THE
STOP BINGE EATING
PODCAST
with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #278: How to Restrict and Limit Yourself

Hello! Today I'm talking about setting restrictions and limits for yourself.

When we're talking about stopping binge eating, one important thing that you need to make sure you're doing is not setting too many limits and aren't restricting yourself too much with your eating.

When you're too restrictive and are giving yourself too many limitations, you can cause yourself to feel restricted and deprived which can lead to you feeling an urge to binge on what you're feeling restricted from or deprived of, and those urges of course are what drive you to binge.

So we want to make sure we're not being overly restrictive with our eating but, sometimes, people misunderstand this guidance.

They take it to mean that they should remove all restrictions and have no limits on what they eat.

It falls into the all or nothing mindset that we all sometimes get confused about when we're making changes.

Sometimes we can only see two options and in this case, it's either having all the restrictions or having none of them.

But there's a beautiful middle ground in there where there are *some* restrictions.

Now, in the beginning for a lot of people, letting go of all the restrictions feels so freeing and they love it.

But then they encounter a problem.

They begin to not feel physically good, which can then lead them to not feeling emotionally good.

At this point, we have to start incorporating some restrictions and some limits.

And these are not bad restrictions and limits. These are not ones that are going to cause deprivation and urges to binge.

These are limits and restrictions that will help you to not binge, and that will help you to feel your best and to be your best.

This is because these are going to be limits and restrictions that you want to have, that you're choosing to have not because you think you should or because someone else told you that you have to, but because you want to have them.

For example, no one forces me to stop watching tv and go to bed when I do. I don't do it when I do because I think I should or think I have to or tell myself I can't stay up later.

This decision is all mine and I choose it because I want to get a certain number of hours of sleep, I want to get up by a certain time in the morning, and I want to feel good and rested during the day.

I set that limit because it's what I think is best for me and it helps me to be my best self.

Now, I could just not have a restriction for this. I could just stay up for as long as I feel like. But if I did, I probably wouldn't feel good the next day, I have experienced this enough times to know that it's very likely for me, and I also wouldn't have as much time in the morning to get things done that I want to get done.

So I *want* to have this limit for myself. Now, in the moment I don't always want to do it, I don't always want to go to bed but, I do it anyway because I remind myself of why I want to.

And because I want to do it, I'm not feeling deprived. I mean, maybe for a moment when I'm thinking about how I just want to sit and watch tv for a little longer but once I get up and think about why I want to go to bed, I don't feel deprived of tv and pleasure time anymore. I'm happy with my decision. I want this limit for the nighttime.

And this limit doesn't take away my freedom like we sometimes think limits and restrictions will.

This is all my choice. I am free to stay up or I'm free to go to bed and I'm choosing to do what I really want to do.

So when you're putting limits and restrictions on what you're eating, you're not taking away your freedom because they're *yours*, no one else's and no limits or restrictions you think you should have or have to have.

You're choosing this and you're choosing it for reasons you like.

Don't enact limits or restrictions that you don't have good reasons for that you like.

Those are the ones that aren't going to feel good and can lead you to rebelling.

So let's go back to what I was saying before about letting go of all restrictions with your eating and the example I gave about the people who do that but then don't feel good.

Some people tell me that they want to live their life without limits and restrictions with their eating but when they do, they realize that's not really what they want.

Because when you have zero limits, you're likely going to overeat, maybe binge, and eat lots of foods that aren't going to feel good in your body.

And that's not what you want.

People tell me all the time that they just want to feel good.

Bingeing makes them feel terrible and they don't want that anymore.

And if you want to feel good, limits have to be put in place.

And again, it's not going to be excessive and it's not going to be things that you don't really want to do.

One example of a limit that most of us want to have that we don't really think of as a limit is stopping eating when we're full.

It definitely is a limit. You're limiting how much you're eating and you're doing it because you will feel your best if you do it.

That's going to be a limit that I recommend you incorporate into your life so your body can feel good.

You're not just going to eat without amount restrictions. You're going to choose this one because you want to feel good.

And then there's the joy foods, or foods that aren't super nutritious and when you eat a lot of them, maybe not even eating until you're too full but just a certain amount, whatever a lot is to you, you don't feel good.

Let's say you eat a bunch of candy for dinner. You're not feeling too full after, you didn't eat the candy past fullness but, your stomach does not feel good. Also, your energy has dropped and your brain's a little foggy. Maybe you're feeling moody.

It's not necessarily the amount of food you ate but, it's the amount of that particular food that you ate.

So maybe you want to limit how much of that particular food you eat because you don't want to feel that way.

That's going to be a useful limit.

Now, you're not saying you'll never eat it again or that you can't eat it.

