

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #281: Changing Your “If/Then” Statements

Hello! Today I’m talking about “If/Then” statements. What I mean by that is when we say things like, “If this thing happens, then this is what will happen.”

We’re basically stating that if a certain circumstance is present then a certain outcome will happen.

I hear people do this all the time about their eating and binge eating and I used to too.

I’d say things like, “If it’s in my home then I’ll eat it all.” Or, “If I start eating it then I won’t stop.”

We say these kinds of things because we’ve experienced it so many times. There were so many times that I’d eat it all and after experiencing it so many times, I just saw it as an inevitable truth.

And that’s the problem here. We see our “If/Then” statements as being inevitable and true.

We look at what we’ve done in the past and now we assume that’s how it’s going to be in the future.

And if we are fully believing that, then we’re not even going to try to make it different.

Now, let’s be clear, not all “If/Then” statements are untrue and not all are a problem.

It’s true that if you binge then you’ll feel terrible and holding on to that belief is going to be helpful because it will help you decide to not give in to an urge and binge and could also help you to not feel urges to binge at all since it makes bingeing sound undesirable.

So we’re not looking to let go of all these predictive statements.

But you have to find the ones that aren't inevitably true and that are problematic.

Like I said for me, one was that if I start eating it, then I won't stop.

It's a problem that I believed this because if I believe that I will eat it all once I start, then why would even try to stop?

I think it's inevitable, so what's the point in putting effort?

So this is what tends to happen.

If I'm eating that certain food, and I'm thinking I won't be able to stop, then I'm going to feel powerless.

If I'm feeling powerless, then I'm just going to keep giving into my desire or urge for more because when you're feeling powerless, you give up.

So then I end up creating even more evidence to prove it true that if I start then I won't stop.

If you're believing the "If/Then" statement to be true then that's what you're going to end up creating.

And there's another downside to this too.

If I believe that if I have ice cream in my home then I will eat it all, then I might be afraid to even buy it.

I fear what I think is inevitable.

So I don't buy it, even when I really want it.

I don't buy it because I think I can't have it in my home.

And as time goes on, and I keep not allowing myself to have it, I want it even more. The desire builds. The desire becomes strong and urgent, it becomes an urge.

And eventually, I just give in, buy it, and that urge drives me to eat it all.

So you have to find the "If/Then" statements that are perpetuating behaviors that you don't want to have and that aren't as inevitable as you've been telling yourself they are.

And then, you have to change them.

You have to change them so you can stop repeating the same behaviors over and over and so you can stop feel powerless, stop thinking you're out of control in certain situations, and so you stop thinking there's something wrong with you.

There's not. And you're not out of control or powerless.

And you'll be able to see that so much more clearly when you understand how those "If/Then" statements aren't inevitably true.

So to start, what statements do you tell yourself that end with, "then I will binge," or "then I will eat it all?"

What "If's" are you putting before that outcome?

What is it that you think will inevitably result in a binge or in excessively eating it all?

Like I said for me, it was having certain foods in my home or even just starting to eat certain foods.

"If I start eating peanut butter then I will binge on it."

I thought it was inevitable but, it wasn't.

Eating peanut butter didn't cause me to binge.

Me giving in to my desire for more, again and again, caused me to binge.

Truthfully, the "If/Then" statement was really, "If I keep giving in to my urge for more peanut butter and don't decide to stop and commit to that decision, then I will binge." That's the truth.

So it's not the peanut butter, it's me and the decisions I'm making as I'm eating it.

No blame here, but I've got to take responsibility for and understand what's really happening.

Now, is the peanut butter delicious and does it trigger a desire for more? Yes.

So, "If I eat a spoonful of peanut butter then I will desire more." That was true for me too. That was pretty much inevitable.

But here's what wasn't inevitable. "If I eat peanut butter then I will binge.

It wasn't inevitable because I could stop that from happening.

I could stop it from happening by not giving in to my desire or urge for more.

It could be, "If I eat a spoonful of peanut butter then I will not give in to my urge for more and be done."

That right there, because I believe that to be true, and because it shows me that I can do something to not make it turn into a binge, is going to feel so much more empowering than that powerless statement from before.

And when you feel empowered, you're going to do what it is that you truly want to do.

I didn't want eating peanut butter to always turn into a binge. And I didn't have to allow it to.

There was something I could do to change that “If/Then” statement. And when I did stop giving in to the urges and desires, then I did change the statement.

