

Hi! I'm so excited to share this episode with you today. I did an interview with Jennifer who went through The Stop Binge Eating Program back in 2022 and she is a success story!

She began binge eating when she was a kid and throughout the years just kept on eating to avoid feeling her emotions and went back and forth from being super restrictive with her eating to bingeing for 40 years.

And now, so much is different for her not just with her eating but with so many things in her life.

She made so much progress during the program but then, she's continued to improve herself since and she can't even tell you the last time she binged because it's been so long since she has.

I love her story so much and I think you will too. She is a changed person and you're going to hear all about it.

So, without further ado, here is my conversation with Jennifer....

Kirstin: Hello, Jennifer.

Jennifer: Hello, Kirstin.

Kirstin: Welcome to the podcast.

Jennifer: Thank you.

Kirstin: So, yeah, you're welcome. So let's just get started by having you tell us all a little bit about yourself, about your background with eating, with food, with your weight, just anything related. Give it to us.

Jennifer: Well, I have struggled with eating and food for as long as I can remember. Probably I kind of remember binging at 10, around 10. My mother has always had issues with food and weight, and she's always been a very small person. Like, she's only five feet tall, so she thinks I'm gigantic. Whole family thinks I'm gigantic at 5'5". And she always was very restrictive as far as what I could eat. She'd let my brother have something, and he'd get a brownie after school. I'd have an apple because, for whatever reason, my weight was extremely important. So there was that kind of stuff, and she also kind of taught me - and she still believes this to this day - that thinner is better. You're a better person if you're thinner. You're just smarter. You're more attractive. So I kind of grew up with that. And I do remember my brother, we lost my brother at 10. He didn't pass away, but he moved to live with my biological father, and it was just all a big surprise to me. I think I was, yeah, I was 10. And I think I probably started just coping with feelings at that point, because we didn't talk about it at the house. He just disappeared, and so I think I probably kind of grabbed whatever I could find. So I just kind of found food, and I remember binging around 10. My dad was a salesman, so there was always lots of food in the freezer outside. I mean, I'd come home with my little key, let myself in and eat an entire pizza just by myself. So I think that's when it started, and I just continued to use it for 40 more years.

Kirstin: Yeah. So you're just using it kind of in the same way for all those years. Emotions, just trying to feel better, trying to change how you're feeling.

Jennifer: Yeah. And if things would happen, I would-- course, I would gain weight. I'd put on weight by eating this way. And then I'd hate myself for that, because I'm not as good because I'm heavy. And then I would eat. It was just this cycle that I couldn't seem to get out of, no matter how hard I wanted to.

Kirstin: Yeah. And then did any kind of restriction follow you for all those years?

Jennifer: So in order to try to lose weight, I would stop eating. So I would just stop eating. So I remember once I made it seven full days without eating anything, and I was so proud of myself. I remember telling my cousin, I was like, "You're not going to believe this. I haven't eaten in seven days." And she looked at me like I was crazy, so I didn't tell other people after that. But it didn't last because you can't do that. I got hungry. And then what am I doing? I'm reaching for everything. At one point, I tried taking laxatives in college because I-- I had heard that if you took laxatives, it'll all just come out. And I remember taking, I think it was 67 laxatives at one point. And my roommate in college, she took me to the hospital. She's like, "You can't do this. This is not good for you." Took me to the hospital and in emergency room, and they did some kind of clean out system. I'm not sure. It wasn't great. But after that, the doctor told me I just needed to drink more water. That was the solution, which clearly that-- that wasn't. I did stop taking laxatives after that, which was good. But I just didn't know what to do. I mean, I really was grasping for anything. I mean, I went to therapists and they would always blame my mother. I mean, that's honestly one of the things I liked very first about you is that when we were talking, you wanted me to know why I was bingeing, but you also weren't blaming anyone. It was my choice. It was my choice to binge. I was allowing the urge to control me. And that was just so refreshing because I don't want to blame my mother. I'm an adult. And I've been an adult a very long time. These are choices that I'm making.

Kirstin: Yeah. I think when it comes to parents, especially mothers, for us women, we do get a lot of programming from them. We do get a lot of messages from them that we then internalize, as you had said before. And what we need to do, instead of what you're saying, instead of blaming them like, "You made me this way," is just having the understanding of, "I got these messages from them. I internalized them. I kept repeating them to myself. And I can change what I'm telling myself. I can reprogram. I can start bringing my own thoughts into my head and let go of what Mom had been saying for all those years."

