

# THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

*with Kirstin Sarfde*

## Ep #277: Setting Boundaries with Other People

Hi! Today I'm talking about setting boundaries with other people and I've chosen to do this topic at this time because this episode is being released right as the holiday season is beginning.

So many of you will be spending more time with other people, maybe more time with friends you haven't seen in awhile, maybe more time with family, and maybe you'll also be receiving more food, joy foods, and food gifts from other people than you usually do.

And with all of that, there might be times when putting a boundary in place could help you.

So what do I mean by a boundary?

Well first, what I'm not talking about in this episode is threatening someone.

Threats are intended to inflict pain or to restrain another person's personal freedom. You're not going to be doing either of those with the boundaries you might set.

These boundaries are not intended to hurt anyone, obviously physically but also emotionally. That's not the intention.

They're also not to be used as a way to try and control another person.

These boundaries are meant to be included as part of a healthy relationship and trying to control other people is not really how we create healthy relationships.

So this isn't about making people feel bad, which I'm assuming is not what you want anyway, and it also isn't about controlling the person you want to set a boundary with.

It's about taking care of yourself, your emotions, your desires, and what's best for you.

So here's how you do that with a boundary.

You make an "if you, then I" statement.

So it sounds like this:

If you do this thing then I will do this.

So basically there's a request of another person to not engage in a certain behavior and also a consequence of what you will do if they violate the boundary.

You're not just asking a person to not do something, you're also telling them what you will do if they do do that thing. That second part about what you'll do is important for boundary setting because it is how you'll take care of yourself if the boundary is crossed.

So you're giving the other person the option to do what they want to do while knowing what you will do if they do what you've requested them to not do.

An example of setting a boundary could be something like, "If you yell at me, then I'm going to leave the room."

Notice how there's the "if you", which is if you yell at me and then the "then I," which is then I'm going to leave the room.

The request here is that the person doesn't yell at you and now knowing the boundary, the person receiving the request will still have the option of choosing to yell or not, again, you're not controlling them, they can do what they want but, they now know what you will do if they yell. Then they get to decide if they want to yell and receive that consequence that you will act upon for yourself or if they want to not yell so you won't.

They have the freedom to do as they want, which is something we all want and in a healthy relationship it's beneficial to allow that freedom, because feeling like you don't have freedom can hurt a person emotionally and hurt the relationship.

But here's one of the most important parts.

You have to actually follow through on what you said you'd do.

It's not going to be useful at all if you don't follow through on your consequence when the person does do what you've requested they don't do.

It's not going to help implement the change for yourself that you're wanting, it's going to leave you feeling emotionally uncared for, you might end up doing something you don't really want to do, and you might feel resentment or anger toward the other person.

Sometimes people are afraid to follow through or afraid to even set a boundary because they fear they will ruin the relationship.

They get afraid that the other person will be upset or angry.

But if they don't do it, they're the ones left feeling upset or angry or resentful.

So although having these conversations can be uncomfortable, it's something that can help build intimacy and build a relationship based on authenticity and truth.

Instead of holding back you're being open and honest.

Instead of continuing to be hurt emotionally or continuing to do things you don't want to do, you're expressing your wants and needs.

Let's say that a person keeps telling you to eat the cookies they brought and you then request that they stop.

You tell them that if they keep asking, then you're going to walk away.

But when they ask again, you don't walk away.

Now you're in a situation where you feel uncomfortable and you might even eat a cookie, even though you don't really want to, in order to get the person to stop.

Then, you might be upset with the person for creating that circumstance that triggered you to feel how you felt and do what you did.

And being upset with that person isn't good for your relationship.

And this could all have been avoided if you had simply walked away as you had said you would.

But also, like I said, for a lot of people there is a fear of how the other person will react or how they will feel.

And honestly, it's possible that they won't respond well.

It's also possible they will. There are many times that when a boundary is set that the other person totally understands and is fine with it.

There's even times when the other person is grateful that you spoke up because they had no idea you were feeling the way you were.

Again, speaking up and expressing a boundary can help to create more closeness in a relationship because wants and needs are being expressed and heard.

So be careful about assuming how the other person will feel because sometimes, you may be completely wrong.

But again, it's possible that the other person may not appreciate the boundary you are setting.

Now first, it's important to make sure that the boundary you're setting is indeed a boundary and not a threat. Again, you're not trying to hurt the other person.

You're also not trying to control the other person.

There's a difference between "you need to stop bringing this food into my house," and "if you keep bringing this food into my house then I will give it away or throw it away."

You're not telling them what to do, you're giving them freedom and are then taking care of yourself.

So if they're upset, make sure you're setting the boundary correctly.

