

# THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

*with Kirstin Sarfde*

## Ep #306: Panicking When Feeling an Urge to Binge

Hello! Today I'm talking with you about feeling an urge and panicking.

That urge discomfort comes over you, you feel compelled to eat, you're thinking about what you're going to eat and you begin to panic.

And how do you react to that panic?

Most likely, you eat. You just give in to the urge.

When you're panicking, you're not thinking clearly, you're not going to be looking for solutions, and most likely you'll just default into giving up and just giving in to that urge.

One of the main reasons why this happens is because of one of the most common thoughts that causes panic.

"I don't know what to do," which is mixed in with fear about something bad happening.

If you're telling yourself that you don't know what to do, then you're not going to come up with a solution. And if you're telling yourself that while thinking about what bad thing is going to happen, you're going to increase the panic, increase the discomfort you're feeling, increase your irrational thinking, and not do what will actually help you and prevent you from bingeing.

I remember panicking one time when I was in Charleston, SC with a friend of mine. It was the last day we were there, we were doing the last thing we were going to do before going to the airport to fly home, just a quick stop, and I locked the keys in our rental car.

I had rented our car not through a usual rental car company but through Turo, which is like Airbnb for cars. I was panicking because I had no idea how to get the keys, I also had no idea how the owner of the car could help me, I was scared that he was going to have to come to where we were with spare keys, which would be such an inconvenience for him, or that he was busy and wouldn't be able to come help us, and he would leave me a bad review, and on top of that, I worried that we wouldn't be on time for our flight home, which was an evening flight and we'd have to last minute scramble to find a place to stay for the night and figure out a flight for the next day, if there even were any available.

Look at how I was thinking. It was "I don't know what to do" mixed with fear about what would happen if I contacted the owner and what would happen if we didn't figure this out soon.

And because I was feeling this panic, I just kept ruminating in my mind, I wasn't doing much of anything really, and nothing was getting solved.

Meanwhile, my friend was not panicking, and she was thinking more clearly than I was. She was looking for possible solutions, which she didn't find, and she was also problem solving by telling me to contact the owner. She wasn't scared like I was about what would happen if I did, so she kept encouraging me to do it.

Finally, when I did, he sent me a video for how to get into the car through the trunk. Luckily, before I locked the car, I had opened the trunk and there was a lever on the back of the seat that puts the seat down. I got in by doing that, got the keys, and everything was fine. The owner wasn't upset, I didn't get a bad review, and we got to the airport on time.

When some of you are feeling urges to binge, you're reacting like how I was. But you need to act more like how my friend was. Had it just been me panicking, I might have just quit for too long, been late with returning the car, missed my flight, and caused all those bad things to happen that I feared would. But without the panic, as my friend was, we were able to handle it and have a fine outcome.

When you're feeling an urge to binge, you can have a fine outcome. You can get through the urge and not binge.

But if when you're feeling an urge to binge you panic, it's unlikely that you will because you won't be thinking about the solution to not binge, you'll be fearing the binge and giving up on not bingeing.

What happens a lot of the time when people panic while they're feeling an urge to binge is that they're thinking they're going to binge. They're thinking they don't know what to do. They're thinking there's nothing they can do. They're thinking they're out of control and they have to eat.

It's those thoughts that are causing the panic.

So if you want to not panic when you feel an urge, you need to be able to recognize the solution for how to not binge.

You need to be able to see that there is something you can do that will prevent you from bingeing and having a bad outcome.

Because there is.

Now, if you can calm yourself down when you're panicking, that would be great of course.

If you can speak to yourself calmly, and be like how my friend was with me while I was panicking, then you'll be able to ease the panic, feel more calm, not give up and binge, and feel through the urge until it passes.

But once you're panicking, it can sometimes be hard to do that for yourself. It can be hard to calm yourself.

What can make it easier though, is preparing yourself ahead of time.

If you're practicing visualizing what you will do if you feel an urge, if you're practicing how you will talk to yourself if you feel an urge, if you're practicing what you will do if you feel an urge, then it can help you to not panic at all or, to quickly ease the panic if you do feel an urge.

If panic is coming from you thinking you don't know what to do, then if you do know what to do then you'll be less likely to panic.

And if it's also coming from a fear of something bad happening, like bingeing, then if you know how to feel through the urge and not binge then you won't be so fearful of a binge happening *and* you'll know what to do.

Prepare yourself for an urge.

It's like how we did preparation for fires by doing fire drills in school. We got used to the sound of the alarm so we wouldn't panic about what it meant, we learned what it meant. We practiced responding to the alarm by walking calmly out the nearest exit, and learned where that was during the drills, and we practiced where we will go once we've gotten out of the building.

So as we did more fire drills, there wasn't panic, even though we didn't know if it was a real fire or a drill.

But imagine if we never did a drill and one day the alarm went off. You might panic and freeze or try to do things you shouldn't or that won't help you. Or you might react like they did in the office when Dwight did a very realistic fire drill, which if you haven't seen it, it's pretty funny. Search for The Office Fire Drill on YouTube.

But anyway, you can help yourself to feel more calm while feeling an urge, and then get through the urge without a binge, if you prepare for it.

Prepare by understanding what the urge means. It means that you're desiring a binge, it means that you're feeling sensations in your body that are not going to harm you, and it means that you are feeling compelled to binge. But what it doesn't mean is that you *have* to binge. You don't. That urge can't control your body and make you eat. It can only drive you to binge. If you do binge, you are deciding

to give in to the urge, the urge isn't making you binge. Like if you feel compelled to yell at someone. That compulsion isn't forcing you to yell, it's not making you yell, you can *not* yell. I'm sure we've all stopped ourselves from yelling at some point when we've felt compelled to yell. Or we stop ourselves from saying something we feel compelled to say.

So, understand what it really means. The urge is a sensation, it's a feeling, but it doesn't mean you have to binge or that you're going to binge or that something bad is going to happen.

Also, prepare by practicing ahead of time what you will tell yourself when you're feeling an urge and what you will do when you're feeling it so that you don't binge.

If you're going to not give in to the urge, you need to have a strategy for how you're going to feel through the urge without eating.

And what's most important is what you're telling yourself.

Tell yourself you don't have to eat.

That you can feel this.

That this urge is temporary.

That you are in control of what you do and don't do.

And you're going to tell yourself that you're going to feel this and not eat.

You're going to be the calming friend to yourself like my friend was with me in the car situation.

You're going to practice speaking to yourself that way before you even feel an urge. You're going to do an urge drill like the fire drill.

The more you go through this visualization and the more you practice, the more ingrained your understanding of the urge will be and the more ingrained your strategy will be so you will feel less panic when you actually do feel an urge.

You'll be prepared. You'll know what to do. So then, you can more calmly let yourself feel through the urge until it passes.

Panicking is optional when you feel an urge to binge.

You don't have to add panic discomfort to the discomfort you're already feeling with the urge.

You don't have to sit there with no idea what to do and think that your only option is to binge.

It's not, you can do something. Prepare yourself for what you will do.

Alright, that's all I have for you today, I'll talk to you next time. Bye bye.