

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #325: Intentional vs Impulsive Pleasure

Hello! In today's episode, I'm going to be talking with you about intentional pleasure and impulsive pleasure.

Pleasure is an important topic to talk about on this podcast because eating *is* pleasurable, and not only do we eat to fuel our bodies but, we also eat for pleasure. And for some of you, one of the main reasons that you binge is because you are seeking pleasure and eating is an easy way to get it. And there are reasons why you aren't just enjoying a little pleasure from the food and moving on but are instead continuing to eat and eat.

One main reason is because you don't have any other pleasure in your life that isn't eating food, or you have very few sources of pleasure in your life that don't involve food but, you may not find those other sources to be as exciting as food or they're not as easily accessible.

And another is because you're not allowing yourself any food pleasure, or very little food pleasure, basically, you're being overly restrictive with foods that aren't nutrient dense.

With both of these, you're setting yourself up to binge on pleasure.

Either you're not giving yourself enough of the food pleasure you want or you're not giving yourself enough of pleasure in general that you want.

And listen, if you think the amount of pleasure you want is too much, it probably isn't.

Us humans want pleasure. We desire pleasure. We are innately pleasure seekers. It's just how we are.

And we are likely going to seek pleasure every single day, especially if we've experienced a lot of the opposite throughout the course of the day with mental tiredness, stress, overwhelm, sadness, loneliness, or other emotions occurring within us.

We're going to want to feel better, or feel good, or feel happy and joyful, and this is normal.

It wouldn't be good for us mentally if we didn't have moments of pleasure and we only experienced neutral and negative emotions.

We need, and desire a balance.

We are inevitably going to experience stress and sadness and anger and a whole spectrum of negative emotions and when we do, we are going to want to experience the opposite as well.

We are going to crave pleasure.

And even if we don't experience a lot of negative emotions, and we're just kind of living in neutral, we're still going to crave pleasure, sometimes just moderate pleasure and sometimes a high of pleasure.

And if you don't intentionally give it to yourself, and if you keep denying it from yourself, your desire for it is going to build and you will begin to urge for it.

And when you're urging for pleasure, you're likely going to go for what's easy, something that is reliable pleasure that you know will be pleasurable, and because your urge is strong, your desire to and your ability to actually think through what you really want to do for pleasure will likely decrease.

So you're not thinking it through, you're just going for the pleasure that you so strongly desire. You want it now, you've waited too long, and now you're just going to do it.

So maybe you've been denying yourself of food pleasure for awhile. You're not allowing joy foods, foods that aren't nutrient dense, foods you think are bad, even though you've been wanting them. You keep shutting your desire down. You want it but you keep not letting yourself have it.

And eventually, you don't want to say no anymore. So you binge on food pleasure. You get all that pleasure you'd been denying yourself, all at once.

And you'll especially do it if you're telling yourself that you're not going to eat these foods again, if you're going to be taking away that food pleasure that you truly do want. You're going to want to get it all in while you can. If the pleasure is going away, you're going to over indulge on it now.

Or maybe you're just not incorporating fun, enjoyment, and pleasure in general into your life very much, or at all. Maybe your life is mostly productivity, some relaxation, but you're not getting much, or any pleasure highs or even moderate pleasure. Your life is kinda blah with just work, errands, chores, responsibilities, scrolling on your phone, and watching tv.

There's not much, or zero, fun – quality time connecting with people, big laughs, enjoyable activities, hobbies, or even small pleasures.

You're not getting pleasure you want at all, or very little, and so you crave it more and more and because eating is what you know will give it to you, and it's easy, and it's what you know to do, and it's available, you eat. And you keep eating more than a moderate amount because you're not craving a moderate amount of pleasure, you're craving a lot because you've had so little, and you also anticipate that you'll continuing getting very little in your regular life so, you don't want it to stop.

Lacking pleasure in your life can make it harder for you to stop binge eating if one of the main reasons why you do it is because you're seeking pleasure in it.