That's the kind of restriction that will most likely backfire eventually when you're feeling restricted or deprived because you want that food and aren't allowing it.

You're saying that you are allowed to eat it but you're going to limit yourself to an amount that you can enjoy while still feeling good afterward.

You can still eat it *and* feel good afterward.

Again, it's not all or nothing, it's finding the middle ground, the "some" that leaves you feeling good.

Having these limits like I'm talking about are going to give you the freedom to do what you want to do.

You're going to do the things you want to do in amounts that you really want.

Now, you're not always going to think you want that limit in the moment. You might think you want more, just like I sometimes think I want to stay up later, and that's okay.

You're going to tell yourself *why* it's not what you really want and why you really want what you really want.

Give yourself those good reasons to adhere to the limit.

So I want you to take a look at what you do and find where it would be useful for you to set a limit and restriction for yourself and how you could do it in a way that not only is beneficial to you but also doesn't make you feel restricted.

When I decided on the time I want to go to bed, I considered what I thought would be too late and what I thought would be too early and I found what I thought would be a good time for me.

When you're deciding on how much joy food you want to be eating, make sure it feels doable for you and that you have good reasons for setting the limit.

When it comes to stopping when you're full, although it might seem obvious, actually tell yourself why you want to stop when you're full. When you are thinking about the reasons why when you're in the moment, it will make it more enticing for you to stop. Otherwise, you might just think about how good the food tastes and wanting more of it.

Intentionally think about why you want to do what you really want to do.

Because if you don't, you're just going to follow your humanly drive to get easy pleasure.

That's a big reason why it's helpful to set limits and put these kinds of restrictions on yourself in the first place.

If you don't have restrictions, you're just going to do what you're naturally driven to do, which is to seek pleasure, avoid pain, and do what's easiest.

We all have that drive. But those of us who are achieving goals and living our best life aren't just going along with that.

We're setting limits and restrictions that go against that because it's what's best for us.

Our brain's design, that drive is what kept us as humans alive way back in the day but now, because surviving is a lot easier and pleasure is extremely abundant and easy to get and it's easier to avoid emotional pain, we need to sometimes work against that natural drive if we want to thrive.

So set the limits, give yourself the restrictions but, and I can't stress this enough, they have to be ones that you want to have because you have good reasons for you to have them. It's your choice. Make sure you're doing it from an empowered place and if it doesn't feel doable or you feel restricted by it, don't give yourself that limit.

Maybe it would be better if you dialed it back. So you're not going from 5 joy foods every day to one a week. Try doing 4 a day for a bit and see how you feel. Or, 5 a day but 4 on one day. Take a small step that feels doable and that you're on board with.

And when you're ready, if you have a good reason to, you can take another small step.

It's going to be easier to incorporate small changes rather than big changes.

And, it's not just food restrictions and limitations that will help you to stop binge eating, stop overeating, and to feel better.

Limiting the commitments to other people that you make can help. So many of you are overcommitted to things because you think you have to do all of them when really, for most of you, you don't. Not all of them. Make sure you're really examining the commitments you've made and commitments you're asked to make in the future to see if you have time for it, if it's really necessary, and if it's enhancing your life or draining you.

Also, see if you can delegate as well. We don't have to do it all by ourselves. Use your community, ask for help.

And the same goes for work for a lot of you. What's really urgent? What's not? Do you really need to get this done today or can you complete your workday and do it another time?

Unfortunately too many of us are overworked and because of this, one thing that can happen is not getting enough sleep which is imperative for optimal cognitive function. And we're also not getting enough personal fulfillment, self-care, and true pleasure. Those are things we all need or have a desire for and if you're not giving it to yourself, you're likely going to impulsively get it by eating food. The desire will build as you're not getting enough of it, or any at all, and eventually, that desire will turn urgent, it will turn into an urge, and you'll feel driven to eat. Maybe eat a lot to try and get all the pleasure that you haven't been giving yourself.

And vice versa, some of you are spending too much time in pleasure, and not enough time working on yourself, on your goals, on bettering your life, or sleeping if you're staying up to late to get more pleasure. Limits to pleasure can be a good thing, especially if that pleasure involves eating for hours.

Basically, when we put limits and restrictions on things, it can help us to create balance. We can have a better balance between work and pleasure. We can feel better physically and emotionally.

Because too much of a good thing is usually not going to be good anymore.

Set limits for those things that stop being good when you're doing too much.

Set limits for things that will cause negative outcomes for you if you do it too much.

And set the limits from a place of love and caring for yourself.

Set them because it helps you become more aligned with who you want to be and more aligned with the goals you have for yourself.

Alright, I hope that helps you to find that useful place between having too many restrictions and limits and having none.

That in between place is a beautiful, balanced, fulfilling place to be.

Go find it for yourself.

Bye bye.