

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #269: How to Stop Self-Sabotaging

Hello! Let's jump right in and talk about self-sabotaging.

It's something that a lot of people get really confused by because they don't understand why they do it.

They want to feel good and eat in ways that will make them feel good and they want to stop binge eating and they want to stop gaining weight and they put in all this effort to make all that happen but then, they go and do things that will prevent them from having and doing all of that.

And it's all on them.

No one else is doing it to them. No one else is forcing them to eat.

People may influence their eating decisions, people may encourage them to eat or pressure them to eat or try to convince them to eat but in the end, if sabotaging happens, it's done by themselves.

So why would we do this to ourselves?

Most of the time, if not all the time, it's not done on purpose. I actually haven't worked with anyone who does it on purpose, they've only done it impulsively.

It's not a well thought out plan to self-sabotage.

It's an impulsive, in the moment decision made in response to a feeling.

It could be a feeling of frustration, disappointment, hopelessness, anger, doubt, defeated, or self-pity, just to name a few.

Maybe you binged, and you feel doubt that you'll ever be able to stop bingeing, and you respond to that doubt by giving up on your goal of stopping binge eating and you just go for another binge.

Maybe you gained a few pounds, and you feel angry, so you eat in response to that anger.

Maybe you keep feeling urges to binge, and you get frustrated by them, so your response is to give up and binge.

So it's not that you're sitting there planning a scheme to sabotage yourself and stop yourself from achieving your goals, it's just that you're reacting to your emotions in unuseful ways.

So don't mentally beat yourself up about it. Don't be so hard on yourself if it happens.

Sometimes we think that if we are hard on ourselves then we won't do it again but, what that's really going to do is cause you to feel bad.

And when you feel bad, you're more likely to do more self-sabotaging because again, you'll be reacting to those bad feelings and when we feel bad, our reactions are usually considered to be bad.

If you're being hard on yourself, you might feel inadequate, or another feeling like that, and if you feel inadequate, you're going to act inadequately.

You're not going to do your best and put in the required effort you need to put in in order to achieve your goal, whether it's feeling through your uncomfortable emotions, being more permissive with your eating, accepting your body, honoring your hunger and fullness cues, or stopping binge eating.

Instead, you're going to put in very little effort, if any at all.

How you're feeling is going to hugely affect what you do and don't do and, how you respond to your feelings will also have a huge affect on what you do and don't do.

If you're feeling one of those feelings I mentioned before, frustrated, disappointed, hopeless, angry, doubtful, defeated, self-pity, you're going to feel driven to give up.

You'll feel driven to sabotage yourself.

So when you're self-sabotaging, you're doing exactly what you're feeling driven to do.

But you don't have to do what you're feeling driven to do. You don't have to give up when you feel that way.

You can feel those feelings and then turn yourself around.

You can stop yourself before you react to your feeling and you can tell yourself something that will be useful and helpful and that will make you feel a different feeling that will drive you to take positive action.

For those of you familiar with The Thought Model, which I've talked about a few times throughout this podcast, this is an example of interrupting The Model.

In The Model, your thoughts cause your feelings and your feelings drive your actions.

When you interrupt The Model, you stop yourself after the feeling and before the action and you start a new Model that you're now going to live in and the new Model will have a new thought, feeling, and action that will not be sabotaging but instead, be productive.

You're interrupting the current cycle and starting a new one.

So you can respond to your feelings differently, you don't have to just react to them. You can notice how you're feeling and then encourage yourself and motivate yourself so you can feel and do differently.

But, if you're going to do that, you have to know why you're feeling how you're feeling in the first place.

And it's because of how you're thinking about yourself, about your body, about how you've eaten, or because of what you're making your actions mean.

You can overeat and make it mean that you're a failure that you will never be able to eat like a normal person and then feel hopeless and then be driven to give up.

If you're doing this, you're making the overeat mean that you're a failure and you'll never be able to eat like a normal person when all it really means is that you ate more food than your body required for fuel or you ate past feeling full.

That's it.

It doesn't mean anything about you personally, you're just making it personal.

