

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #264: Not Wanting to Go to Sleep and When You Can't Fall Asleep

Hi! Today I am celebrating because....yesterday was the five year anniversary for this podcast!! Can you believe it??

I honestly can't. I actually just did the math AGAIN to make sure it's really been 5 years, and it has been.

The first 3 episodes were released on August 21st of 2018 and here we are, on August 22nd of 2023, on episode number 264, still going.

I've released an episode of this podcast every week for 5 freakin' years, there have been millions of downloads and thousands of people have been helped. I'm still in awe of this.

And I want to thank every single one of you who have been listening, who have provided feedback, and who have encouraged me to keep going with your extremely kind words and messages and emails. I keep doing this because of you, I'm so grateful for you, and although I have no idea how many more years I will do this podcast for, I think it's pretty freakin' cool that I've already done it for 5. I truly do love you all so much and I wish I could tell each and every one of you to your face but just know that I do!

And also, since I'm talking about anniversaries, I wanted to share a personal one that I'm having in between when I'm recording this and when it will be released.

It's my one year anniversary with my boyfriend that I have not yet talked about on this podcast! I've talked about him here and there with my group members that I work with in my program and now you know too!

It's hands down the best relationship I've ever been in, he has everything I want in a partner, and I am so happy and in love with him.

And for our anniversary, on the actual day of our first date we'll be going to the beach where we had our first date, and then the next day we're taking a little weekend trip up north in Maine where we'll be camping and paddle boarding and maybe surfing, and exploring and just enjoying celebrating together. It's gonna be so fun!

And for anyone who is wondering, yes, he is the person who got me into surfing, which I talked about a little bit on one or two episodes. He's just the funnest and I've tried so many new things because of him and I love it so much.

So anyway, I'm happy, but enough about me and my celebrations.

Let's jump into today's topic which is sleep.

I chose this topic for this anniversary episode because sleep is a top priority of mine, it's also something I have had some struggles with myself, and it's also something that can effect your eating habits, your mental health, your motivation, your energy, your focus, your mental capacity, and so many things that will also effect your binge eating and the work that you're doing to stop binge eating.

It will affect your brain performance, mood, and health.

It will be so much easier to not binge and do the things to help you to stop binge eating when you're feeling rested, awake, and are in a good mood.

I can't tell you how many people have told me that they often binge when they're tired.

So basically, sleep really important in so many ways and I walk to talk about it here on the podcast so here we go.

Let's get you some better sleep.

Now, I'm obviously not a scientist or sleep expert so I'm not going to be getting into all the science of sleep or sleep disorders.

And if you suspect that you might have a sleep disorder or an issue that goes beyond what I'm talking about here today, please talk to your doctor and/or a sleep specialist.

What *I* can help you with and what I'll be talking about today is your mindset around sleeping, and not sleeping.

Specifically, not wanting to go to sleep and having a hard time falling back asleep.

This topic of sleep has come up recently with a few of the people in my maintenance membership that I offer for people who have completed The Stop Binge Eating Group Coaching Program and side note, if you've completed the program and want to join the membership, shoot me an email and I'll send you the registration link.

So, the two main things that have come up for people as I said, are not wanting to go to sleep and having a hard time falling asleep.

So let's talk about both starting first with not wanting to go to sleep.

So many people want to go to bed at a certain time so they can get up at a certain time and still get enough sleep but, they have a hard time actually going to bed and I'm going to talk about a few common reasons why.

One reason might be that they think they haven't gotten enough pleasure, fun, relaxation, or time for themselves that day.

They think they haven't gotten enough so they stay up, and don't go to sleep so they can get more.

It's basically pleasure scarcity and there's three ways this can be remedied.

It's either changing your thoughts, changing your pleasure, or changing how much pleasure you get.

For some people, the simple remedy is to get more true, quality pleasure in your life.

You might say there isn't time for more but I want to challenge that and see if there really isn't more time.

Quite often we do have more time we're just not using it wisely.

We might be eating which of course it's okay to eat for pleasure but if it's not giving you the quality pleasure you're seeking then it's important to use the time you would spend eating in a different way.