Second, make sure you're setting the boundary from a place of love. You don't want to attack them with it or yell it at them. Do it from a positive, or at least a neutral place.

And third, there is a chance that you will set a proper boundary and you will do it lovingly, and they will be upset or angry or feel some other type of way that is not ideal.

Or they may do something that isn't ideal.

If they feel an emotion, it's okay if they feel it.

Just like it's okay for you feel emotions, it's okay if they do too.

We all feel emotions sometimes, and sometimes other people's words and behaviors influence our thoughts and therefore our feelings and if that happens, we'll be okay.

If the other person feels an emotion, they'll be okay.

And if the other person reacts in way that you don't like, or even if they want to end the relationship whether it's a romantic, family, work, or friendship relationship, then you might feel sad, devastated, or upset because you don't want the relationship to end but, you could find solace in knowing that you did what was best for you. You were being true to yourself.

Now of course that is easier said than done. It can be hard to process the end of a relationship, going through the sadness, maybe grief, and getting to the other side where you're in acceptance. And that work is a whole other topic that I'm not going to get into in this episode.

But just know that ultimately you get to make the decision for whether you'd rather be in a relationship where you are inauthentic, resentful, and your needs and wants aren't being met or if you'd rather be in a relationship where you are authentic, emotionally cared for, and your needs and wants are met.

And just a quick side note because I feel like it needs to be said. Most of the time boundary setting is received well by the other person because you're likely setting the boundary with someone who cares about you and how you feel. From my experience, I've seen that less often a negative reaction happens. But if the person you're setting the boundary with responds in an abusive way of any kind, please seek

help. I truly hope that isn't the case for any of you listening, but if it is, call a hotline, tell a trusted friend, and please take care of yourself. I just wanted to address that to make sure no one was misunderstanding what I was saying about negative reactions to boundary setting.

Now, back to what I was talking about before. If you're familiar with thought work, which I talk about sometimes on the podcast, and actually whether I'm talking about it directly or not I'm mostly talking about thought work because changing your thoughts, changing your mindset about certain things, food, your body, yourself, etc, is what will stop your binge eating.

But if you're familiar with thought work, you'll know that you *could* change your thoughts so you're not feeling resentful in a relationship. But, there might be times when you don't want to change your thoughts, your stance, your opinion on certain things.

And that's totally okay.

You might not want to change your stance or opinion when it comes to how people talk about your body or other people's bodies.

You might not want to do work on your thoughts about it.

And you don't have to. You don't have to work on anything you don't want to work on.

But if that's the case and you don't want to change your thoughts, then you need to make the decision for how you want to handle it when other people talk about your body or other people's bodies in a negative way and that could be a time when you set a boundary.

So, I will end this episode by giving you some examples of common boundaries that people set around food and bodies so you can get some ideas for how you could set useful boundaries for yourself.

Recently one of my group members was getting coaching on her family members talking about other people's bodies.

She's tried talking with them about it and educating them on being accepting of bodies and sharing her point of view but it hasn't changed them.

So she told me that what she wants is to just not be a part of the conversation.

So here's the boundary she's setting.

If they talk about other people's bodies, she won't engage in the conversation.

Or, if they talk about other people's bodies, she will leave the room.

See how she's not trying to change how they talk about other people's bodies, she's already tried that and it didn't work, and she's not trying to control them, and she's not trying to make them feel bad about what they say.

She's allowing them to be themselves and make their own choices and then she's making her choice for how she wants to respond.

Here's another one and this one is about food gifting, which can happen a lot around the holidays.

And I know a lot of you don't want food gifts. You don't want people giving you foods that you don't feel comfortable with having in your home yet or even in your office yet.

So you'd rather they didn't gift you food.

A boundary you could set here is, "If you bring me food, then I won't eat it."

Or, "If you bring me food, then I will give it to someone else."

Or, "If you bring me food, then I will throw it away."

It's your choice for what consequence you want to choose.

But again, make sure you follow through on it.

And one more that I want to share that happens often which I mentioned earlier is when people are pushing food on you.

They are incessantly telling you to eat a certain food or keep telling you to eat this, and this, and this even though you've said no and have asked them to stop.

You can set the boundary of, "If you keep telling me to eat then I will leave the room."

Basically, with all of these, if you are feeling like your emotions are not being cared for, you will care for them yourself.

You will make a request and you will define a consequence that you are committing to following through on if the request is not honored.

This is about you and your emotions and your needs.

This is about you taking care of yourself.

And this is also about creating closer relationships with others and about self-responsibility, empowerment, and authenticity.

So ask for what you want and if you don't get it, take care of yourself.

Alright, I hope that helps you to make boundaries that will be useful for you with other people.

That's all for now, bye bye.