Because what will happen is that if you are not being intentional about incorporating pleasure into your life, you will do it impulsively, when the urge for it has grown strong.

If you're not thoughtfully including pleasure in your life, you'll be more impulsive about including it so you're not thinking it through, are just doing what feels good in the moment, are choosing what's easiest, and when it comes to eating food, you might even end up eating food you don't really like because it's just what's there and is available, and in your mind it's good enough.

So you're not even getting satisfying pleasure. It's not really what you're desiring and craving. And if you're not satisfied, you're likely going to keep eating to try and reach satisfaction but you'll likely never reach it before you get too full.

So you end up eating too much, feeling too full, and you're still not satisfied.

And the cycle might repeat once you have room for more food, as you're trying to get the pleasure you were seeking.

So, if you want to help yourself to stop with the impulsive pleasure getting, be more intentional about incorporating pleasure into your life.

Because if you aren't intentional about it, you will likely be impulsive about it.

You're going to get the pleasure you desire regardless, so be intentional about it.

So what do I mean by that?

First of all, you're going to plan for pleasure.

Plan for general pleasure and plan for food pleasure.

Intentionally include some kind of pleasure into your life every single day.

Now, that doesn't mean it needs to be a party every single day or the most amazing tasting food every day, and it also doesn't mean you have to eat a joy food every single day. Eat them as much and as often as you want to.

But experience some kind of pleasure, every single day.

Now, of course there may be days when they're just so packed with productivity that there isn't time for pleasure. I totally get that.

But that just means that the next day, or the day after, it is imperative that you plan for pleasure. You schedule it into your day.

And if you think there just isn't time for pleasure at all in your life, then I highly encourage you to re-evaluate what is obligation in your life and what you are choosing that isn't obligated or urgent. Many of you tell yourself that there isn't time for pleasure when really, you could say no to more things. You could say no and the people you're saying no to could figure out something else without your help. You do not have to do everything for everyone and it's important that you prioritize you and your pleasure otherwise, you're going to urge for food, binge, and not be able to show up as your best self for anyone and you suffer.

So really take a hard look at what you do with your time and analyze what is really important that you personally take care of and what isn't and what you can say no to or delegate.

And for you moms out there, my suggestion to you is to find more pleasure in the time you spend with your kids.

I was working with someone not long ago who was complaining about having to do kid things in the afternoon with her young children. She was getting no pleasure from those couple hours every day because what she thought she had to do with them was not what she wanted to be doing.

But when she worked on shifting how she was thinking during that time, and was intentionally more appreciative of the time she gets with them and was more grateful and found more joy in it, her experience completely changed and she started experiencing more pleasure in that time.

How you're thinking is going to have a huge impact on the pleasure you're getting and not getting so just know that there might be more pleasure available to you in your day if you shift your attitude about what you're doing.

And also, take an audit of how you spend your time because you might find that you're spending some of your time trying to get little bits of pleasure here and there in unsatisfying ways that you actually could use in a much more fulfilling way.

What if instead of taking a few minutes to eat a snack, or to scroll through social media, you did something more fulfilling.

You could be more intentional about how you use those small bits of time and how you use them matters and they will add up and compound into either more fulfillment or more lack.

So please, make time for fulfilling, satisfying pleasure in your life.

And that's going to mean that on most days, you're experiencing moderate pleasure. You enjoy what you're doing, you feel good doing it, you're experiencing joy, even if it's moderate joy and not elation. And it doesn't have to last for a ton of time. Not everyone is going to have hours in their day that they can dedicate to pleasure. That's okay. Just be intentional about what you do with the time you do have and maximize the pleasure you experience. Quality over quantity.

You're better off having a short time of true pleasure that you're really enjoying vs doing something that's just alright for a couple hours.

For me, I'd feel so much more fulfilled watching a half hour of a tv show I really enjoy than if I scrolled on social media for two hours.

