

# **THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST**

*with Kirstin Sarfde*

## Ep #280: If You've "Let Yourself Go"

Hi! Let's talk about letting yourself go.

Not long ago, one of my group members was really upset with herself because she thought she had let herself go and I wanted to do an episode about it because I'm sure she's not the only one.

So let's jump right in with first, understanding what it even means to let yourself go.

Basically, it means that you stopped caring and stopped trying and stopped putting in effort.

Maybe you stopped caring about your appearance, what you're eating, how you feel, or about self-care.

And usually it results in change of appearance. That's what we usually associate letting yourself go with. We look at ourselves or other people and we or they just don't look at put together or have gained weight or maybe it's both.

And it happens to a lot of us at one time or another.

I know I personally have had times in my life when I've let myself go. I wasn't caring, I wasn't putting in a lot of effort, I was just doing what felt good and what was easy.

Many people I know have done the same.

So if you're going through it, or are at the end of it and are ready to get yourself back together, know that you're not alone.

It's normal to go through periods of time like this.

And when you do, and you're ready to stop it, there's two things that need to happen.

One, have understanding for why you let yourself go and forgive yourself for it.

Two, get motivated.

So let's start with the first one.

My group member who went through this was being super judgmental of herself, and that was the biggest problem. She was judging herself and was mad at herself for doing it.

She was mad because of how her body looks and was beating herself up about it.

She was making it mean that she has little self control and willpower, she has no respect for herself, and she's not strong enough or driven enough to be better.

Because she was thinking this way about herself, she was feeling really bad about herself. And when we feel bad about ourselves, we're not going to feel motivated to do better.

When we feel bad, we do bad. When we feel down about ourselves, we're likely to do nothing,

You've probably noticed that the opposite is also true, that when you feel your best you do your best. It's because when you feel good you do good.

Now, it's okay if you feel bad about what you haven't been doing and about what you have been doing. It's okay to feel disappointed about what you may have done to yourself or your body.

Feeling disappointed or upset is valid when you're noticing the result of letting yourself go.

But, you're not going to stay there.

Instead of wallowing in negative emotions about what you've done and haven't done, you're going to understand why you did what you did.

So first, what is it that you let go of? What is it that you stopped doing?

Get down to the facts of what happened.

Then, be honest about why you did it. No blaming yourself or negative self-talk here, just understanding why what happened happened.

For my group member, it wasn't because of any of those things she was saying. It wasn't because she has little self control and willpower, or because she has no respect for herself, or she's not strong enough or driven enough to be better.

None of those are true at all.

What is true is that she stopped because she made other things in her life priorities. She prioritized her kids, her home, and her job. She was homeschooling and taking care of her home, she was driving the kids to their activities and being there for them, she was cooking, cleaning, and she was fully invested in her job. All of this took a lot of mental energy and time and at the end of each day, she didn't have much left for herself.

So instead of taking care of herself and doing things that would make her truly feel better and be the best version of herself, she'd just veg out, zone out, and eat because it was easy pleasure.

After using so much of her time and energy on other things, she didn't have much left for herself to do much more than that.

And over time, the lack of self care for herself showed in her appearance.

And all of this wasn't because she wanted to treat herself this way.

It was because she chose other priorities.

With the time and energy she had, she made choices, and that's okay.

At different times in our lives, we have different priorities and it's important that we understand and accept why we make those choices.

She doesn't need to be mad at herself for what she chose, she can instead just understand it.

And she can forgive herself for not choosing herself because at the time, she thought that the other things were more important.

For all of you, who have had periods of time when you're not taking the best care of yourself, when you're letting yourself go, you have reasons for it.

Even if they're not the most rational reasons or the best reasons, you have them and at the time, you did what you did for those reasons.

Maybe other things took priority, and that's okay, priorities shift.

Maybe you had a lot going on in your life with family, work, a friend, or whatever and you didn't have the capacity to work on yourself too.

Maybe it just wasn't ingrained as a habit yet so it still took conscious effort that you didn't have the time and energy for.

Maybe you didn't know how to do all the things and take care of yourself and your body.

Maybe you didn't know how to take care of your body at all.

Maybe you were caught up in diet mentality and you thought restricting would help but it didn't.