Jennifer: Yes. It's so powerful. And I don't know why I didn't figure that out. Somehow, for some reason, I couldn't tell myself that. But when you said it, it was like a little light bulb. I thought, "Oh my gosh. She can think and say whatever she wants. But that doesn't mean that that's what I have to think and say. And isn't my opinion of myself so much more important than, frankly, anyone else on earth?" For me, there were so many little light bulb moments that you gave me, so many. And that one was huge. It has changed who I am now, even how I am with her now. She is who she is. She still says things that I think, "What are you talking about?" But I just let her. I say, "Okay, okay, Mom. I love you." Because I do love her, and I know she loves me in her way.

Kirstin: Yeah. And she's just being who she knows to be.

Jennifer: Yes.

Kirstin: That's how she's been programmed, maybe from her mother or maybe just from the media or the diets or the magazines, or wherever we're getting our information from. That's just how she is. And like we're saying, you get to then decide who you are. And then when you are solid in what you believe to be true, you can do exactly what you said, where you just can be like, "Okay, Mom, that's your opinion. That's what you think. That's your judgment. And I disagree. And that's okay. We can disagree." And you don't even have to tell her that you disagree. You can just be like, "Okay."

Jennifer: Yeah. I don't tell her because, I mean, she's good on her own. I'm good on my own. I don't need to convince her of anything. Yeah. It's helped a lot.

Kirstin: Yeah. And trying to convince somebody of something they don't want to be convinced of is very challenging.

Jennifer: It's not a fight I want.

Kirstin: No. No. So we can just let people have their opinions and we can have our opinions. And then we just live together and love each other.

Jennifer: That's right.

Kirstin: Yes. Yeah. So all these years of binging and weight struggle and eating for your emotions, going back and forth with restrictions, all of that, how was it negatively affecting you and your life?

Jennifer: Because of the binging, I didn't like who I was. So I was upset that I was binging. And then I would punish myself, just be negative with myself, the self-talk. I mean, and it was bad. There were no limits. I remember once in your group, we were having a meeting and I had made this dessert with Oreos. And for some reason, I said, "Well, I mean, you can have an Oreo if you want one, Jennifer." And so I did. And then my body was like, "Oh, that was good." And so I had another one. And I was like, "Okay, you can have four." So I had four. And then I put them away. And then my husband was doing something that night. And next thing you know, I'm having more. Before I knew it at that time, I was clearly making that decision to continue eating Oreos. But at the time, I was very new in the whole program, I ended up eating, I think, like 19 Oreos. And so we had our meeting and I didn't want to talk, and I didn't want to be on camera because I was so mean to myself. I was just beating myself up. And you said, "Okay, no camera, but just talk to me. Just tell me what happened." And I told you-- and I told you how I felt. I said, "I'm an idiot. I am worthless. I cannot control what I'm putting in my mouth." I'm so mean. I literally hated myself. I hated who I was. I hated how I looked. I hated everything. I mean, my husband even said, "Why are you always looking down?" And I was looking down because I hated who I was. I didn't want people to see me. So binging affected that. And the weight, of course, I mean, you can't not gain weight if you're eating the way I was eating. And I wasn't a little light binger, someone who just had two extra cookies that day. I mean, I was filling myself up to feel better.

I mean, there were times where I went to the grocery store to get my foods that were going to make me happy. And I'd eat an entire bag of potato chips, an entire box of cookies. I'd fry some shrimp because then I needed something salty. I'd eat an entire box of fried shrimp, and then I'd make French fries in the oven. And I would get so sick that I could barely move, and I'm sweating, and I'm crying because I'm in so much pain. And no joke, an hour later, my body would have metabolized some of it, and I'd go back for more. I didn't want to feel the feelings. I was left alone all the time. It's really embarrassing. But it is what it is. This was my life. And thankfully, I don't do that anymore, but it changed who I was. So many years where I lost. I lost years of my life trying to not feel feelings, trying to not make other people upset. Because I don't want people upset with me or mad, or I don't want them to look at me. I don't want them to judge me. It's just so much. I don't know how I made it through.

Kirstin: I mean, so much of trying to control emotions, trying to control your own emotions, and trying to control other people's emotions.

Jennifer: Yeah, I still don't know why I felt the need to do that.

Kirstin: Well, what's the other option?

Jennifer: Let them have their feelings.

Kirstin: Well, you know that now. But back then, it becomes this huge deal, right? It's like, "Oh, my gosh, no, we can't let them be upset. Oh, my gosh, I can't be upset. So let's do something to try and control all of this." So back then, it was either just terrible feelings all around or eat food or try to please everybody. And then you're displeased So then you eat food.