If you're eating for two minutes, what could you do instead for two minutes that would feel more like quality pleasure?

Or, where in your day are you doing something that isn't urgent when you could be doing something pleasurable?

It's so common for people to prioritize doing chores that don't need to be done right now when it would be so much more beneficial for them to do something that's quality pleasure, something fun, or something relaxing.

I was talking to one of my group members about this recently where she said that when she has free time she'll go through her personal email, fold laundry, or do dishes. Of course sometimes it's best to prioritize those things because you're running out of clothes or you're going to need those dishes or the sink or dishwasher are getting full. But other times, it's fine to leave them and do something for yourself.

And it's important to do that sometimes especially when you're craving more pleasure, fun, or relaxation.

If you're proactive about making sure you're getting enough pleasure, you'll be more willing to complete your day and go to bed and not think you need more. You've had enough.

Then there's the type of pleasure you're experiencing. If it's not quality, if it's not what you want, then you won't be satisfied with it and you'll keep searching for more into the night.

Kinda like with food when you're not eating what you actually want and so you keep searching for satisfaction by eating more foods you don't really want so you never get it.

But if you just eat what you want, satisfaction is so much easier to get.

If you're not satisfied with the pleasure you're experiencing, do something else.

This is where it's so important for you to tap into yourself, notice how you're feeling, notice what you're thinking, and make sure you're really enjoying what you're doing.

If you're not getting quality pleasure from the show or movie you're watching, watch something else.

If you're not getting quality pleasure from a hobby that you usually enjoy, do something else.

If you're not getting quality pleasure from eating, do something else.

And just know that you're not always going to enjoy the same things all of the time. I was talking to another of my group members about a time when she went for a walk and was listening to an audiobook but she just wasn't feeling it. It was confusing because she is enjoying the book in general and loves listening to audiobooks but for some reason, in that moment, it wasn't what she was in the mood for. So she listened to music instead and loved it. It made her experience so much more pleasurable when she did what she was in the mood for.

This is a perfect example of checking in with yourself to see if you're enjoying this now or not and if you're not, do something else instead of trying to force yourself to do something because you think you should enjoy it or because that was the plan.

And also, if you don't know what else to do, or if eating is the only thing that comes to mind, it's time to explore options. Try something else or something new. See if you like it. If you don't, try something else. If you don't have any ideas, Google for ideas or ask people you know what they do.

Whatever it is that you're doing in your free time for pleasure, make sure you're enjoying it.

And lastly there's changing your thoughts.

When you tell yourself that you haven't had enough pleasure, fun, or relaxation you're going to feel deprived, sad, or disappointed and again, you're going to stay up and try to get more in order to reach enough.

But I've seen people so many times not ever reach enough, again, like with food.

It's never enough and it's because they keep telling themselves that it's not.

With food, they think one bite isn't enough, one serving isn't enough, 10 pieces isn't enough. But it could be enough if they decide that it is.

So often, that's all that enough is. It's a decision we make. We decide that it's enough.

There is no set amount that is enough.

So if you're telling yourself that you haven't had enough pleasure, why isn't the amount that you've had enough?

And how much would be enough?

Now, of course we all need pleasure, it's important that we all get some so if you're getting zero or very very little then yes, it's not enough and it's time for you to figure out how you can incorporate more and make time for more like I talked about a moment ago.

But for most people, they could have enough if they believed that the time they had was enough.

Again, when you're thinking it's not enough, you're going to feel deprived, sad, or disappointed which is stopping you from getting full pleasure from your pleasure.

It's like when you feel guilty about what you're eating. If you're feeling guilty, you're not going to get as much pleasure as you would if you were eating it guilt-free. If there's no guilt you'd be able to enjoy it more and not feel bad about eating it.

If you're loving your pleasure time, and are thinking it's enough, and are enjoying every moment of it, then you'll be more satisfied than if you're thinking it's not enough and are feeling scarce and resentful of what's caused you to have as much time as you do.

So see what happens when you take full advantage of the time you do have and think it's enough.

