

# THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

*with Kirstin Sarfde*

## Ep #336: What “Normal” Eaters Think

Hi! Let’s talk about quote “normal” eaters.

When we are stuck in a pattern of binge eating, we want to eat normally so badly.

That’s for sure what I wanted and I hear other people say it all the time too.

We just want to feel normal.

We just want to eat like those normal people.

We want to eat when we’re hungry and stop when we’re full.

We want to eat a joy food and stop at a moderate amount.

We want to not think about food so much.

And we might wonder how the heck they do it.

We might wonder if we have it in us to be normal eaters too.

And I truly believe that the answer is yes. Yes, you do have it in you.

But some things need to change in order for you to be like them.

And today I want to talk about what those things are.

Now, when you think about those normal eaters, you might be only focused on what they're doing.

You're seeing them stop eating with food left on their plate, you're seeing them eat a moderate amount of joy food, but, do you ever consider what they're thinking that's causing them to do that?

They aren't just eating that way. There's a reason why they eat how they do.

And they eat the way they do because of what is happening in their mind.

It's because of what they're thinking about the food, about the availability of the food, about their body, about themselves, and about their emotions.

They think differently than you do.

That's what's causing them to act differently because it's our thoughts that are the cause of everything we do.

We think a thought, that causes us to feel a feeling, and that feeling drives our behavior.

So if you want to understand why you do what you do and why they do what they do, the answer is in our thoughts.

You think differently than them, so you feel differently which drives you to act differently.

Now, so much of what these normal eaters think they might not even notice.

They might have no idea they're thinking what they're thinking because it's so habitual and natural that it's become subconscious.

But thoughts are there.

And even more importantly, there are thoughts that aren't there.

They're not thinking the same thoughts you do that are causing *you* to feel deprived, resentful, restricted, rebellious, urges, guilty, ashamed, obsessive, or unsatisfied.

They're not thinking that they shouldn't eat what they want to eat, that they should eat something healthier, which would lead them to not get what they want and end up feeling unsatisfied which would lead to more eating, trying to get that satisfaction.

They're not thinking that this will be the last time they eat this food, so they don't feel a sense of urgency to eat as much as they can while they can.

They're not thinking that what they ate was bad so they don't feel guilty about eating it.

They're not thinking that they shouldn't be eating what they're eating so they don't feel shame about it and so they don't eat it in secret.

They're not thinking that they need to eat healthy 100% of the time so they don't deny themselves of the unhealthy foods they like to eat and therefore don't urge for them.

They're not thinking that it's never enough, so they don't continually feel unsatisfied.

They're not thinking they can't stop eating, so they don't feel powerless and not even try to stop themselves when they're eating.

They're not thinking they're going to binge, or even that they're going to overeat, so they don't feel anxious, scared, or panicked.

They're not thinking that eating food is the way to handle their discomfort so they don't eat whenever they feel an uncomfortable emotions.

Now, they might think that consuming something else, such as alcohol or drugs, or doing something else like shopping excessively or gambling or sex or exercising or endlessly scrolling on their phone or doing some other activity is the solution and they might do those excessively. We all have something that we've used or done excessively to avoid feeling our emotions and to avoid thinking thoughts. These normal eaters might just have a different way of escaping. And some, might be handling their emotional discomfort in a way that isn't going to sabotage them or be destructive, like working on their thoughts and processing and feeling their emotions because that really is the most effective way to feel better.

So, there is so much that they're not thinking that people who binge eat do.

That is what makes their behavior different from yours.

Now, their thinking isn't entirely different.

There are also similar thoughts that both normal eaters and people who binge eat might think.

Both might think that they love food.

I remember when I was binge eating I thought that part of the problem was that I loved food so much.

But, there are plenty of people who are considered to be normal eaters who also love food a lot.

It's not the love for food that you have that causes you to be a binge eater. It's what you use food to avoid, such as your emotions or your thoughts, it's how restrictive you are with your food.

Think about a person that you love or have loved so much. It likely didn't negatively affect you unless you were emotionally dependent on that person in some way. It's not the love, it's whether or not you used that person for something an unhealthy way.

A quote "normal" eater might also think that food is comfort, just as someone who binge eats.

They might associate certain foods with warmth, tradition, or a memory.

They might feel comforted when they eat certain foods.

They might want to eat to feel good, but don't rely on it as their main way of handling their emotions.

And a quote "normal" eater might think that food is fuel and pleasure just like someone who binge eats does.

It really is both and both types of people can see it as both.

But there are definitely more differences in their thinking vs binge eating thinking than similarities.

And if they're not thinking those thoughts I went through a minute ago, what the heck *are* they thinking?

What is going on in the mind of these supposed normal eaters?

Well, here are some thoughts that might be happening.

They might be thinking that what they want to eat is what they'll eat. That what they want to eat is a good choice. They're not judging what they want. So they eat it and feel satisfied.

They're thinking that they can eat this food again, and foods like it again, and they're allowed to eat it when they want to. They're not taking it away from themselves, they're giving themselves unconditional permission to eat it when they want to. So there is no urgency to eat a lot of it. They're much more relaxed about it and don't think much about it.