Jennifer: Exactly. Exactly. [laughter] Oh my gosh. That's exactly it.

Kirstin: Yeah. So you mentioned that you did go to therapy. Was there anything else that you tried in order to stop binge eating?

Jennifer: Oh, my husband and-- so I was married at this point, and I couldn't seem to control what I was eating. At least that's what I thought. So we put all of our fun foods or joy foods in a cabinet and we locked it. We put a lock on the door with a padlock. And he was like, "This is ridiculous, honey." But I was like, "I need this." Okay. So he did it for me, so nice. And he'd lock it. And we'd go to work, and I'd get home before he got home, and I would finagle my way to get to it. I would stick my little fingers in the cabinet to try to get to something. I would just go to the store on the way home and binge food anyway. It was ridiculous. [laughter]

Kirstin: Not really a good long-term solution.

Jennifer: [laughter] No, no, no. Not a solution at all.

Kirstin: Yeah.

Jennifer: And then just the not eating, for my wedding, I kept telling myself, I want to look good in my wedding pictures. So I just didn't eat for like six months. And I lost weight. Don't eat. You're going to lose weight. And I think it was-- I got married in August. I think it was December when I came home for Christmas and I had gained 50 pounds. My mother saw me and just started crying. My cousin actually poked me in my shirt to see if it was real. It's just-- I don't know why I put myself through all of this because it is 100% me. I didn't know what else to do. I just was uninformed.

Kirstin: Yeah. Like many of us, I was also uninformed for a very long time. What can you do?

Jennifer: Yeah, you do better when you know better.

Kirstin: Exactly. Yeah. So during all this time, did you believe that you would be able to stop binge eating?

Jennifer: No. Well, I say no, but maybe I did, because I kept trying. I kept trying different things. I mean, I must have thought it was possible on some level, but I just didn't know what else to do. So I would keep myself busy. So I would constantly try to keep myself busy, just try to control the surroundings. Don't buy certain foods. But then inevitably, I would just go sneak food. I never binged in front of people. I wasn't going to show someone that side of me. And again, that brings me to another little light bulb moment that you gave me during the podcast. It was like the very first or second podcast I had heard. And you said, you can stop binge eating. And I'm thinking, I don't know, Kirsten, I've been trying for a long time. Oh yeah, yeah, you can stop binge eating because would you stop if someone walked in the room? And I thought, Oh my gosh, 100% I would stop if someone walked in the room. I wouldn't even have to think about it. I would immediately stop. I have. I have stopped when people walk in the room. [laughter] I remember doing it as a kid. I'd throw everything under the sofa and pretend I'm just sitting here watching TV. So yeah, I thought, oh my gosh, that's a choice I'm making. I'm literally making that choice, and you just didn't know it. I mean, that's amazing.

Kirstin: Yeah, because we're usually thinking, I can't stop. I'm out of control. There's nothing I can do. I'm powerless.

Jennifer: Yeah, and you're not.

Kirstin: Yeah. Yeah. So why do you think you decided to sign up for coaching when you did? Why do you think it would be helpful at that point?

Jennifer: I decided one day to look up binge eating on Spotify. I think I had mentioned to a therapist at one point that I was eating copious amounts of food. And he said, oh, you might be a binge eater. And I said, well, what does that mean? And he kind of told me, but he wanted to put me on a prescription, and I didn't want that. So I think that's what led me to the search of stop binge eating. You popped up, and I started listening. And actually, I ended up binge listening to you on Spotify.

Kirstin: That's a good kind of binge.

Jennifer: But I listened back to back-- I mean, back to back, probably the first 10 episodes. And you just made so much sense. And it just all resonated with me. And then I heard you started talking about a program. And I thought, oh, my gosh, I wonder if this would work. I mean, it could. Her podcast, it makes sense to me. So I talked to my husband, and he's like, I don't know. You've tried so many things. And I'm like, I know. But I mean, what if it works? I mean, what if it works? 40 years of your life, that'd be worth it. So that's why I signed up. And I was very nervous. And I mean, you remember, I mean, I started on one side and ended on the other side. I was a tough case, I imagine, because I had all these just preconceived ideas that had been in my head from, well, my mom. I mean, I believed everything she said. So when you were saying different things, I kept pushing back. Like, no, that's not right.

Kirstin: I loved it so much.

Jennifer: I'm sure.

Kirstin: No, really. I love when people push back because it just means that they're being honest. If I say something and you're like, "No, I'm not on board with this," I'm like, "Okay, let's talk about this more." I would so much rather that than you just being like, okay. And then in your head, you're like, this is total BS. What is she talking about? I don't believe this. I would so much rather you push back than be a yes person.