30 minutes could be enough.

One hour could be enough.

Whatever time you do have could be enough.

So that's the main reason I see come up for people who don't want to go to bed.

They don't want the pleasure to end because they think they don't get enough of it.

And going along with that idea of not wanting the pleasure to end, some people don't want it to because of what's to come the next day.

If they go to sleep then the next thing that will happen is work or something they're dreading.

So the longer they stay up, the farther away the work or the dreadful thing is.

It's basically procrastination.

And as with all procrastination, it's procrastinating a feeling you think you'll feel.

They're putting off how they think they'll feel doing the work or the dreadful thing.

So the longer they stay up doing something they enjoy, the longer they get to feel good and they will feel the feeling they don't want to feel while working or doing the dreadful thing later than sooner.

This is just like continuing to eat so you don't have to feel how you think you'll feel when you stop eating.

You don't want to feel lack of pleasure or again, however you think you'll feel doing whatever task you have planned for once you've stopped eating.

So you keep eating to put it off.

But what will actually happen when you stay up too late is that then not only are you going to do the work or dreadful thing anyway, it is coming regardless of how late you stay up, but, you'll then probably feel tired doing it which will make it an even worse experience.

So the solution here is to be willing to feel how you're going to feel, which is also the solution when it comes to stopping eating.

Be willing to feel what you think you'll feel once you stop eating, or while working or while doing the dreadful thing.

If you're willing to feel how you'll feel, and are willing to be in the feeling, then you'll be willing to end the pleasure and go to bed.

And if you go to bed then you won't make it worse by being tired on top of how you're going to feel.

So don't put it off, just go to bed so you can feel as good as you can feel. Even if that includes some not good feelings.

Now, another obstacle I see people experience that stops them from going to bed when they want to is prioritizing things that don't need to be prioritized.

I talked about this a moment ago when it comes to making time for pleasure and the same thing applies to going to bed.

You're choosing things like chores instead of choosing to go to sleep.

You're deciding that those things are more important than going to sleep at the time you've decided.

And just like I said before, maybe sometimes it is. But a lot of the time it's not.

A lot of the time, you, your mental health, your brain health, your energy levels tomorrow, your alertness and focus tomorrow, how you will feel tomorrow is way more important than having an empty kitchen sink or a clutter-free kitchen or having all the laundry put away.

Notice what you're prioritizing and take a look at what really is important, what really is urgent, and what can actually wait without a huge consequence.

And prioritize what's really important to you, and what can wait can wait.

And again, maybe sometimes other things will be a priority over sleep and that's okay. What I'm saying here is to make sure that it actually is before choosing it.

Alright, another one I hear is that the time they've chosen is too early.

But here's the thing. If you chose a time because it's what will allow you to get up at a certain time while getting adequate sleep then it's not too early.

It's the perfect time.

Sure it may be earlier than you're used to but like with "enough" that I talked about a moment ago, there is no set time that is too early. We decide what is early and late.

What's early to you might not be early to me and the same goes for late.

What you've been telling yourself is too early might actually be perfect.

And if you are telling yourself it's too early, why is it?

You're probably thinking you're missing out on something if you go to bed at that time and if that's the case, you can ask yourself what you'd be missing out on if you *didn't* go to bed at that time.

I had someone tell me recently that they wanted to be both an early bird and a night owl.

But most people can't have both and still get adequate sleep.

Of course there can be benefits to both. There can be great reasons to stay up late and great reasons to get up early.

So you need to decide which reasons you like better.

Which is more appealing for you? Which would have a more positive impact on your life?

Be honest with yourself about what you really want most and choose that.

Maybe the time you've chosen is in fact too early for you and the lifestyle you want to have and you can choose to stay up later and accept that you'll also wake up and start your day later.

Or you will see that in order to have the lifestyle you want and feel your best that going to bed at an earlier time is what you want and you can accept that as your choice and as not being too early but again, the perfect time for you.

And the last obstacle I want to mention about going to bed at the time you want to go to bed is making an identity shift.

For one of my group members, this was a big obstacle for her.

