

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #289: The Importance of Fun

Hi! Let's talk about fun!

It's something that seems is lacking for too many adults.

We're all having fun as kids, it's what we do the most, but then as adulthood creeps in, we let it go.

Maybe people think it's not important, or they think they don't have the time, or they don't have the energy for it, or, what I see happen the most is that they've forgotten how to have fun.

But it is important and if you're not having any fun, or very little, it's time to incorporate more.

Most adults are very good at incorporating productivity like work, chores, errands, and commitments they make to help other people. Some adults, are good at incorporating relaxation. And both of these are important too of course. But it seems that there's a lot of time spent being productive, some time spent relaxing, and not enough time having fun.

Relaxing and fun, although they can sometimes be one in the same, you can relax and have fun at the same time, are also not always the same.

They both help us feel better but not always in the same ways.

And I've found that they can be different solutions to different problems.

Here's an example.

A few weeks ago I was working long days. For three days straight I was finishing work later than usual and the other days were pretty normal.

And I did make time for relaxing at the end of the days. For one of the especially late work days, I actually rested a bit in the late afternoon. And this rest for me was laying on my couch watching tv or a movie and maybe a little bit of spending time on my phone on social media or reading articles. I was resting my brain and resting my body to recover from being so productive with my work.

It also seemed like I was sleeping enough. I was going to bed and waking up around the same times I usually do.

But I wasn't feeling refreshed. For most of the week, I actually felt cranky and tired.

And to back it up, that Sunday before the week began was entirely relaxing. We had a snowstorm and my boyfriend and I spent the whole day indoors watching movies.

By Friday, I was not feeling mentally well.

Now, do I know exactly what was causing me to feel how I was feeling? No. It could have been something more than what I was doing with work and relaxing.

But what I do know is this.

On Friday night, we went to a game night with friends and had so much fun. I was enjoying myself when we were all just talking and eating dinner, and when we were playing games the energy was high and there were a lot of laughs.

And afterwards, and the next day, I felt better than I had all week.

My energy was back to normal and so was my mood.

That night that I was having fun, I was using my mind differently, I was most likely experiencing endorphins like I hadn't been for most of the week, my serotonin was most likely boosted, and that changed my mental and physiological state.

Now, I will say that at some points while I was working, especially when I was interacting with people on coaching calls and such, I did feel good. I love coaching and sometimes I do feel a bit high after calls. But it's not the same I don't think.

Yes we can get enjoyment from our work but, there also needs to be the pure enjoyment of just having fun without responsibility attached.

And the same goes for exercising. I was doing my physical therapy exercises each morning, which at that point in my recovery were legit exercises that were tiring and worked my muscles a lot and made me perspire a bit, along with some upper body exercises too, and the working out helped me feel good too but like with the feeling good from work, it just wasn't the same. It wasn't enough.

What I experienced that Friday night was very different than what I'd experienced during the week and it made such a difference for me.

And then I continued it throughout the weekend.

On Saturday I drove down to Rhode Island to have dinner with a friend I hadn't seen in a year, I spent the night in a hotel, and the next day I hung out with a few friends that also live down there and all of it was so enjoyable and fun.

And come Monday, I wasn't cranky, and wasn't tired. I felt refreshed, I had energy, and I worked that day without the resistance I had felt the week before.

For me, this was just such a great example that showed me how important fun is.

And when I think back to how I used to live, for so many years of my adult life, it makes sense why I felt so unmotivated, why I was lazy with work, and also, why I overate and binged so much.

I was needing more fun.

Now, I'm not saying I was lacking fun for all of my adult life. It was kinda off and on. There was a time when I was regularly going to dance classes a few times a week. There was a time when I was regularly going out to see live music a few times a week. But there were also many periods of my life when I was doing a lot more relaxing and eating than having true fun.

And I actually saw a glimpse of that during my tired and cranky week.

That Thursday, I was sitting on my couch, watching a movie, and I got this craving for the chips in my cabinet. Now, this was surprising for me because I had purchased those chips a few weeks before and hadn't desired them or really thought about them at all. So why was I now?

And my guess is that I was urging for some fun. I wasn't giving myself fun so my brain offered those chips, something pleasurable and easy and accessible, to create fun.

And that was what really got me thinking about work and relaxing and fun and what I'd done that week and how I was feeling and what I was really needing.

I kept giving myself relaxation but wasn't giving myself fun and my brain noticed. So my brain urged me to do something to get those feel good feelings.

Now, when I say I felt an urge for the chips, I'm not saying it was a binge urge. My brain wasn't urging me to binge. I don't feel those kinds of urges anymore. But it was a less intense urging, a nudge, an encouragement to get them.

And underneath that urge for chips was really an urge for fun.

And I see that happen with so many of my group members too.

It's actually been coming up for a lot of people recently.

They're overeating and bingeing and it's not entirely because they're being too restrictive with their eating or because they're not willing to feel through their emotions but because they're urging for pleasure, fun, and enjoyment.

And instead of having fun and enjoying themselves and getting pleasure in fulfilling ways that leave them feeling better than they did before doing it, they're eating.

And for so many of them, it's because they just don't know how else to get it besides eating food.

They've forgotten about hobbies they used to have, friendships have drifted and they haven't created new ones, and they haven't tried anything new in such a long time.

But it's time for them to bring the hobbies back, to reconnect with old friends or connect with new people, and to try new things.

One of my group members recently told me she was watching tv with her husband, and it wasn't really something she was super into and they weren't talking and she had the thought, "is this all there is?"

And the answer is no!

Our world is full of opportunities for fun, I don't care where you live.

I hear all the excuses and they can all be overcome.

Is there not really anything going on where you live? Be willing to travel a bit.

Do you not have friends where you live? Explore ways to create new friendships.

