

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #298: How to Have Useful Conversations With Yourself

Hi! Let's talk about having conversations with yourself.

A lot of the time when people are describing to me what goes on in their mind before they start eating when they're not hungry or when they're feeling an urge, or before they eat more when they're full, there doesn't seem to be much of a conversation happening.

Basically, their brain says to eat, and they eat.

They're not really paying attention to what their brain is saying to them, they're not considering their options, they're not considering the implications of doing what their brain is suggesting, or maybe they're not even acknowledging what's going on in their mind at all, there's no awareness.

There is no real discussion, no back and forth, they just eat.

And this is a problem because our brains usually aren't going to think things through on their own.

Our brains are very toddler-like. At least, this part of our brain that's telling us to eat when we're not hungry or to eat more is. It's just the lower brain wanting pleasure and wanting to feel good. That's all it's considering in that moment.

It wants pleasure, eating will be easy pleasure that it's familiar with, so it tells us to do it.

It's that simple.

But, if we just go along with everything our lower brain tells us to do, if we just go along with everything our lower brain wants, we'd be in a lot of trouble.

We wouldn't show up for important obligations, we wouldn't get done so many of our adult responsibilities, we wouldn't do anything that isn't enjoyable, we would only do things that are enjoyable, and we would definitely experience a lot of negative outcomes because of it.

If you didn't go to work any time your brain said it didn't want to go to work, you'd lose your job and your livelihood.

If you ate every single time your brain said it wants to eat something, and kept eating every time it said to eat more, then you would feel awful.

And let's clear something up about that. When I talk about eating whatever you want on this podcast, I'm not saying that you're going to eat every single time your brain says it wants something, and keep eating every time it says to eat more.

We need to separate you and your brain. We need to separate you and your *lower* brain. That toddler part of your brain. That part of your brain that just wants to avoid discomfort and get easy pleasure.

You, up in your higher brain, want more than that. You want to live your best life, you want to thrive, you want to achieve goals, you want to evolve and improve, and if you're going to do and have all that, you can't just do what's easy, pleasurable, and comfortable.

You have to do things you haven't done before, things that are unfamiliar, things that are uncomfortable, things that aren't always enjoyable, and things you don't feel like doing.

And that means that sometimes your brain is going to tell you to do things, it's going to make suggestions, and you're going to decline because it's not aligned with what you really want the most.

Yes you might want it in them moment but, is it what you really want for yourself?

That's what needs to be figured out and if you're not having a conversation with yourself, then you're not giving yourself a chance to figure out if it is.

Too many of us aren't spending enough time talking with ourselves before making decisions.

Especially eating decisions.

Many people think that if our brain says to do it then we must do it. Or if our brain says we want it then we do want it.

But no. You don't have to do it and it's not necessarily what you want.

My brain might tell me to stop recording this right now and go eat a snack.

Option one is for me to just do it. I can just agree and go. I can think that since it's in my mind then I must do it and if it's in my brain then that must be what I want to do.

And option two is to stop and think about this.

Option two is to think it through, to question what my brain is telling me.

I don't just have to hear it and agree, I can think for myself. I can get curious about this. I can make my own decision, not just go along with what I just heard in my head.

And that's what I am suggesting you all work on doing more of too.

When your brain tells you to eat something, first, the best question to ask yourself is, "Am I hungry or do I just want to eat?"

Now, I know that some of you are pretty disconnected from your hunger *and* fullness signals but, this question can be a great start for you to reconnect.

You're not just going to answer with, "I don't know," you're actually going to take a moment to scan your body, observe what you're feeling in your body, and notice what sensations you're feeling and where. Just doing that can help you to uncover the answer. And you can do this anytime you feel the desire to eat and the more you do, the more understanding of your body and the more connected to it you will become.

And the reason why this is a great question to ask first is because it will help you understand where your brain is coming from with this desire to eat.

Is it wanting to fuel itself?

Or is it just looking for pleasure, enjoyment, entertainment, or looking to feel differently?

Remember, we're aiming for a conversation so instead of just going along with what your brain is saying, instead of just nodding and saying okay because it's easier, you're going to understand it's motive.

Just like you might with another person. You're hanging out and they might say, "Hey, let's go to Target." And you might then ask, "Why do you want to go there?"

And when you ask them that, you're helping yourself to make a decision about whether or not you want to go with them. You don't just have to say okay.

Image if you did just say okay, and you drive there together, and they want to do a ton of shopping, try on a whole bunch of clothes, and spend a really long time there and that's not at all how you want to spend your time. But you said yes without gaining the understanding of why they want to go and you're now there, with no out, feeling pretty miserable.

Now, imagine if you inquired about why they want to go and they tell you all the things they want to do and with this knowledge you now decide for yourself if you want to go or not, you could say you don't want to go, not go, and spend your time how you really want to spend it.

