

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #307: Telling Yourself The Whole Story

Hi! Today I want to talk about a concept that many of my group members have found to be helpful which is, telling yourself the whole story.

What I mean by “the whole story” is what will happen from right now until you finish eating and after you’ve finished eating.

It’s telling yourself what will happen if you eat more.

It’s telling yourself what will happen if you go to the store, buy all that food, and eat it all.

Too often, people are only telling themselves the beginning of the story. That was what I used to do when I wanted to eat more or when I wanted to binge.

I’d think about going to the store and how fun it would be to pick out what I was going to eat. I’d think about how good the food would taste, how much I’d enjoy it, and how good it would feel. When I’d start eating, I’d think about how yummy it is, and how yummy more would be, and I’d enjoy just eating without a care.

I’d think that what I was eating was so good and I wanted more good. I’d think that eating more would be more goodness.

I was just thinking about right now, and the *immediate*, immediate future when I’d eat my next bite. That was it.

I wasn't thinking about how eating all that food would affect me. I wasn't thinking about how I'd feel after eating all that food. Or, maybe I *would* think about it but I'd lie to myself about it and tell myself I'd feel fine when countless times before when I'd done the same thing or something very similar, I didn't feel fine at all. Pretty much any time I'd ever eaten that quantity I was intending to buy, I felt awful afterward and totally regretted it.

Or those times when I wasn't intending to eat a lot of food, when I just kept deciding to eat more and to eat more, I wasn't thinking about how I'd feel if I ate more. I wasn't thinking about how I felt now and how I'd feel if I put more food into my body.

I was only focused on the pleasure and good feelings of right now.

And there really wasn't any body-awareness. I wasn't paying attention to my body at all. And I bet most of the time I was ignoring it on purpose because I didn't want to be full because I wanted to keep eating. I was basically doing the ignorance is bliss thing. As long as I was ignorant to how my stomach was feeling, I could continue to enjoy the food.

Until of course, my body was so uncomfortable that there was no way I could ignore it.

This happened far too many times yet when I was initially thinking about eating, I wasn't thinking about how it had ended so many times before.

I wasn't thinking about how the story would end.

I was only thinking about the beginning, and part of the middle, the good part, the fun part.

I wasn't thinking about how it would really end if I ate more, or if I bought all that food and ate it, or if I went and bought more food.

But that's what I needed to do, and it's what I do so much more of now.

And it's important that you're doing it too.

As humans, we are pleasure seekers and when pleasure is an option, it's likely that we're going to want it. Our brains are most likely going to focus on getting that pleasure and it's not going to focus on what the consequences of that pleasure would be.

And I'm guessing this is because when our brains were created, pleasure wasn't something that sabotaged us like it can now. When we got pleasure way back in the day, especially food pleasure, we didn't have an over abundance of it like we do now. We didn't have as much access to it as we do now. So overdoing it wasn't something that really happened. Too much pleasure wasn't accessible to us then like it is now. So too much pleasure wasn't a concern for our brains, it wasn't something we had to think about really, and our brains haven't evolved to the point where we're naturally thinking about the consequences of too much pleasure unless we've gotten really good at practicing doing it and we make it more natural for ourselves.

For example, I'm really good at thinking about the consequences of staying up past the time I usually go to bed when I'm doing something pleasurable at night. My mind just goes there because I've thought about it so many times.

But for other people, they rarely think about it so they just continue with the pleasure without any thought about what will happen if they stay up too late.

I also do it with drinking now, which is why I rarely drink, it's actually been I think like a year since I've drank an entire alcoholic beverage, I've only otherwise had sips and samples here and there.

But I didn't used to do that. In my younger years, I was just thinking about how good I felt and wanting to keep the feeling going and how good the drink tastes. I wasn't thinking about what would happen at the end, like I do now.

And I think about it more because I've practiced thinking about it more. So I do it much more naturally now.