I no longer believe it. I saw that it wasn't an inevitable statement, I saw what I could do to change it, and now I've done what I can do and have fully changed my belief. I have a new “If/Then” statement.

So many of you have statements like these.

If I don't eat a healthy breakfast then I will binge.

If I eat out of the container then I will binge.

If I have certain foods in my home then I will binge on them.

If I get bored or feel stressed out, then I will binge.

If I start then I won't stop.

Is that really how it has to be?

It isn't.

Sure there's a reason why those two things are connected but, they don't have to be.

Because there is something missing in those statements.

It most likely is more like this:

If I don't eat a healthy breakfast then I will decide that I've already messed up being healthy for the day and then I will binge.

Or if I don't eat a healthy breakfast then I will crave more unhealthy stuff and instead of working through those urges for more unhealthy stuff, I will just eat them and then I will binge.

If I eat out of the container and I never decide to stop and I just keep giving in to my urge for more, then I will binge.

If I have certain foods in my home and I keep giving in to my urge to eat more then I will binge on them.

Or, if I have certain foods in my home but I never allow myself to eat them then my desire for them is going to build until I feel an urge for them and when I finally do eat them, if I keep giving in to my urge to eat more, then I will binge on them.

If I get bored or feel stressed out and I then decide to eat to numb my feelings, and I completely check out and stop paying attention to what I'm eating, then I will binge.

And lastly, if I start and I never decide to stop and commit to stopping and feeling through the urge for more, then I won't stop.

There's more to the story and that "more" is important for you to acknowledge.

Because when you do, you'll see how it can be possible that your original "If/Then" statement could not be inevitable.

There is something you can do to stop the past from repeating itself.

And when you acknowledge what it is, you can actually do something to change what's been happening.

You can change the outcomes for yourself in the future.

Now, for some of you, you hear all that talk about deciding to stop and committing to that decision and not giving in to urges and feeling your urges all the way through, which is how you'll change the outcome, and you might get caught up in not knowing how to do that, so you don't feel empowered when you think about that. You still feel powerless because you don't believe you can do what you need to do so you just go back to believing the "If/Then" statements you've been telling yourself for years. You keep believing that it's not possible for you to change what's in between your "if" and your "then."

So if you don't know how to do those things that you need to do in order to change your "If/Then" statements, then you can at least acknowledge that you're going to learn how.

You can see what you need to do, and if you don't know how, you're going to learn how to do it.

You are capable of learning how. All of you are.

And to get you started with your learning, here's some relevant podcast episodes:

Ep 151 Resisting vs Allowing Urges

Ep 157 Anticipating the Urge to Binge

Ep 160 In the Moment when You're feeling an urge

Ep 184 Self talk while feeling an urge

Ep 215 How to follow through on a decision to not eat

And if you want more help, if you want my direct help with your specific struggles and your personal reasons why you're having a hard time doing it, you can always join me in the Stop Binge Eating Group Coaching Program, and info for the next round I'm opening up is coming soon.

You can learn to do different things that will redirect your results and you can create a different outcome, no matter what food you're eating, what food is around you, or what emotion you're feeling.

If you've experienced an undesirable outcome previously, no matter how many times, why did it happen in that circumstance and what can you do to stop it from happening again?

You can learn how to not give in to all your urges for more. You can learn how to feel through your feelings. You can learn how to commit to a decision to stop eating.

You can stop feeling powerless and start feeling empowered.

You can change the “then.”

You can tell a new story, one that you believe, about what will happen if you eat that food, if you have that food in your home, or if you’re feeling certain feelings.

I’ve done it, I’ve helped a lot of people do it, and you can do it too.

Your past doesn’t have to be repeated and it’s not inevitable that what’s happened before will happen again.

If you’re in that situation again, then you can do something different to create a new outcome.

And then, you will have new “If/Then” statements that will feel good, that will put you in charge, and that will help you to behave exactly as you want to.

Alright, so you’re going to find the ones that aren’t truly inevitable and that are actually driving you into undesirable outcomes, you’re going to get very detailed about how that outcome actually happens, step by step, find what’s really between your “if” and your “then.” And then you’re going to change the narrative you tell about that that “if,” and you’re going to practice doing what you need to do in order to create a new “then.”

You can do this. You’ve got this.

And I’ll talk to you next time. Bye bye.