

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #308: Getting More Fulfilling Connection in Your Life

Hi. This episode today is about getting more fulfilling connection in your life. I wanted to do this episode because when I was binge eating, there were lots of times when I was lacking fulfilling connection and I think it really affected my eating in a negative way.

Now, I'm using the word fulfilling because there's a difference between just connecting and having fulfilling connection.

Like, I could connect with the cashier at the grocery store but it's not really going to fulfill me. It's not really going to have much of an impact on me.

Or like when I've had roommates, we could connect through small talk but it's not really impacting me.

But when I'm connecting on a deeper level with someone, or when we're talking in depth about something important to me or something I'm interested in, it feels so different. It fills me up in such a better way.

Now, it wasn't like I had zero fulfilling connection. I definitely did have some. For most of those years, I had close friends that I would connect with in meaningful ways, and it would be fulfilling, and I would feel connected and it was great, I loved it.

I really cherished those people and those moments and I felt so good when they happened and when I felt so connected.

But there were also far too many times in those years that I didn't.

When I've gone through my journals to do the episodes where I share some of my entries, I've come across so many entries where I'm writing about how disconnected I felt, how I didn't have the quality of friendships that I wanted to have, how lonely I felt, and how sad I was that I didn't have a boyfriend to connect with. There were so many times that I'd write about how I wanted to spend more time with people and it was actually similar to what I'd done with my binge eating during all those years.

With the binge eating, I wrote about wanting to stop, without stopping, so many times. And I'd write about wanting to connect with people more, without doing it, so many times.

I can't tell you how many times I've written in a journal about wanting to spend more time with my friends.

It really has been a challenge for me for most of my adult life, and I'm still not great at it now. It's something I'm still working on improving.

I do see my friends, but not as much as I would like to. And there are so many reasons why.

We all have lives and it can sometimes be a challenge to find a time that works for us. I have one friend who I always have to make plans with like at least a month in advance because she does a lot of stuff with different people and has obligations and travels and all that.

I have another friend who has 3 kids and they're all very involved with extracurricular activities and hobbies so she's busy with all they do plus having family time and spending time with other friends.

It's not like it was back in high school where you have your friend group and maybe a hobby or sport or two and that's it. So it's easier.

As adults, we have lots of obligations and adulting things and jobs, some of us have kids and they have their own lives that we want to be a part of, and we also have friends that aren't connected to each other so it's not like we're all just going to hang out together like when we had the friend group in high school.

I have several friends that live within driving distance of me but they're not all friends with each other so I'm not just making plans for us all to hang out, it's all done separately.

And I don't always have the time or the energy to see and connect with them all frequently. So my desire for solo relaxation takes up some of that time I could spend with them too.

But what's the bigger problem is when I do have the time and energy, and I also have the desire for it, but I don't do it.

That's what happened to me way too often during my binge eating years.

Instead of reaching out to someone to connect, I'd eat food. I'd go to the convenience store or grocery store or drive thru and buy food to connect with.

And it would be filling, way too fulling but, it was never *fulfilling*.

I kept choosing food over friends and one reason why I did it was because it was easier. In my mind, it would be so much effort to try and hang out with someone if I wasn't making plans ahead of time and was just trying to find someone to spend time with when I felt like it. I'd imagine myself reaching out to several people before I'd find someone who was available, and then I had to come up with an idea for something to do that both of us would want to do and that felt like so much pressure.

And of course it would have been beneficial for me to make plans ahead of time instead of trying to make them in the moment but in my mind, I wanted to not make plans. I wanted to have that time or that day free without any obligations so I could do what I wanted. But too many times, I'd just end up eating, or watching too much tv, which was not what I really wanted.

I'd want to have the day to myself, without any plans, but then I'd feel bored or not know what I wanted to do with my time, and then I'd eat. I kept thinking I'd just come up with ideas or desires for what I wanted to do but it didn't happen. At some point during the day I'd be out of ideas and then I'd just eat because it was all I could think of.

Eating was easier, it was more comfortable, it was available, but, a lot of the time, it wasn't what I was really wanting.

I was wanting fulfilling connection but a lot of the time I wasn't even connecting with myself enough to recognize that and other times I was recognizing it but I chose to do the easier thing that wouldn't really satisfy me.

I wouldn't be satisfied by the food so I would keep eating more and more, chasing satisfaction, and even after eating it all, and feeling stuffed, I still wasn't satisfied.

