

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #311: Your Self-Descriptions and Why They Matter

Hello! If you were to describe yourself, what would you say? What kinds of descriptors would you use?

If you were to describe your body, what words and descriptions would you use?

If you were to describe your eating habits and your relationship with food, what would you say?

If you were to describe your life, how would you describe it?

I'd suggest that you really take some time to answer those questions. Write down your answers, see what comes up.

Because your answers to these questions matter, a lot.

How you describe these different things about yourself is going to affect you, maybe more than you even know.

And it can give you some insight into why you behave and eat the way you do.

So often we use the self-descriptors we use and don't think much about them.

Usually because we just think they're facts. We think that how we're describing ourselves, our bodies, the food we eat, *how* we eat, our relationship with food, and our lives is factually how they are.

But most of the time, it's not.

Most of the time, it's just our opinion and when our opinion is negative, it's going to create negative outcomes for us.

Our self-descriptors aren't just insignificant words, they're very significant.

Those words we choose to describe ourselves with are going to make us feel emotions. We're going to feel something when we use those words and whether we feel good or bad is going to be determined by the words, by the descriptors, we choose.

And not only are we going to feel good or bad, how we *behave* is going to be affected by that good or bad feeling. Those good or bad feelings are going to drive us to act in good or bad ways, desirable or undesirable ways, in ways we want to or ways we don't.

The descriptors and words you use to describe yourself aren't just meaningless words. They're going to affect how you feel and how you behave.

So if you're doing things you don't want to be doing, and if you don't like how you feel, take a look at what you think about yourself, and how you describe things about yourself.

See if you're describing these things about yourself in a negative way, because how you describe yourself will show up in how you behave. What you believe about yourself is how you will be.

For example, if you describe yourself as a failure, you're going to act like a failure.

If you describe your relationship with food as being unhealthy, you're going to keep acting in ways that perpetuate an unhealthy relationship with food.

If you describe your body as disgusting, you're not going to treat it well, basically you'll treat it disgustingly.

If you describe your life as boring, or stressful, you're going to act in ways that contribute to the boringness or stressfulness.

And this happens because of what's in between your description and your actions. In between is the emotion that the descriptors create, as I talked about a moment ago, and those emotions are going to drive certain actions.

If you describe yourself as a failure, you're going to feel like a failure, you're going to feel inadequate, and when you feel that way, you're likely going to just give up, stop trying, do nothing, and fail more.

If you describe your relationship with food as being unhealthy, and you feel ashamed when you think this, or you feel disappointed, when you feel that way, you're again likely to do nothing, to change nothing, because those are not feelings that drive us to change. They drive us to stop.

If you describe your body as disgusting, that's another descriptor that's likely going to cause you to feel ashamed, and shame will drive you to hide, to do nothing that will make anything any better. Even worse, you might engage in behaviors that make things worse for you, like bingeing or overeating

because you feel so bad and think that eating will help you to feel some kind of joy, something better than the shame you're feeling.

And if you describe your life as being boring, thinking that way is going to cause you to feel bored, or feel disappointed, or some feeling like that, and when you feel that way you'll likely engage in inaction and do nothing, and stay bored. And it's the same process with stress, where if you think your life is stressful, you're going to feel stressed, and you're going to act stressfully, contributing to your stressful life.

It's all connected. And it all begins with your self-talk, your self-beliefs, your self-descriptors.

And again, they're not facts. They are words you're choosing, descriptors you're choosing, and they're your opinion.

If you believe about yourself, any of the examples I just gave you, know that you are not factually that way.

And we know this, that they are not facts, because not everyone would agree.

I've had so many of my group members come into my program using descriptions about themselves like the ones I mentioned and not only do I not agree with them, but so many of the other members in the group don't either.

We choose different words to describe them because we don't choose to be so negative about them.

We do this kind of thing with people in our lives all the time. A friend of yours might talk about how fat and ugly she is and you disagree. It's not a fact that they are, they're just choosing to use those words, and it's affecting how they feel and act. And you're choosing different words about the same exact body.

I hear people all the time, both in my group and in my personal life talk about how certain foods they eat are bad, or how they're being bad, or saying they can't control themselves around certain foods, and they have no idea how it's affecting them. They think they're just telling it like it is but they're not. They're choosing to speak of themselves this way. And they don't have to.

And neither do you if you do it too.

You get to describe yourself, and things about yourself, however you want to and choose whatever words you want to.

You don't have to be so negative, defeating, harsh, or mean. And you don't have to try and bullshit yourself and try to be positive either.

What you can do is be more neutral with yourself, and actually be more factual with yourself.

You don't have to describe yourself as a failure, you can describe yourself as someone who has made mistakes and just hasn't figured it out yet. But will.

You don't have to describe your body as disgusting, you can describe your body as being just a human body.

You don't have to describe your relationship with food as unhealthy, you can describe it as a work in progress and as something you're improving.

You don't have to describe that food as bad, it can just be food.

You don't have to describe yourself as being bad, you can just be a person eating a delicious food.

You don't have to describe yourself as being out of control with certain foods, you can describe yourself as being a person who is learning to make better eating decisions and a person who is setting limits they want to adhere to and is working on following through on them.

You don't have to describe your life as boring or stressful, you can describe your life as something you're working on making more enjoyable or more calm.

Do you notice a difference in how you feel even when I'm offering you the two options for each of these? How differently it feels to hear each of them?

With all of these, when you start describing, thinking, talking about them differently, you'll show up differently. You'll feel and act differently.

That's the power of the descriptions you use.

It's the same reason why we choose certain words and phrases when we're speaking to other people, especially when we're talking about something we want them to improve on. We choose our words wisely, so we're not being so harsh or bringing them down, because we don't want to discourage them or influence them to feel bad, we want to try to encourage them. We want to help to motivate them. So we try to be as neutral as possible with our words both in our descriptions of where they are now and what they're doing now and what we want them to do differently and how.

Instead of telling a person they're totally screwing up and aren't doing anything right, I might say that mistakes have been made, factually go over what they did incorrectly, and explain how they can improve. It's going to feel so much better for them which will encourage better action.

Do the same for yourself.

Be more neutral and encouraging instead of negative when you're describing yourself.

And to be clear, I'm not telling you to lie to yourself or try to BS yourself. I'm saying to choose better feeling words that you believe to be true.

You can be a work in progress, someone who is working on changing, not someone who is stuck.

You get to decide which one you are.

You choose your words.

You choose your descriptors.

You have more than one option. The negative thing you've been using isn't your only option.

Choose ones that are going to be useful, that will actually drive the actions you want to be taking and that will help you be the person you want to be.

You can be that person, and it's all going to start with your self-descriptors.

So challenge any beliefs you have that are things you think "just are." Like, "this is just who I am," and "this is just how I am or how it is."

You probably aren't. And it probably isn't. At least, not in the way you're describing it with the words you're choosing.

Explore other options. They exist.

Alright, let's be more neutral. It's so much more useful.

And I'll talk to you again soon, bye bye.