Jennifer: Well, you lucked out then, didn't you?

Kirstin: I loved it. You were just always like, but what about this? No, this. And then you just kept coming back. I loved it so much.

Jennifer: It worked out really well for me.

Kirstin: So you were really committed to this work, which is part of the reason why you were so successful. So why do you think you were so committed?

Jennifer: I mean, I wish I knew. I mean, I think I'm just one of those people who is committed. If I think it's going to work, I'm going to have to give it 100%. I need to give it everything I have. And if it doesn't work, it doesn't work. But I was paying money. I believed you already. For some reason, I had already believed in what you were saying based on just listening to the podcast. So I mean, I did push back at the same time.

Kirstin: It could be both.

Jennifer: Oh, my gosh.

Kirstin: It could be both where you're like, no, no, no, I totally believe what you're saying, but I'm really stuck in believing this, which is kind of where you were at. You're like, no, I hear you, and I want to be there. But like, here's all the mess in my head that I just can't get away from.

Jennifer: Yes, that's exactly right. That's exactly right. Because I did. I believed you, and I wanted to be on board. But I had all this stuff saying, no, food. No, there are different types of food. Some foods are bad.

Kirstin: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And that's where coaching is so helpful because so many people are in that exact place where they're like, "Yes, I get it. And I want to believe that. But this is where I'm at and I can't get from point A to point B."

Jennifer: Yeah, I think I wouldn't have gotten it had I not had that coaching because I was firmly stuck on certain ideas that just aren't true.

Kirstin: Yeah. Yeah. So what did you find to be the most challenging part of doing this work?

Jennifer: Well, the food, number one, the food was the most challenging, probably just the idea that food is just food. I mean, I had just grown up my whole life thinking that cake is bad, ice cream is bad, vegetables are good. That idea, and I think I got to a point in the program where I had switched it in my mind to nutritionally dense because I was just desperate to hold on to that little string that I had created where food is good and bad. But eventually, I finally came around. That was probably the hardest or at least the first thing.

So another thing, another challenging thing, was the feelings, trying to feel the feelings. And I noticed that progression since the program. I mean, I learned how to feel the feelings, but they weren't comfortable. It's not fun at all. So when you start to have those feelings, I mean, I did. I kind of slipped back every now and then. It triggers you to do what you've done for 40 years. And it's not like I ever got to the point where I had been, but I would eat something that I thought would make me feel better instead of just sitting with them and being okay. I mean, I was a step in the right direction, but also, do you need to use food that way? I mean, not unless you want to, and I didn't want to, so that one was tough. Figuring out how to feel the feelings. I had avoided that my entire life.

And then the food thing, and then the company. That's one thing that surprised me. I think I've always used food as entertainment. And for lack of a better term, friendship. This was my buddy. My little grocery store trip. I bring all my little buddies home, and we'd hang out, and we'd watch TV, and we'd be having a great time together until we weren't. Because inevitably, we would hit that wall where Jennifer felt terrible.

So I think, I mean, all three of those things were difficult for me to kind of figure out and manage and learn how to live without. Because life is very different. I don't worry about it. It's not a bad thing, but it is very different. When I get lonely now, I don't even think about bingeing. But if I did, I would be like, "What are you talking about?"

But when I get lonely now, I think, okay, you need to find something to do. You need to call a friend. You need to pull out a puzzle. You need to read a book because you don't want to feel the way you felt back when you used to binge. But yeah, they were friends. My food was kind of like a little friendship relationship, a terrible relationship. [laughter] Yeah, those three things are probably the most difficult.

Kirstin: Yeah. I mean, I get that. Food was my friend, too. I talk about that sometimes, where I say that instead of calling a friend, I would walk around the corner to the convenience store, grab some food, and bring it home. It's like, "I'm looking for connection." Maybe I was also feeling lonely. I'm wanting to do

something. It's like, why put in the effort to call a friend when I can just go get some food? And I'd feel terrible.

Jennifer: Yeah. And it can lead to other things. Then you're kicking yourself for doing it. Then you've gained more weight. And then you just said that you wanted to lose weight, and then you just ate a bag of chips. That doesn't make any sense, all of that, all these consequences.

Kirstin: Yep. Yeah. And I want to touch on something else that you said where you're like, I started calling food nutritionally dense. Which I use that term a lot just for lack of a better word to describe certain foods. But what gets really tricky about it is when you say that, but what you're really meaning is good.

Jennifer: Exactly.