That food was never going to be able to provide me with what I was wanting, so of course I wasn't feeling satisfied. Food couldn't, and can't create fulfilling connection for me, which is something I wanted, something I of course still want sometimes, and it's what all humans want.

Us humans are meant to connect. We are a social species. The fact that we feel lonely is an indicator of this.

We feel loneliness when we're experiencing a lack of connection.

And I know I've felt a lot of loneliness in my life.

So if loneliness is a binge trigger for you, like it was for me, along with allowing yourself to feel the loneliness instead of eating to try and fix it, you can work on connecting with people more.

You can give yourself what you're really wanting, those fulfilling moments of connection.

Now, if you're going to do that, you first need to understand what is stopping you from doing it.

Like I said for myself, it was just easier and more comfortable to not do it.

It takes effort to contact people and make a plan and actually do it.

And even when you live with someone, it can still take effort and be uncomfortable to do that with the person or people you're living with.

You still have to put in effort to connect. And maybe they don't want to, maybe they want to do something else, and that's part of the resistance too. There can be a risk of rejection and that's something that stops some people.

You don't ask because you don't want to be told no.

Because, you might feel bad about yourself if someone says no and if they don't want to spend time with you, or do something with you, or talk with you.

If that's the case, you have to be willing to feel rejected, which is just a feeling that you are capable of feeling, and it's also important that you manage your thoughts around them saying no.

What I mean by that is that you choose a useful response to them saying no. And I mean a response that you're saying to yourself, not to them.

What some people do is make the "no" mean something about themselves.

They respond to the no by telling themselves, "I'm not lovable. I'm not interesting. I'm not likable. I'm not a good person." Basically they're coming up with all these personal reasons for why that person said no.

Then they feel bad about themselves and that belief about themselves is going to stop them from trying to connect in the future.

It's definitely happened to me. I've had the belief that I'm not interesting and it's for sure stopped me from trying to connect with people. I've believed that I'm going to be boring and they're not going to enjoy spending time with me so I don't bother trying to connect with them.

So if what's stopping you from connecting with people, or from asking people to spend time with you so you can connect, is a negative belief about yourself, if that's your obstacle, then you need to shift how you're thinking about yourself.

Most likely, whatever it is that you're telling yourself, it's not true. And you have evidence that shows it's not true.

I've believed I'm not interesting yet I've had so many people in my life be very interested in me and my life and what I have to say. There have been countless times that I've not bored people and they've enjoyed spending time with me and they want to spend more time with me.

So to overcome the belief that I'm not interesting or I'm boring, I've had to remind myself that I'm not and show myself the proof.

You have proof against what negative believe you have about yourself too, and evidence that proves what you want to believe to be true.

Tell it to yourself.

And also tell yourself why it's important that you connect with people.

That's something I've done that really helps me.

I'll remind myself of how good I've felt after connecting with people and remind myself of what happens to me if I spend too much time alone.

I love spending time alone. I love doing my own thing. But as with pretty much everything, too much of a good thing isn't good anymore. I've seen what happens to me when I spend too much time alone and it's not good, I don't feel good.

So when I remind myself of why it's important to spend time with people and connect, and why it's important that I don't spend too much time alone, it's easier for me to put in the effort.

It gives me that motive to do the less comfortable thing and use energy to reach out to someone and make a plan.

So give yourself that really important reason to do it, tell yourself why it's important that you do it, be willing to hear people say no, and know that it doesn't mean anything about you as a person if they do say no.

Even if that person in particular doesn't like you for some reason, their reason is not fact and it's just their opinion.

For example, say someone did say no to me because they think I'm boring and uninteresting. That's just their opinion, it's not a fact. I don't need to believe that too. I can look at that evidence that I talked about a moment ago and prove to myself that I'm not boring and I am interesting, even if that one person doesn't think so. There are other people who do. And I can be one of those people.

You can do the same thing for yourself.

So you're going to work on your thoughts about putting in the effort and about yourself.

And something else that might stop you is not having people to connect with.

I hear that from a lot of people too. They want to, they have the desire to but, they don't have the people available to them.

Something that seems to happen to a lot of people is that as they get older their social circle get smaller. Friendships fade, people grow apart, people move away and don't stay connected, there can be so many reasons why there are less people in your life for you to connect with.

And something I also see happen often is that people fall into the comfort trap of just spending time with their significant other because it's easy and they live with them, and hopefully they like them too. It's just easier to spend time with them and because it is, a lot of people choose the ease and comfort of spending most of their time with their partner rather than reaching out to friends and making plans with them so, they end up disconnecting with their friends and now have less friends to connect with.