I tell myself the whole story of drinking alcohol – what will happen if I have even one drink, or if I have more. I'll feel tired, I might say something I wish I hadn't said because my inhibitions are lowered, if it's close to bedtime I might not sleep well, I might feel tired the next day. Because I'm thinking about all these things, I easily don't drink, or if I do choose to drink, I easily don't have a second or third. And it's been a couple years since I've even had a second drink.

Doing this with food is something that has helped me to eat less joy foods. It's easier to stop myself when I'm being honest about how I feel now and how I'll feel if I keep eating more.

I'm telling myself what I know from experience, and what is likely to happen, and in doing that, I make eating more less desirable, and when it's less desirable, it's easier to not do it.

If I'm telling myself that I'm going to feel way too full and uncomfortable, and my motivation and energy will be depleted, and I won't want to do anything for the rest of the day or night, and I won't sleep well, and I won't feel energized the next day, it makes me not want to do it.

When I tell myself the whole story, and the epilogue, so not just what will happen after eating but later on or the next day, I'm more likely to end the story sooner.

I'm more likely to end the story on a happy note instead of an uncomfortable one because I get to choose when the story ends. I get to choose when I stop eating.

So when you're thinking about eating something, don't just think about the beginning of the story. Think about the end.

And you get to decide where the story ends.

If you're going to keep eating, take a moment to acknowledge where you are in the story now, so how you feel physically feel now, and think about where the story will go from here.

If you're going to go buy a bunch of food and eat it all, tell yourself honestly how that story will end.

Now, I do want to be clear that doing this is just one tool that you have in your toolbox.

And that goes for so many things I talk about on this podcast.

Sometimes this is the only tool you need. Sometimes you're going to tell yourself the whole story of what will happen and you'll stop or decide to not even start. It can go this way if your urge isn't super intense or if your emotions aren't super intense.

But sometimes you need to use other tools along with this.

And I say this because I never want anyone to try something I talk about on this podcast, and if it doesn't work they blame themselves and think they're not capable. You absolutely are. But sometimes you just need to use other tools too.

It's like if you're building a house and when just using the hammer doesn't work, you quit on building the house and think you can't do it. But sometimes using the hammer will work and other times you're going to need a screwdriver, a drill, a saw, a wrench, so many other tools to be used in different circumstances.

The same goes for this. This is just one tool.

Other times, you'll need to put your focus on your urge or your emotion and process it. Or you'll need to move your body, or take deep breaths, or to encourage yourself by telling yourself that you can do this, or to calm yourself, or to dismiss the excuses or justifications you have for eating. It might help you to also use some other tool or tip I've given you in the episodes of this podcast in conjunction with this.

But this is definitely one that needs to be used more by a lot of people and not just with eating but so many things in life like going to bed or leaving a party as I talked about earlier or turning off the tv instead of watching another episode, or stopping scrolling on your phone, so many things that are pleasurable that we do in excess until it negatively affects us.

End the story on a high note. Don't keep going until it has a disappointing ending.

Create the ending you want to have.

Choose your own adventure, remember those books? Except in your story, you have a really good idea of what will happen if you turn to page 38 or page 72. You've been on those pages before, so tell yourself what is going to happen.

Alright, so if you're thinking about bingeing, you're going to not just think about the beginning, the fun part of the story. You're going to tell yourself the whole story, from beginning to end and the epilogue.

And if you're eating and thinking about eating more, take a moment to assess where you are in the story, how your body feels, think about where the story can go from here and where you want the story to end. You decide when the story ends.

And if you're honest about any negative consequences that will happen if you eat a lot or keep eating more, and you're being specific about what negative things will happen, it won't be very hard to stop.

It's easier to stop when you want to stop more than you want to keep eating, and that happens when the reasons to stop are better than the reasons to keep eating.

And lastly, remember that if this isn't stopping you, grab another tool that you've learned from this podcast and use it. Try different tools, see what works best for you, which are the most reliable for you and your personal situations, urges, and emotions.

You can prevent and stop binges. You are absolutely capable.

Help yourself to do it by telling yourself the whole story.

Alright, bye bye.