Kirstin: You're not just acknowledging all of the nutrients in the food. You're like, "No, this nutritionally dense food. That's good. And this food that's not nutritionally dense is bad." I hear people doing that a lot when we are trying to shift away from moralizing food into good and bad. They're just like, "Well, that's unhealthy." And sure, maybe it is not super healthy. But again, they're just using that in replacement of bad.

Jennifer: Yeah, exactly.

Kirstin: Yeah. So it's not always the words that we're choosing. It's what we're choosing them instead of, really.

Jennifer: Yes, the meaning, the intention. And I noticed that about myself. I got on board with you with the good and bad. And then I noticed I'm like, wait, I'm kind of doing the same thing by using nutritionally dense. I mean, it was a slow burn. It's here and then I take a step forward and then another step forward. I mean, the whole process for me has been little, tiny baby steps.

Kirstin: That's what it is. I have a group right now that I've been reminding them of that over and over because they just want to do everything at once. And they want to be done bingeing yesterday. And I'm like, "We're going to do this one goal at a time, one change at a time. It will compound into a beautiful, big change in the end."

Jennifer: But I understand they want it now. I wanted it now. We all want it now. We want to change this thing that we don't like about ourselves, this action that we keep doing.

But it gets better. There is an end. There is a whole different life. The life you always wanted. It just takes a lot of work, but it's worth it.

Kirstin: Yeah. Yeah. So you and I actually worked in your group, which feels like forever ago. I actually had to look it up. I was like, "When did we actually work together?" And if I'm correct, your program started in August of 2022. Is that right?

Jennifer: Yeah, I think so. Because I tried to think about it myself. I know it's been at least two years.

Kirstin: Yes, it has. Yeah. So since it's ended, how has it been doing all of this work and keeping it up and continuing to progress on your own?

Jennifer: I've come so far since stopping the program, farther than I thought I ever would. And so many different things have changed. So the food changed and then the types of food changed. And I was desperate to lose weight. But I thought, "No, no, we're not going to worry about losing weight. And as much as you want to, you need to figure out this binge thing. You really need to stop bingeing, and not just

stop bingeing, stop having the urges to binge. You cannot do something, but you still have that urge." And I wanted to get to that point. I mean, my relationship with my husband is different. I mean, I used to-- I'm sure you remember Popeyes, where--

Kirstin: I'll never forget it. [laughter]

Jennifer: He wanted to eat at Popeyes. And I didn't want to eat Popeyes, but I didn't dare say, "No, I don't want to eat at Popeyes," because he wants to eat at-- I mean, give me a break. Oh my gosh. It's ridiculous. I mean, it's Popeyes. What am I worried about? Yeah. So with him, there was a shift. Another light bulb. You taught me that I am not responsible for other people's feelings. So no matter what I say, I am not responsible for your feelings about what I said. And so when I started saying, "No, I don't want to eat at Popeyes," he'd get a little agitated at first. And I'd just remind myself, "Kirsten says I'm not responsible for other people's feelings." And every now and then, he'd do something. And I'd say, "You know what? I need to teach you something. Kirsten says--" He said, "You're making me angry." "I'm not making you angry because Kirsten says I'm not responsible for your feelings." [laughter] It was fantastic. It was a life-changing moment for me. And so he would get mad. And he even said, "You're just so contrary now." I mean, we had some times during this two years where I didn't know if we were going to make it. I would tell him, "Well, I'm not changing back. I'm not going back. And if it means that I am alone in this life, I am okay with that because I am not going back to the compliant person that I was. I was killing myself to be compliant and make everyone else happy, even though I was miserable. So this is me. And either you get on board or you don't. And that is your choice." And that was huge. That was huge for me. I mean, my life is just so different now in so many ways. Our relationship is better. I mean, it got worse and then it got better.

Kirstin: That can happen sometimes because you're changing who you are and he's not used to it. He's used to Jennifer who always says yes. And on the inside is seething that she didn't want to say yes. "Oh, I don't really want to do this. I don't really want to go, but he wants to, so I'll do it." Right? So now you have become this person that is more aligned on the outside with who you are on the inside. You are actually showing up as yourself and saying no when you want to say no. And when we talk about not being responsible for other people's feelings, I just want to be clear about what that means for other people, is that you are not making him mad. You're not. You are saying no, and then he's feeling mad because of what he is making that mean and because of what he is thinking about that. All of us feel how we feel because of what we're thinking, not because of what other people do. Because if you said no and he was thinking, "Okay. No big deal. We can go eat somewhere else," or, "I'll just eat there by myself," or, "I'll eat there by myself another time," he wouldn't be so mad.