She has thoughts about what it means to be a person who stays up late and what it means to be a person who goes to bed early.

So in order to become a person who goes to bed at the new time she's chosen, she needs to first see that the identity she's been choosing for late night and early people is her choice. It's how she's chosen to perceive them. And then she can consciously choose to think about them differently.

A lot of the time people think it's cool to stay up late and uncool to go to bed early.

Or it's weird to go to bed early.

But these are all just opinions we have.

Personally, I think it's cool to go to bed early. That's my opinion and it's one that makes it easier for me to go to bed at a time that some people would consider to be too early.

So if you're resistant to going to bed at the time that you've chosen, see if it's one of these reasons that I talked about here.

Do you think you're not getting enough pleasure, fun, or relaxation?

Are you procrastinating what's coming tomorrow?

Are you prioritizing other things that don't need to be prioritized?

Do you need to get clear on what you want for your lifestyle and what's most important to you?

Do you need to change how you think about being a person who goes to bed at that time?

And once you know, you can work on your mindset around it.

And what's also important if you're changing the time you go to bed is not making too big of a change.

If you're someone who regularly goes to bed at 2am and then you're trying to go to bed at 10pm, it's unlikely that you'll be able to fall asleep because your brain isn't used to this or isn't tired at this time.

So make small, gradual changes. Go to bed 15 minutes earlier every few days. Allow your brain to get used to a new time.

And that goes for any change you're trying to make, especially with your eating.

Don't make drastic changes in what you're eating. Make small, gradual, doable changes that barely even feel like a change.

It will be so much easier to do.

Alright, so that's going to sleep.

Now let's talk about those times when you wake up and can't fall back asleep.

Or also, when you go to bed and aren't able to fall asleep.

A few years ago, this was something I dealt with a lot and it was really frustrating.

I sometimes had a hard time falling asleep, sometimes I would wake up in the middle of the night and not be able to fall back asleep for awhile, and sometimes I would wake up too early and not be able to fall back asleep.

And I was really tired during the day.

Being a person who has been a sleep proponent for as long as I can remember this was really frustrating for me.

I even have an entry in one of my high school journals where I talked about making sure I got 8 hours of sleep.

I also have had a regular bedtime for years now that I do my best to adhere to as often as possible. I'm definitely not perfect but I follow it most of the time.

And when I started experiencing issues with my sleep, I was following most of the recommendations you read everywhere for good sleep hygiene.

So I started looking for solutions and this was partly why I took a break from alcohol and caffeine for a year, to help me figure out my issue with sleep.

I do think that taking a break from those helped some but there was more behind my waking than just that.

I still can't say for sure exactly what it was, or why I still sometimes wake up and can't fall back asleep for awhile in the middle of the night or wake up too early in the morning and can't fall back asleep. Maybe there is something going on with my brain and whatever is supposed to naturally keep me asleep. But there is one reason I do know of that was very obvious.

My thoughts.

Sometimes when I'm awake, I'm not thinking about much of anything. That's what happens most of the time for me these days.

But often in those previous years, and once in a while now still, when I'd be awake, my mind was all over the place, thinking about things I need to do, thinking about something that happened that day, worrying, being fearful or anxious, trying to figure something out, or just continuous thoughts about something, so many thoughts.

And when your mind is going, and when your thoughts are racing, you're going to have a difficult time falling asleep.

So if that's you, you need to be working on your thoughts before bedtime more.

When you're in bed trying to sleep and distractions are gone, and it's just you and your mind, that's prime time for your brain to bring all these thoughts to the surface. It's when your brain is processing your day and your thoughts.

And this is not the time that you want this to be happening.

So make time for it when it *is* a good time.

Do some journaling, meditating, reflection, problem solving, list making, talk to someone, whatever you can do to work through whatever is going on in your mind.

If you just ignore it, it will most likely come to the surface at the worst time.

But if you're proactive and work through what's on your mind, it will set you up to be more relaxed and prepared for sleep.

Now, even when you're doing work on your thoughts, they still might come up while you are wanting to be asleep.