Now, I'm not saying you need to connect with people outside of your partner, your boyfriend, girlfriend, fiancé, husband, wife, whatever you have and however you label them, but, for most of us, our partner can't always fulfill our needs and desires for connection. They aren't always going to want to do everything we want to do or talk about everything we want to talk about or connect with us on everything we want to connect with.

They're not a carbon copy of us, they're a different person with their own interests and desires and needs and they're not going to 100% align with us.

But when you have more options of people in your life to connect with, more brains, more personalities, with diversified interests and desires, you have more opportunities for connection.

You don't have to only rely on your one person and you don't have to feel disconnected and lonely when that one person isn't available for connection. You have other options for connection.

My boyfriend and I connect often but we're also not always available for each other because we have our own separate lives.

If every time he wanted to spend time with a friend or went surfing in the winter, which I don't do, or went mountain biking, which I also don't do, if every time he wasn't available when I was craving connection and I had no one else, I'd feel a lot of loneliness.

But I don't feel it a lot because I have other people to connect with. I have other people I can spend time with. And those other people are different from him so I'll be able to connect with them in ways that I won't with him.

Like, talking about female things. I don't know about you but there are things I talk about with my girlfriends that he has no interest in, or not even girl-talk things, there are some things that I'm interested in that he's not and thankfully I have friends who are interested in them so I can connect with them on those topics.

I enjoy connecting with my friends about things that my boyfriend and I don't connect on. It would be a bummer if I never got to connect about those things just because he isn't interested.

And to add to this, research has shown that having strong and secure relationships increases happiness and longevity. And I totally believe that.

But going back to where I was going a moment ago, I went on a little bit on a tangent, you might not have friends outside of your partner, or only one, or none that live close to you.

And if that's the case, you can make more friends.

At any age, you can make new friends. There is no age-limit to friend making.

I'm 42 and in the last couple years I've made a few new friends. And I've also met acquaintances that I connect with like the other students in my adult tap class, and my teammates on my volleyball team. I only see them in class and at the game but I enjoy socializing with them, getting to know them, and connecting with them. It makes a difference to me and although I love tapping and playing volleyball in themselves, connecting with those people really enhances the experience.

And I believe I'll keep making friends for the rest of my life because I'm going to keep doing things I love for as long as I can and people will come into my life because of it.

So get out there, find things you enjoy, try new activities, and connect with people. Now, please don't be a graspy creeper and latch on to people you want to be friends with. That's not going to attract connection.

But after frequenting a workout class, or some other kind of class, or a club, or a coffee shop, or a location you enjoy, and after saying hello to another frequenter and slowly increasing communication, you just might find your next close friend. Or at least someone you can connect with as an acquaintance on topics that you're both interested in.

And also remember that you never know who knows someone else. My boyfriend has close friends that he's made through other friends and some of those original friends he's not even friends with anymore. And actually, that happened to me too.

When I first moved to LA, I met a girl that I became friendly with. Then, she introduced me to some other people. Soon after, she disappeared from my life but those other friendships continued. There's actually two of those people that I still keep in touch with to this day.

You just never know what opportunities can be opened up for you when you put in the effort and step outside of your comfort zone. You can experience more happiness and connection.

And I also want to say that you can't just wait around for people to reach out to you and try to connect with you. Other people might be experiencing the same obstacles you have been and if you are both waiting, nothing will happen.

So be the one to make the change. Be the one to start the connection. Be the one to get the ball rolling.

Take responsibility for your needs, desires, and happiness, and get them yourself, instead of waiting for other people to initiate.

You deserve to have what you want, including happiness and connection.

You're a good person, you are lovable, you are interesting, and there are people who want to connect with you.

Re-connect over the phone or on a video call with someone who haven't talked to in awhile. I did that with a couple of friends not long ago and it was wonderful and so fun.

Put in the effort to spend more time connecting with your partner in fulfilling ways, not just surface level small talk, and with your friends.

And find new people to connect with. Try new activities, or new classes or clubs, gradually open communication with people, and explore connections.

Instead of eating when you feel lonely, connect.

To decrease the loneliness you do feel, because it will happen to all of us from time to time because we're humans who feel lonely sometimes, but to decrease it, be more proactive about connecting with people.

Get out of your own way and get connecting.

It feels good, so much better than eating a bunch of food.

Alright, enough listening to this recording of me talking, get out there and connect with a live person in your life! Alright, bye bye.