Jennifer: Yep. Exactly.

Kirstin: Right? If you were responsible for his feelings, then he would feel the same every single time you say no. He would always feel mad. But there are probably times when he doesn't feel mad. And especially now that he's gotten used to the new Jennifer that actually says what she means and says what she wants to say. He's more used to it.

Jennifer: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I mean, no, he's never mad. I mean, it's so much easier and even accommodates me, which I find interesting. I want barbecue for dinner, and I say, "You know what? I don't want barbecue. Is there anywhere we can go where I can get just some chicken and some vegetables and maybe a salad?" And he's like, "Yeah, okay." And we go. He can have barbecue some other time, and not even a conversation about it. It just works now.

Kirstin: Yeah, yeah. And I think that when changes happen, like you said, it can get worse before it gets better. And there's actually a worksheet in my program that asks that question. I can't remember exactly how it's worded, but it's something like, "Are you willing to feel worse before you feel better?" And part of what that means is related to what you've talked about with feeling the feelings. Are you willing to get

uncomfortable? Are you willing to feel uncomfortable emotions? Are you willing to actually face all of this discomfort and all this stuff that you've been avoiding before it gets better? Because when we actually start facing things and feeling things, it is going to be uncomfortable. So are you willing to feel that?

Jennifer: And honestly, I think I had blown it up so much in my head that I would be so uncomfortable, that it would just be so bad. And it's not bad at all. It's not bad at all. Especially when people get used to you saying no or having an opinion, they change too, because this is the new you. There just aren't times where I'm just sobbing in the corner because of my feelings. I mean, that never happens because they aren't as bad as you kind of have made them out in your head.

Kirstin: That's a huge reason why so many people are unwilling to just feel the feelings and just feel the discomfort because they make it into this huge thing. And even like you were saying, like, we get so afraid to say no when we want to say yes, and not people please because we're so afraid of people's reactions. And we already blow that up in our heads. There's going to be this huge reaction so then we just don't do it.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Kirstin: So how do you feel about food now?

Jennifer: I mean, for me, food 100% is just food. I don't even play the games that I used to play, where I get to have two Oreos after dinner as my sweet treat. I don't do anything like that. I mean, if I want an Oreo, I'll buy Oreos. But I'm just saying that I don't have these little-- I used to have these rules for a while, too, where I get certain things, and I'd keep them in the pantry, and I'd have one every night as my joy food. I don't even need joy food. I don't need food to create joy. I have other things for that now. It's so nice. There's no talk. There's no chatter. There's no guilt. I find that I don't even want it. I don't even want it. It didn't taste as good as it used to or I used to believe it did. But I don't even think-- I mean, I just don't even worry about it. I don't worry about it. If I'm hungry, I have something. If I'm not hungry, I don't. If I'm not hungry for dinner, I just don't eat dinner. But I'm usually hungry. I do. Yeah, I'm usually hungry, but. But now it's weird. It's so weird. And I see, I hear my mom talk, and I just kind of roll my eyes inside my head so she doesn't see that. But I think, no, no, no. That's not a thing. That's not a thing. [laughter] But it's just been good. My birthday's coming up. I'm so excited because I want to have some birthday cake. I mean, I don't have to have a piece of cake every third day at 4:00 PM, I just don't. I don't do any of that [anymore?]. [laughter]

Kirstin: Yeah. You sound like you're much more relaxed about food.

Jennifer: Yeah, I certainly feel much more relaxed. I used to go to the store and-- I have to go grocery shopping. And every single time I'd go, "Well, you just get a little snack, just get a little snack for the ride home." Why? Why would you need a snack for the ride home? I don't even think about it now. Very different.

Kirstin: Yeah. Yeah. So I want to ask you, you mentioned wanting to lose weight and that you did put weight loss on hold and didn't really put your focus on it so you could get all of your binge eating just squashed. What was it like for you to not focus on losing weight? Was that hard for you, or was it pretty easy to just kind of put the focus aside?

Jennifer: It was hard because, inevitably, that's what you want. Binge eating causes lots of issues, but the one that everyone else sees is the weight. So you are heavier, and you want that gone as soon as possible. But it just created so many issues for me. So weighing myself would trigger-- going to the doctor, I'm like, "Don't tell me my weight." And then they'd give you this sheet of paper at the end where your weight's in bold print. It just got in the way. It diverted my focus because I was so concerned with the weight loss. So I

just decided at that point that I was-- again, one of the things you taught me was like yourself right now. So start liking yourself now. I realize you have 30 pounds to lose, but that's okay because you're still you. You're the same person, 30 pounds heavier or 30 pounds lighter. You still have the same people that love you. You should love yourself, regardless of your weight. And all that positive energy and the positive thoughts helped to squash the binge eating. So I focused on that and just kept giving myself grace. And I decided I needed to worry about the bingeing and not the weight loss because the weight loss would come when the bingeing stopped.