And if this happens, it could be helpful to just grab a notebook and start writing about what you're thinking. Get your thoughts out and if you don't resolve them then, you can make a plan for when and how you will.

That can help you put them to rest for now, knowing that they will be addressed and knowing when they will.

And here's the most important part.

Whether you're awake and you have racing thoughts or your thoughts are calm, do not get frustrated or stress.

It's so easy for us to get frustrated about not sleeping when we want to be sleeping especially if we have to be up early or have things to do the next day.

We start to think about how we don't want to be tired, how hard the day will be if we're tired, that we should be asleep, getting angry that we're not asleep, being annoyed that our partner is sleeping and we're not, so many thoughts that are going to ramp us up instead of calm us down.

And when we're ramped up, we are not helping ourselves to sleep.

We're doing the opposite.

We're keeping ourselves awake.

So if you're not sleeping, what you're going to do instead is accept that you're not sleeping, and do whatever you can to calm yourself.

You can do deep breathing, you can get out of bed and read, you can meditate, I personally like to count backwards because it's boring so I'm not gonna get all hyped up doing it and it's also something to put my focus on if my brain wants to wander to thinking about something that might cause me to feel some feelings that could hinder my sleep.

The goal when you're not sleeping is to get yourself to a mental state that will help lead you into sleep, which means your mind is relaxed.

So if you notice that you're feeling frustrated, stressed, anxious, or angry about not sleeping, do what you can to bring yourself to a calmer mental place.

In that moment your brain isn't ready to sleep yet and all you can do is whatever you can do to help facilitate sleep.

You can't force yourself to sleep, you can only create an environment in your mind that is conducive to sleep.

I also want to address quickly the concern about being tired because I know that's a common one for people when they're not able to fall asleep and it was for me too.

It for sure a concern that can cause frustration and actually keep you awake.

I know it's not enjoyable to be tired but here's the thing. When you're not sleeping, you don't *know* if you will be tired the next day. There's been times when I've been awake for like an hour in the middle of the night and then wasn't tired the next day. I have no idea why but it's happened.

It's not guaranteed that you will be tired and that's something else I tell myself if I'm not sleeping.

I don't know what's going to happen.

So I do my best to not worry about it because it's not inevitable.

But also, if I am tired, I don't have to make a huge deal about it.

When I'm awake when I want to be sleeping, I don't tell myself that tomorrow is going to be a garbage day because I'll be tired.

I tell myself that I can do the day tired.

There's things you can do that I talked about in episode #44 – which is titled Binge Eating When You're Tired.

Basically, if you're tired, you can simply accept that you're tired and do the best you can that day, instead of being annoyed, frustrated, or angry about it, just like you're going to do when you're laying awake in bed.

Being tired during the day when you have things to do is uncomfortable enough, you don't have to add uncomfortable emotions on to it.

So, if you're lying awake at any point in the night, don't try to force sleep, allow your brain to go through what it needs to go through.

Frustration, annoyance, anger, and anxiousness is going to interfere with falling asleep.

Calmness and relaxation will promote it.

And you are capable of creating calmness and relaxation with what you're thinking about while this is happening.

Accepting rather than fighting that you're awake is the best thing that you can do.

And to help you with all of it, do your best to practice good sleep hygiene.

I'll put a link to a list of good sleep tips in the show notes which you can find at coachkir.com/264.

And just know that you don't need to be perfect with all the sleep tips, it's okay if you're not 100% doing everything all the time, just do your best and do what works best for you.

One tip says to turn off electronic devices at least 30 minutes before going to bed. One of my group members was telling me that she has no problem falling asleep after looking at her phone for awhile and I know a lot of people are the same. And that's okay! If it's okay for you then it's okay.

The tips are just a guideline and what matters most here in all that I've touched on in this episode, as with most of these episodes, is what's going on in your mind, what's going on with your thoughts.

So make sure you're checking in on your thoughts and are working on them.

Alright, that is where I'm going to stop today on the topic of sleep, happy 5 year anniversary to the podcast!

And I'll talk to you again next week. Bye bye!