solutions become easier to see and seeing solutions in itself can feel so good.

But then there are times when they legit just do not know.

That probably happens for you too. It for sure happens with me sometimes where I just don't know how to do something or don't see other options or don't know why I did what I did.

And we might not even have a guess. We might be completely lost for an answer.

But we still don't have to settle with, "I don't know."

We can figure it out.

We live in this amazing world with so much knowledge that's available to us whether it be somewhere online or in a book or within another person.

When we settle on, "I don't know," we're not going to put in effort to look for that knowledge.

Again, "I don't know," is going to drive inaction and giving up most of the time.

But, "I'm going to figure this out," is more like determination which *will* get you searching for an answer.

It's not that you don't know, you just don't know *yet*.

The answer exists and you will find it.

That may mean you ask someone else to help you find it, or you research, or you pay closer attention to yourself and notice what's going on internally with your thoughts and feelings or take some time to do some self exploration.

When I ask my group members something and they legit don't know the answer, if I do know the answer I will tell them. I will give them my knowledge. If they try to guess but aren't finding the answer, and I don't know the answer, because I can't know it, because the answer lies within them, for example I can't know what they're thinking or feeling, I can only guess if they don't tell me and my guess could be wrong, then their homework is to pay closer attention to themselves or to spend some time doing some journaling about it and explore their mind on their own.

And they will find the answer eventually.

Then when it's figured out, we can move forward.

Now we can work on effective solutions.

So if you hear yourself say, "I don't know" as you're working on stopping binge eating, don't accept that answer.

Take some guesses, explore yourself, or find someone who does know.

Know that the answer exists and decide that you will figure it out.

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