Kirstin: So what do you think about your body now and compared to what you used to think about it?

Jennifer: Oh, I hated my body for so many years. I was just so uncomfortable in my skin. I mean, I made myself do things because I had children and I didn't want to cause issues for them. So we would go to the park, I would take them to all the birthday parties, and I'd feel so insecure. And I really hated my body for years. And now it's not that I love my body, but I love who I am. And I appreciate my body. I can walk. I can go biking. I can do so many things. So I have an appreciation that I never had before. So I wouldn't say that I look in the mirror and say, "Oh, look at you." I don't do that. I don't know that I ever would do that. [laughter] It's not really me. [laughter] But a huge appreciation for my body. And I don't want to do things that would cause my body problems. I don't want to feel bad. I also kind of feel like I've been given this one life and this one body and this one person. And that's really the only person I can control. It's the only person that I can guide. And so I'm responsible for me, and I need to take care of me.

Kirstin: Yeah, I love that. So it goes from having this hatred to your body to having appreciation for it and respecting it. And you don't have to be in love with your body. That is okay. [laughter] That is all right.

Jennifer: Well, in your 50s, your body changes. So I mean, we're just making it through. We're just happy.

Kirstin: Yeah. [laughter] Appreciation and respect is so much better than hate. And that falls into the category of neutrality and acceptance. And that's what I teach. You can go through all my episodes and I mean, point it out if I did say it, but I probably never really talked about body positivity and loving your body and all of this stuff. I usually talk about how that's not attainable at this point for a lot of people because they're hating their body so much. And I'm like, let's just be neutral. Let's be accepting. Like you're saying, be appreciative. Be respectful.

Jennifer: Yeah. And I think I'd rather feel that way anyway than loving my body.

Kirstin: You get to feel however you want about your body. [laughter]

Jennifer: That's right.

Kirstin: And if you're good with how you're feeling, and it's giving you results that you want, then you do it. [laughter] Oh, my gosh. Okay. So many things. I just want to keep talking about all of this forever. I feel like I have so many more questions to ask you. But I want you to tell me what you would want to say to somebody else who was in your shoes, who had been bingeing for as long as you had, for someone who was going through the same difficulties and struggles as you. What would you say to them if they're having a lot of doubt about whether or not they'd be able to stop bingeing?

Jennifer: Just don't quit. Don't give up, that you think you can't do it, but you actually can. And every little step is a step towards freedom from bingeing. I truly believe I've been doing it since I was 10. And it's been 40 years. And I think if I can stop, anyone can stop. There's nothing special about me. I just wanted it. You want to stop. You can stop. And baby steps matter. It's like when you lose a pound a week, people are disappointed. And after 40 weeks, you've lost 40 pounds. [laughter] That's crazy. It's like that. Initially, I

thought it was going to be so hard and I didn't know if I could do it. And then, every little step, and here I am now, and I don't even think about it. It's definitely doable for anyone.

Kirstin: I agree. And I love what you said about don't give up. Because that is the number one reason why people don't stop binge eating is because they give up time and time again. And small steps. I like your example of the weight loss. There are so many people, they lose one pound. They're like, "That's not enough. I need more. I need to eat less. I need to restrict more." And they lose the weight, but the result in the end isn't what they wanted. Like you said, you barely eat for six months so you can fit into your wedding dress and then you gain 50 pounds after.

Jennifer: Yeah. Crazy. I mean, what in the world?

Kirstin: Yeah. So we allow it to take time. We allow ourselves to do baby steps one thing at a time. We acknowledge the progress that we're making with those little steps. And we celebrate our little wins. I have people in the group do that all the time. Celebrate the wins. They matter. And they're all going to build up into something really amazing.

Jennifer: Yes. And just be nice to yourself. It's so hard to be nice because you're mad and you're disappointed. But it's just, it's vital to be nice to yourself, to be okay that everyone makes mistakes and you can do better next time. I really think that made a huge difference for me.

Kirstin: Yeah, it did. And look at you now. And just so everybody knows, I reached out to Jennifer a while ago to be a success story. And she was like, "I don't think I'm ready." And I'm like, "What are you talking about?"