You don't have to rely on what's around the corner or on the friendships you created when you were younger.

There's more.

Even if you're doing something online, it's better than nothing.

That same group member did an online dance class and she loved it. She was so happy afterward and she didn't binge that night because she found something better to do than eat a bunch of food.

For me, instead of doing in person piano lessons, I've been learning through an app and it's been really fun.

There are so many options for fun out there if you look.

And if you don't know what to look for, consider what you used to do when you were a kid, or when you were younger, or what people you know do.

One day I was thinking about swimming, which I did in high school. As an adult, I've gone to swim laps at the gym a few times here and there and I liked it but what I'd prefer is to have someone tell me what to do like my swim coach did in high school. I want someone to create workouts for me. It's like

with my usual morning workouts at home. I don't want to come up with my own so I do workouts with a woman on YouTube.

So I did a Google search for adult swim teams near me. I didn't really think anything would show up but low and behold, I found one, and they have workouts on Monday and Wednesday night in the town next to me.

I also was thinking about ping pong, which is something I played a lot when I was a kid. Like with swimming, I've played here and there as an adult and I just love it. So I Googled, "ping pong club near me" and there it was. There is a table tennis club that was started a little over a year ago right near me.

I got curious about doing things I used to love doing, I did some research, and I found them.

And I'm going to check them both out. I haven't yet because I've had other things to do when they're happening and because of my knee injury but now that I'm cleared to go back to all regular activities, those are both in my calendar.

Do a little exploring and research for yourself too. You never know what you'll find until you look.

And also look for things you have never done before, that you've wanted to try, or that you know other people do.

And then just try something and be willing to not be good at it at first.

I don't know about you, but I usually think things are more when when I'm good at them.

But here's the thing, if you want to get good, you have to be willing to be bad first.

And the more you do it bad, the more you will learn, and the better you will get, and eventually you will get to good.

So don't quit something just because you're not good at it. Give it a solid chance.

And if you just don't genuinely like it for whatever reason, then you try something else.

And it's not just activities that are important.

It's also connection.

For me, I know that a lot of my bingeing was driven by loneliness.

And it wasn't like I didn't have any friends, I did. I had lots of them actually. But I wasn't reaching out to them enough. I wasn't putting in enough effort.

So I would sit at home alone, feeling lonely, and then go eat food to feel better and to enjoy myself.

But obviously it didn't really make me feel better. I felt better when I was going to buy the food because I was excited, I felt better when I started eating it because it was pleasurable, but afterward, I

felt so much worse than I did before. The loneliness intensified along with other emotions and physical discomfort.

Us humans are a social species.

Tony Robbins talks about the 6 humans needs, which I agree with, and they are certainty, variety, significance, connection, growth, and contribution.

Connection is one of them.

Connection is a component of happiness and fulfillment.

I've seen it for myself after having periods of my life when I've connected with people more and when I haven't.

And the connected times were better.

When I went to Rhode Island for the weekend, I wasn't doing any special activities with my friends.

I had dinner on Saturday and on Sunday we were sitting in the living room talking the whole time.

And it felt great because I was connecting.

Personally, I think it's important to have the variety too, which was another of Tony Robbins humans needs.

Have the times when you're just connecting with people and the times when you're doing a fun activity.

Connect with people and have dinner, have coffee or tea, talk on the phone or video chat, go for a walk, go to class, do crafts, watch a movie together, go to a museum, go to the theatre, there's so many things.

And if you want to make new friends and more connections, look through [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com), find a social calendar where you live or nearby and pick something off there, join a club, take a class, reach out to local Facebook groups, explore places where people meet.

And again, it would be helpful to also have things that you can do on your own for the times when other people aren't available, or when there just isn't anything going on, or at night after dinner.

And if you're one of those people who thinks you don't have time for fun, it would be helpful for you to re-evaluate what you're doing with your time.

Recently one of my group members realized that she was saying yes to things that she thought she should say yes to but didn't really need to. She was filling up her plate with unnecessary things and not leaving time for herself.

Her life was centered mostly around work, her kids, and other adulting things.

And she was making some time for relaxation and meditation but not really for fun for herself.

So she kept finding herself eating for fun.

Her brain was doing what mine did with the chips, but more.

So she decided that she was going to do less.

I think a lot of us think we can't say no or we can't do less but really, we can.

And it's so important that we do.

It's so important that we don't take on things that we don't really need to and that we delegate some things to other people.

So we can have time for ourselves, and time to have fun.

Because when we do, we'll show up in our lives better.

We'll be happier, more fulfilled, and more energized.

If you think you don't have the energy for fun, maybe what's really happening is that you don't have energy because you're not having fun.

People might think they don't have time for fun but it's so important that they make the time.

Most likely it's more important than something you've been telling yourself you have to do that you don't really.

Let's get out of the same old same old.

Let's make life more exciting and fun.

Because when you do, food won't be the most exciting and fun part.

Of course you can still have fun with food and be excited about it, that's totally okay.

But there needs to be more.

And when there is more, you won't obsess about food as much.

So don't just go through life, live life.

Prioritize fun.

You'll enjoy your life so much more if you do.

And if you're someone who eats because they're bored or lonely, it can help you to eat less.

Create excitement and connection with activities and people.

It's so much more fulfilling and has much better long-lasting effects than bingeing on a lot of food.

So if you're someone who has been mostly eating for fun, start exploring, start researching, start looking, and commit to something fun.

And not just once a month or once a week. Have fun most days, even if it's just something moderately fun. It doesn't always have to be super exciting, it can just be something you enjoy.

That's what matters most. Enjoy yourself.

Find the balance between productivity, relaxation, and fun.

Alright, have a super fun day and I'll talk to you next time.