Maybe you were too busy to make time for pleasure so you got quick easy pleasure from food when you could.

There is a reason for why you did what you did. Find that reason and have compassion for yourself. Understand yourself.

You didn't know how to do better, or didn't have the capacity to do better, or didn't have enough time because of your other priorities.

Have compassion for yourself for that.

Especially when this happens while you're going through hard times emotionally, or when there's a lot on your plate, or when you're just not feeling good, you can have compassion for yourself. You can only do so much and you can't force yourself to do all the things you'd ideally like to do.

Forgive yourself for the decisions you made in your past when it comes to you and your self-care.

Forgive yourself for letting yourself go. You didn't do it on purpose, you were doing your best, even if your best resulted in outcomes that you're not happy with now.

And if the things you let go of weren't habits, if they were still things that took conscious effort for you to do, then be especially forgiving of you letting go of those.

Like I said about my group member, she didn't have the capacity for more, so she let those things go. So many of her habits were still intact, she still did basic care. But what wasn't habit was let go.

Be realistic about what you have the capacity for, because it's not going to be everything. Sometimes there are going to be things that are needed to be let go of. Understand why you're choosing what you're choosing and if in the end you or your body have suffered because of it, forgive yourself for making the choice you made.

So that's the first thing you're going to do. You're going to have understanding for why you let yourself go, and you're going to forgive yourself for it.

And then, you're going to create motivation to get yourself back.

Now, it's important to know that having desire and feeling motivated are not entirely the same.

You can want something and not feel driven to actually put in the effort to get it.

That's also something that happens to all of us at one time or another and is normal.

You might have the desire but not the motivation.

You might want to get yourself back but don't have the motivation to do what you need to do to get it.

And if that's the case, here's what you're going to do.

First, you're going to make sure that whatever it is that you want to do is doable.

You're going to make sure that your goal isn't so big that it seems impossible or seems daunting.

You're going to make your goal as small as you need to make it in order for it to seem doable, maybe even easy.

You want to make sure you think, "I can do that."

So instead of saying that you're not going to eat anything after dinner, when you've been bingeing after dinner most nights for months, you're going to make the goal smaller.

Maybe instead of not eating anything, you'll make your goal eating less, and you'll decide what less means, and you'll choose an amount that feels doable.

Or another example, instead of saying you're going to journal everyday, when you haven't been doing it at all, you make a goal of doing it once a week for 10 minutes.

So you're going to make sure your goals feel doable to you and, you're not going to try and do everything at once too.

Don't try to incorporate back in, all at once, everything you stopped doing. Just choose one or two, or again, however many feels doable.

It is so much easier to feel motivated when you have goals that feel doable rather than ones that seem impossible or dreadful.

So that's one thing you're going to do to help you feel motivated.

The second thing is getting specific about why you want to get back to this thing, or these things, and make it meaningful to you. You're going to get clear on what your compelling reason is for doing it.

When you have a reason that is compelling, that is important, you'll feel much more motivated to do it as opposed to when it doesn't really matter if you do it or not.

And you're not just going to come up with a reason, you're going to tell yourself that reason every day. You're going to keep that reason in the forefront of your mind by reminding yourself of it again and again.

This reason is your motive, it's your reason for putting in effort, for putting in time, and it's your reason for making yourself a priority.

When those other things took priority, it was because you had compelling reasons to make them priorities. So that's what you'll do with your self-care and your eating now.

And if you don't feel motivated when you think about those reasons, you're going to make sure that those reasons are meaningful, personal, and important enough to you and not just vague reasons. And also, make sure that whatever it is you want to do is doable and if it's not, make it a smaller goal and tell yourself why it's important that you do that smaller goal.

So, if you've let yourself go, you're going to first understand why you did it, without blaming yourself or being hard on yourself. You're going to get down to the facts and do it with compassion and forgiveness.

Then, you're going to create motivation. You're going to set a small, doable goal, and you're going to remind yourself over and over why it's important that you achieve this small goal and why you want to do it.

There might be times when your brain says you don't want to do it and you're going to come right back at it and tell it why you do.

Tell yourself your motive. And make sure it's specific, compelling, important, and personal.

No matter why you let yourself go, you can get yourself back.

Starting now.

Get to it and I'll talk to you next time. Bye bye.