Jennifer: I wasn't ready, though. [laughter]

Kirstin: Yes, you were. I saw it. I saw it.

Jennifer: I think I'm so much better than I was.

Kirstin: Well, improving is great, but you haven't binged it in forever.

Jennifer: It's been a very long time. It has.

Kirstin: It's been a very long time. And I saw that and I'm like, "She hasn't had a binge in forever. Come on the podcast. Tell everybody about it." And you're like, "I'm not ready." And I'm like, "Well, when you're ready." And here we are. [laughter] But I say that because it's so interesting what other people see that we don't see, where I'm like, "I see on the outside," I'm like, "No, here are the statistics. Here's what you're doing. Success." And you're like, "No, no, no, no, I got to clean up X, Y, and Z and all of these things." And I'm like, "Girl, we can work on ourselves forever." When can we just say, "Hey, I've succeeded." [laughter]

Jennifer: I tell you, that's probably one of my worst qualities, just the constant need for improvement.

Kirstin: Yeah. And I think a lot of people experience that too. And we just need to, again, celebrate where we are and be proud of ourselves for where we are. That's something I do for myself quite often is I celebrate the dumbest little things. I'm so proud. But yeah, I think we need to do more of that is just celebrating the little things and just being okay with where we are in this moment. We can be accepting of where we are and be proud of ourselves for where we are and want to do better. That's the thing that I talk about with accepting your body quite often that people get confused about. Where I'm like, "Let's accept our bodies. Let's just agree with reality. Let's just be neutral about it." And they're like, "No, but then I'm

just resigning. And then I'm never going to change it." And I'm like, "You could be accepting of your body and then change it. You can be chill now and then still work on improving." That's allowed.

Jennifer: Yeah. I think it works better.

Kirstin: It works way better. Way better than just trying to hate yourself then.

Jennifer: Yeah, I agree. It's a tough thing to learn, though.

Kirstin: It absolutely is. I agree, but it's learnable.

Jennifer: It is learnable.

Kirstin: Yeah. So are there any other words of wisdom that you would like to share that you haven't already? You've shared so many. I love it. But anything else?

Jennifer: Yeah, I feel like I've laid it all on the table here. But no, I just want to thank you. Honestly, your program changed my life for the better. So there's just no amount of thanks that I can give you that you would understand how grateful I am for you and your program. Both, you're meant for this work. I really believe that. I mean, I start crying. [laughter] So do you cry, baby?

Kirstin: Cry away, girl.

Jennifer: I do. I mean--

Kirstin: I think we coached on that once. Just letting yourself be a person that cries.

Jennifer: Oh my gosh, we did. You're like, "It's okay to cry."

Kirstin: It's okay to cry.

Jennifer: Crying doesn't equal weakness. I remember that.

Kirstin: Crying is just you expressing an emotion. That's it. That's all. Crying is welcomed.

Jennifer: And my husband, too, we all, everyone who loves me that knows what we've done because it was a wee thing. I mean, I know I had to do the work here, but without you, I wouldn't be where I am right now. I really, truly believe that. So you're amazing.

Kirstin: Aw, thank you. And I'm so glad that you acknowledged yourself too because I was going to acknowledge you.

Jennifer: You've already talked to me about that before. [laughter]

Kirstin: I mean, also just for everybody else to know, it's I didn't just come and change you. And the program didn't just change you. You did it. We worked together as a team.

Jennifer: I think it's a 50/50.

Kirstin: It's 50/50. We both get credit.

Jennifer: That's right. Little wins. [laughter]

Kirstin: Oh, my gosh. This has been so wonderful. I have loved this so much. Thank you so much for sharing your story and your thoughts and everything with everybody who's listening. I bet they really appreciate it. I appreciate it.

Jennifer: You're welcome.

Is she relatable or what? And isn't she just amazing?

She has changed so much since we first met two and a half years ago. Her relationship with food and with her body *and* with other people has changed so much for the better. And that's what we all want, right? To feel better, to do better, to be better, and she did that.

And if you want to do that too, I want to encourage you to come work with me in The Stop Binge Eating Program. Registration will be opening tomorrow, on March 19th of 2025. You can get on the waitlist by going to coachkir.com/group so you can be notified as soon as registration opens, and that's also the page where you'll register once it does open and you can get all the info about the program on that page. But if you have any questions that aren't addressed on that page you can email them to info@coachkir.com.

Just like Jennifer said, if she can do it, so can you. We both really believe that.

And I can help you do it.

Alright, I hope you enjoyed my conversation with Jennifer, remember that you can change just like she did, and I will talk to you next time. Bye bye!