And it would be so much easier for me to move on from the show than from the social media, even though I'd been doing it a shorter amount of time, because I'd feel more satisfied after the show than after the social media. The more satisfied, the easier it is to move on and do something else, especially if that something else is going to bed...which I know many of you have a hard time doing because you're not feeling satisfied. You're feeling like you're haven't gotten enough when in actuality, you've gotten plenty, it just wasn't quality.

And some of you might want to tell me that you don't know what to do for quality pleasure.

And if that's you, stop saying, "I don't know," and start exploring options. Ask other people what they do, think about what you used to do that you stopped doing either in your adult years or childhood years, research ideas on the internet. Is there anything you've always wanted to do that you just haven't gotten around to trying? There really are tons of options but you're closing yourself off from finding them every time you settle with saying, "I just don't know." You might not know now but, you can figure it out. You can find something.

Now, as I said, on most days you're going to experience moderate pleasure.

But let's not live a life that only includes moderate pleasure.

Include the big pleasure, the big fun, the pleasure highs.

Because not only will it feel so good and be so fulfilling but, it will make the moderate pleasure even better.

If every single night of my life, I spent 2 hours watching tv, even if it was shows I like, that moderate pleasure might stop being so moderate. It might become more mundane.

But, if once or twice a week, I did something really fun, I got the pleasure high, then the nights when I'm watching tv would continue to be moderate.

And I've experienced both these. If I do the former, it becomes repetitive and is lacking variety. And variety is the spice of life, right?

And if I do the latter, I actually *want* to just chill and get pleasure from watching tv because I need a little bit of a break from the big pleasure.

I got the high, now I want the moderate.

And I appreciate the moderate pleasure so much more when I also have the big pleasure.

And many of you are not appreciating the moderate because you're not experiencing the big.

So why not plan for something big every week?

And I don't mean big like it has to be a huge party.

I mean big like doing a whole day outing, or attending an event or concert or play, or going away for a night, or just doing something really fun for a few hours with your partner or friends. Or going somewhere you've never been before that's close to where you live, or just an hour or two drive from where you live, be willing to travel a little bit.

Just do something different than what you're usually doing day to day or something that you get a ton of pleasure from.

Give yourself a variety of pleasure, both big and moderate.

And when you do, you won't be strongly urging for pleasure and then feel driven to binge on pleasure.

Now, to be clear, you might still feel urges to binge for other reasons but, let's eliminate this reason.

Let's have more to look forward to and more to enjoy.

And whatever excuses you've been using that have stopped you from doing more, acknowledge them and dismiss them.

You don't know what to do? Start exploring options.

You're anxious about trying new things? Feel anxious and do it anyway.

You don't know if you'll like it? Try it and actually see if you do instead of wondering if you will. And if you don't, you never have to do it again and you can try something else.

You're too tired? Well maybe you'd have more energy if you experienced more pleasure. So be willing to do things tired at first and create more energy by doing.

There is likely no legit reason why you can't have more pleasure in your life.

And it's so important that you do because again, if you aren't intentional about it, you will become impulsive about it.

You're gonna get it regardless.

So do it in a thoughtful way. Plan more in advance.

And, for those of you who want to be spontaneous, it will be easier for you to make thoughtful spontaneous decisions if you do more planning for pleasure.

When you know you have things to look forward to, you won't have such a strong urgency for pleasure like this is your only chance and you gotta make it big and you put so much pressure on yourself. This spontaneous moment isn't your only opportunity. More will be coming so you'll be more relaxed and in

a better headspace to think through your decision and think about how it will affect you and think about your future self.

When pleasure is more abundant, it's easier to be less impulsive because you're not going to feel so rushed to do it.

So, create abundant pleasure in your life.

Balance big pleasures with moderate pleasures, and that doesn't mean it's 50/50, it just means you're getting enough of each.

Don't deny yourself of something you innately desire so you urge for it and then make impulsive decisions for getting it.

Intentionally give it to yourself.

More truly satisfying and fulfilling pleasure for everyone!

Alright, that's all for today, bye bye.