It doesn't mean anything about what you're capable of, you're just making it mean that it does.

So when you can see what you're thinking that's causing you to feel hopeless, you can shift your perspective to something that doesn't make you feel hopeless.

For example, you could tell yourself that one overeat isn't going to kill you, that you're still a capable and good person, that you can do better next time, that you will figure this out, you can learn from this overeat and then tell yourself exactly what you're going to do the next time you eat so you don't repeat the mistake.

People who self-sabotage are so often exaggerating the effects of their mistakes, are making them mean something they don't mean, or are simply just being really mean to themselves. Their self-talk is super negative.

For example, you might look at your body and think really mean things about it, like how disgusting, ugly, unattractive, and flabby it is. This self-talk is going to make you feel awful, ashamed, angry, some kind of negative feeling that is going to drive you to take negative action, such as eating food because either you want to avoid feeling how you've just caused yourself to feel with your thinking or because you're deciding to give up on this body, give up on taking care of it, give up on even trying to feel good about it or in it, because you've put yourself in such a negative headspace with how you're describing it with those super mean words.

The self-sabotage is ultimately happening because how you're choosing to describe your body, how you're talking about your body, is causing you to feel emotions that you are responding to by eating.

And you don't have to talk about your body that way. You don't have to describe it with those words. Those words are optional and you have better feeling options. You have other options for how you can talk about your body.

And the other options don't have to be wildly positive, they can just be less negative.

Instead of eating and sabotaging yourself, you can encourage yourself to take care of this body, you can say something a little less negative and more appreciative like, "my body is allowing me to live," or "my body hasn't given up on me," or "my body is a human body," just something that's going to make you feel less crappy so you aren't feeling driven to take crappy action.

You don't have to tear your body down in your mind because of how it looks.

It looks how it looks and you can choose how you want to think about it.

Also, when you're behaving how you're behaving and doing what you're doing, you don't have to tear yourself down either.

You can lift yourself up. You can be kind to yourself. You can forgive your mistakes instead of making yourself feel bad so you then go on to make even more, maybe even bigger mistakes.

So if you find yourself self-sabotaging, the answer to why you're doing it is in your thinking, it's in your self-talk, it's in your interpretations and perspective.

Are you telling yourself that you can't do what you want to do, making yourself feel doubtful or inadequate and then giving up? Instead, tell yourself why you can do it.

Are you telling yourself that there's no point and it doesn't matter, so then you feel apathetic and are responding to your apathy by giving up? Instead, tell yourself why it does matter, because it does. It's important.

Are you being mean to yourself or to your body because of how it looks or because of what you've done? Be kinder, it's so much more useful and encouraging.

Are you telling yourself that even if you do do it that you won't be able to sustain it and keep it up, so you feel defeated and hopeless, and you respond by not even trying? Focus on smaller, doable goals

that you do believe you can sustain and work on those instead of focusing on the big goal that's harder to imagine success with.

If you are self-sabotaging, what needs to change is your attitude.

Instead of being hard on yourself or mean to your body, and instead of making things into a bigger deal than they really are, and instead of making things mean something that they don't mean, get down to the facts of what happened or what is happening and encourage yourself and be kind to yourself.

You have the ability to support yourself and help yourself to do everything you want to do.

And you will do that by managing your self-talk, by keeping going even when you feel driven to give up, and by learning from what you've done so you can do better next time.

Even if you make a mistake, even if you're not happy with yourself or your body, that doesn't mean you have to give up or make things worse.

You can and you will do better.

And you'll start by thinking better, more usefully, more neutrally, and even more positively if you can get there.

And remember, anytime you've sabotaged yourself it wasn't malicious. You weren't doing it rationally and with intention. It was just a response to a feeling and we all do it. We all react to our emotions in unproductive and sabotaging ways sometimes. It's normal.

We don't need to get mad at ourselves or make it mean anything more than that it was a mistake, and our mistakes are forgivable.

Forgive yourself.

Then learn from it so you can do better.

And encourage yourself to then go do better.

Alright, I'll talk to you again soon, bye bye.