

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #337: Your “Under-Feeling” Problem

Hi! Let’s talk about feeling your feelings.

For some of you, the main reason why you binge eat is because you’re too restrictive with your food. You don’t allow yourself to eat when you’re hungry or you don’t allow yourself to eat what you want and if you do it for too long, you start urging to binge on fuel for your body or you’ll start urging to binge on food you’ve been denying yourself of.

And for some of you, the main reason why you binge eat is because you don’t allow yourself to feel how you’re feeling, especially when you’re feeling very uncomfortable. And that’s what I’ll be talking about today.

You urge to escape how you’re feeling, you urge to change how you’re feeling quickly, and because eating food is what you know to do to escape and change how you’re feeling, you urge for food when you’re urging to escape and change how you’re feeling.

And usually, the more uncomfortable you feel, or the longer you’ve been feeling uncomfortable, the more you’ll want to eat in quantity. In your mind, more food means more better feelings, and the longer you eat, the longer you get to feel better feelings.

Food is your tool to feel differently.

Food is your tool for escaping how you feel.

So often people put so much focus on the way they're eating, and try to control what and how much they're eating without acknowledging what they're using the food for.

But when you understand what you're using the food for, you can understand why the eating is happening.

Eating all that food is a problem. You feel awful when you do it. It negatively affects you. But you need to see what the cause of the eating problem is.

The eating is really a symptom of another problem and in order for the eating problem to be solved, the problem that's causing the eating problem needs to be solved.

It's like if your car is making a loud noise. Yes, the noise is a problem. You don't want to be hearing it, it's annoying, and it's distracting. But there is another problem that's causing the noise. And you're not going to be able to stop the noise until you figure out what's causing it and solve that problem.

There are layers of problems here.

When it comes to your binge eating, the top layer is the eating problem and the layer below it is the feeling problem.

And I love the way Brooke Castillo labels it. She calls it an "under-feeling problem."

What it means is that you're not feeling enough.

You feel feelings, you feel emotions, we all do. And instead of just feeling them, you try to escape them.

When you feel emotions, particularly the uncomfortable ones, you don't feel them enough.

You might let yourself feel them for a little bit but as some point, you're out.

Or you might not let yourself feel them at all. As soon as you feel some kind of emotional discomfort, you're on the hunt for food.

Because you're not feeling your feelings enough, you're eating too much.

For any person, if they have an under-feeling problem, then they are going to have an over-something-else problem.

If under-feeling is happening then that means there is an over-consumption of something else that is manipulating the feeling because you can't just not feel without doing something to escape it.

For people who binge eat, that something else is eating.

Now, this is obviously a problem because we all feel a spectrum of emotions every day of our lives. And on most days, that spectrum is going to include a spectrum of negative, uncomfortable emotions.

Our uncomfortable emotions can't be avoided no matter how hard we try.

We can do tons of work on improving our environment, our circumstances, our thoughts and we are still going to experience negative, uncomfortable emotions because although we are capable of managing our circumstances and our thoughts we are not in control of everything that happens around us and we are not in control of every thought that pops into our mind.

So sometimes we're going to think thoughts that cause us to feel uncomfortable emotions. It's going to happen.

And when it does, we have 3 options.

Option 1 is to try to distract ourselves, which may work sometimes, but sometimes won't, and when it does work, it's not really solving anything and we'll likely go back to feeling how we were feeling before distracting once we're done distracting. So that's not going to be a reliable way to handle your feelings. It's not a real solution for feeling better.

Option 2 is to eat to escape how you're feeling, or to try and change how you're feeling so you can feel better, but that will likely result in feeling worse than you did before eating and, like with distracting, it doesn't really solve anything.

And then there is option 3, which is to feel how you're feeling. To be with how you're feeling. To let yourself experience how you're feeling.

Now, sometimes when you just let yourself feel how you're feeling, the feeling will pass through you and dissipate. And sometimes, it doesn't even take that long. So many people I've worked with have told me that if they've just let themselves feel how they're feeling, the feeling went away so much faster than they expected. Instead of running from it, they stayed with it, and it passed.

The feeling actually got resolved just by them feeling it.

But, sometimes when you feel your feelings, it doesn't pass quickly. It's not so easily resolved. It doesn't just go away.

But, here's why feeling your feelings and being present with them is still a better option than distracting yourself from it or eating to escape it.

When you don't escape or distract, and you stay with the feeling, you are setting yourself up to take the next step, which is to work on your thoughts.

The reason why you're feeling how you're feeling is because of what you're thinking. It's your thoughts that cause your feelings.

So if you want to truly resolve your feelings, and truly feel better, you need to work on your thoughts and change your thoughts.

That means you're changing your perspective, your opinion about something, your interpretation of what happened, whatever it was that was going on in your mind that caused you to feel what you're feeling.

If you're distracting yourself from your thoughts and feelings, you aren't working on them.

If you're eating, you're not working on your thoughts and feelings.

With both of those, you're trying to ignore your thoughts and feelings.

But if you're just letting yourself feel what you're feeling, you're not ignoring your thoughts and feelings. You're staying with them. You're present with them.

You can notice them. Notice what you're thinking.

You can be aware of what you're thinking. You can write down what you're thinking.

And you can work on changing your thoughts to change how you feel.

And a side note, you can listen to episode #266: How to Change Your Thoughts if you want help doing it.

When you stay with your feelings, you're moving forward toward resolving them.

You're on the path toward working on what really needs to be worked on for you to feel better, which is your thoughts that are causing your feelings.

So you're handling your feelings in a more productive way. Ignoring and escaping is not productive.

Feeling your feelings, although it may feel uncomfortable, is the first step toward true comfort. And after that first step, you can move on to the next step of working on your thoughts.

You'll resolve your feelings so much faster if you just stay with them, explore them, and work on them. That's another upside to feeling. Distracting and escaping is just going to prolong the entire process, it's really like you're procrastinating working on and handling your feelings, which will cause you to feel what you're feeling for so much longer, as you take all these distraction and escaping breaks. And, you're not actually working on the problem so it doesn't get solved.

So, if you are someone who binges because you're avoiding feeling your uncomfortable emotions, I encourage you to feel more.

Instead of under-feeling and overeating, feel more.

Feel all the feelings, even the uncomfortable ones.

The more you feel, the less you will eat.

So feel the uncomfortable emotions that come up for you.

Be with them.

Be a feeler of your own emotions.

You will be okay, and you will actually be better off if you don't escape or distract but just feel them and work on your thoughts that are causing them instead.

Choose the discomfort of your emotions so you can move forward instead of the discomfort of prolonged, unresolved emotions.

Alright, that is what I have for you today and I will talk to you next time. Bye bye.