Or, imagine they tell you they just want to stop in to buy paper towels, and knowing that, you're totally cool with doing a quick trip, so you do what you're okay with, maybe you grab something for yourself too that you want, and then you're out of there and you feel good.

If when you're having this conversation with your brain, you realize you're hungry and you're totally down for eating for hunger, then great, let's go eat something.

Or if when you're having this conversation with your brain you realize it just wants to eat because it wants pleasure, or it wants to feel numbed, relaxed, comforted, happy, or some other emotions, then you can consider what it is that *you* really want to do. Do you want to go along with it or not?

And you'll get the answer to that question by continuing the conversation.

And the next question I'd suggest you ask yourself is, "How do I feel physically and how will I feel if I eat?"

Do a physical assessment and then consider your future self and how they'll feel.

Is your stomach full? How is your energy? And how full will you feel if you eat this? How will your energy be if you eat this?

Now, of course we can't predict the future but, you can probably make an educated guess based on when you've eaten this food in the past and based on how your stomach feels.

And the more you pay attention to your body, the more educated your guesses will be.

So take a moment to consider how you feel physically and how you think you will feel if you eat.

This is just like when you're making other decisions in your life. You look to the future, to how you think the decision will pan out, you consider pros and cons, you consider how you think it will turn out.

Do the same when it comes to making eating decisions.

You don't have to be a yes person. You can ask questions, you can consider your future self, and you can consider what you want the most, what you really want.

And you can also even consider if what your brain wants is what you want.

Sometimes your brain is going to say that it wants chips because it feels stressed. But when you stop and consider it, you realize that *you* don't want to eat chips.

Really, you'd rather have something else or, you'd rather not even eat food. Maybe you realize that what *you* really want is to relax your mind so you'd rather just lay down and listen to some music for a few minutes. You see laying down and listening to music as a much better way of relaxing and calming your mind so you say no to the chips your brain offered.

But in order to do ultimately do that, you have to have the conversation instead of just running for the chips as soon as your brain suggests them.

This is all really about engaging with yourself, engaging with your brain, instead of just listening and doing.

Listen, ask questions, consider, and decide.

And you're not just going to do this with thoughts about desiring food.

Also do it if your brain tells you that you're not good enough, or that you can't do this, or that you're out of control, or that you're a failure, or that you can't handle this emotion, or that you can't eat that food or shouldn't eat that food, or that your body is disgusting.

Your brain is sometimes going to tell you stuff that is total BS and you don't have to go along with it. You can challenge it, and you should challenge it.

That's what I do when I'm coaching my group members. I notice the unuseful thoughts that they share with me, the ones that are going to keep them from stopping binge eating and from achieving their goals, and the ones that make them feel bad about themselves, and I challenge them. I question them. I get curious about them so I can help them change them.

And you're going to do that for yourself.

You don't have to believe everything you hear in your own head. Just because it's in your mind doesn't mean it's true.

And you can observe yourself more, and question why your brain is thinking what it is, and question yourself to see what really is true.

Is it really true that you can't do this? That you can't handle your emotions? That you a failure? No, it's not true. But if you do think it's true, why? Where is this coming from? Let's understand this because when you dig a little deeper, by having this conversation with yourself, you might find that the reason you're giving yourself is clearly not true to you.

And if you have these conversations, any of them, and you're bingeing, still restricting too much, still feeling bad about yourself, still eating to avoid emotions, then I urge you to come work with me on it.

There are so many useful conversations that you can have on your own with yourself and you can help yourself so much.

But sometimes we need an outside perspective, a different way of looking at things, a different point of view, and that's something I can offer you and I have a lot of experience working on these things with people who binge eat.

I just want to put it out there that with having these conversations, and with anything else I talk about on this podcast, you don't have to do it all on your own. I can help you, personally, and we can have these conversations together.

And if you're interested, registration for the next round of The Stop Binge Eating Program will be opening on May 22nd of 2024 and all the info can be found at coachkir.com/group and you can also find that link in the show notes.

So, you're not just going to let your decisions be one-sided. Actually converse with yourself. Understand yourself. Get to know yourself. Check in, ask questions, take a moment to think before deciding. Again, just like making decisions with other people. You're going to discuss, not just let the other person decide everything without any input or thought from you.

Be attentive, actively listen to your brain and understand what it's telling you, pay attention to what it's saying, observe it, consider how you feel and how you want to feel, and ask useful questions that are going to help you decide what you really want to do.

And I just want to say, before I go, that this doesn't have to take a long time. This doesn't have to be a long, drawn out conversation. It can take literally just a minute.

Sometimes people think it's gonna be this huge thing so then they don't do it. What it really is, is a quick conversation with yourself about what's going on and what you want to do.

And it's totally worth doing because when you put more thought into your decisions, you get more of what you want.

Alright, enough listening to me, go talk with yourself. Bye bye!