They're probably thinking that what they ate was good, or they're just kinda neutral about it because they're not attaching morality to it. It's just a food, and eating it was just a choice they made based on what they wanted.

They're thinking that what they're eating is okay to eat, it is fine. They're not judging themselves or judging the food so they feel no shame, they feel neutral, pretty much no emotion about eating it, so they eat it out in the open, where anyone can see.

They're thinking that it's okay to eat unhealthy food sometimes. So when they do, they don't think they're eating off track, or think they're cheating, or think they've messed anything up. They think it's just a part of normal eating. So there is no all or nothing thinking or behavior. They are relaxed when they eat unhealthy stuff so it's so much easier to eat it, enjoy it, and move on.

They're thinking about what is enough for them when they're eating for pleasure, and they're deciding how much is enough, instead of thinking it's never enough. Because really, there is an amount that is enough for all of us. And when they eat that amount, they believe they've had enough, so they feel satisfied, and move on.

They're thinking they've had enough when they feel full. They don't ignore their fullness signal. They think it's time to stop, and they decide to stop, and they commit to that decision so they don't feel too full and uncomfortable. They might not even understand why a person would eat so far past full and create so much discomfort for themselves when food is abundant and so is pleasure outside of this one time they're eating.

They're thinking they can stop eating, that they are capable, which all of us are. So they feel empowered and stop when they want.

They're thinking that they're going to eat a moderate amount and be done.

And those that don't consume or do other things to avoid their discomfort whenever they feel it, they're thinking that it's okay to feel how they're feeling, it will pass, it's temporary, they'll be okay, and they will get through it. So they embrace the discomfort and allow themselves to feel it all the way through.

What it comes down to with these normal eaters is that they're thinking in a much more relaxed way and they're not judging themselves, their choices, and their food. They're not making a big deal out of everything food related. They're allowing and giving themselves permission rather than taking food away and denying themselves. And they're choosing to honor their bodies.

And why are they like this?

Well, I can't speak for all normal eaters but I can give a general answer.

The main reason is because they don't have a diet mentality as most of us who have binged have had.

They didn't get caught up in diet culture.

Or, they did but they've since gotten out of it and shifted their mentality. That is me, I was in it and got out of it.

That's why most of us who have binged think the way we do.

It's because of what we learned from doing diets, because of calorie restriction, and because of what we think we need to do in order to control our weight.

It's because of what we've internalized from what we've heard from other people.

Not everyone heard those things. Not everyone internalized those things. Not everyone believed them if they did hear them.

And adding to thoughts that these normal eaters think and don't think, I bet many of them don't think so negatively about their bodies or hate their bodies. I bet many of them are accepting of their bodies, even if they're bigger. Even if they have flaws that they don't love.

That's big part of this, the desire to control your body and make it smaller. And the desire to eat perfectly. For so many people, that really is what drives their excessive restrictions, which can lead to the secret eating, the guilt, and the urges to binge.

So a lot of those normal eaters never got caught up in diet culture and therefore didn't internalize the diet mentality or again they did but have since changed their mentality.

And also, not everyone used food as a way to avoid, ignore, distract from, or change their emotions.

Again, we've all found some way to do it other than just feeling them and working through them.

So normal eaters might be doing or consuming something else. But not everyone learned to do it with food and not everyone uses food as their go-to way of doing it.

So what's different is what we're thinking.

And what you think is changeable.

I bet that at some point you didn't think the way you do now. It might have been a long long time ago but, I bet you did think more like a quote "normal" eater.

But somewhere in your life, you heard people saying things, people told you things, you read things, you watched things, and you changed what you believed and changed what you were thinking.

And you might have thought it was right or that it was normal.

And you held on to it, not even realizing how it was affecting you or not realizing that it was changeable or how you could change it.

But it is affecting you. And it is changeable.

You can change your perspective. You can change your opinion.

And you'll start by seeing what thoughts you're thinking are contributing to your binge eating and seeing how they're contributing.

You can look at what you're thinking, how that thinking causes you to feel, and what behaviors those feelings drive for you. You can look at your own personal think, feel, act patterns.

And when you see how those thoughts affect you, you are taking the first step toward changing them.

You have awareness of the unusefulness of those thoughts, maybe even the destructiveness of them.

And the next step probably won't be jumping to those thoughts that normal eaters might be thinking that I listed. That might be too big of a leap for you. And that's okay.

But you can find something that you do believe, that is more helpful than those diet mentality thoughts for you to think.

Something like, "Eating this might be okay," or even just acknowledging something like, "Not giving myself permission to eat what I want causes me to feel restricted which can lead to bingeing." It can be so helpful to just acknowledge why what you've been thinking has been a problem.

You can take small steps toward thinking like a normal eater so you can act more like one.

I call those small steps bridging thoughts so you end up building a bridge from your diet mentality thoughts to the normal eater thoughts.

And one step, one small change in your perspective, one change in how you're thinking at a time, you will get to the normal eater thinking.

It's possible for you.

You will get there.

You will change how you think which will change how feel, and how you behave.

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