THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #354: Eating For Fun

Hi! Have you ever head someone say, "Food is fuel?" And have you ever been told to only eat when you're hungry?

These can both seem like useful ways of thinking because it sounds like you're taking good care of your body by thinking that way.

If you were treating food like fuel, looking for nutritious foods for your body, and if you were only eating when you're hungry, then yeah, your body would probably love that.

But, would you?

I bet most of you wouldn't.

Because then you wouldn't be allowing yourself to eat foods that aren't nutritious or to eat when you're not hungry just for fun, pleasure, and enjoyment.

You'd be holding yourself back from eating things you want to eat just because they're not the best, most nutritious fuel. So you'd never get to eat things like pizza, or any deep fried foods, or chips.

You'd be holding yourself back from enjoying eating experiences with people, or even with yourself, when you're not hungry. So you wouldn't eat dessert, go out for ice cream, or eat that delicious-looking cookie when someone randomly offered it to you.

And I say the words "holding yourself back" purposefully.

You're not doing it because you want to, you're doing it because you think you have to, or that you should. You're forcing yourself to eat that way because you think it's the right way to eat, because again, it's the best way for your body.

But your body isn't the only thing affected by what you eat.

You are too, in your mind.

And if you aren't eating what you desire to eat, and if you are forcing yourself to eat in a certain way and to not eat certain foods and to not eat at certain times, it is very likely that eventually, you will feel deprived and restricted.

And you probably know what happens then….you urge for what you've been deprived of and restricted from. The more you say no, the more you want it.

And eventually, you give in and eat but, if it's been a long time, and if you are telling yourself it's just this one time and after this it will be forbidden again, then you're going to eat a lot, trying to get as much as you can while it's allowed.

And when that happens, it's not good for your mind or your body. Now both aren't feeling good.

In your attempt to only give your body what it wants, and not give yourself what you want, those foods, those experiences, you ultimately eat too much and are definitely not doing what your body or you want.

But that's what happens when you're restricting yourself from eating what you want.

This is why it's so important that you don't deny yourself that way.

You, and your body would both be so much better off if you did incorporate those foods sometimes and if you did allow yourself to eat when you're not hungry, just for fun, pleasure, or enjoyment, sometimes.

Doing those things sometimes in moderate amounts is going to be so much better for you and your body than doing them excessively all at one time.

Now, I do understand the concern that you'll do it moderately sometimes *and* do it excessively.

But, here's the truth about that.

If your excessive eating, your binge eating, is happening only because you're being too restrictive with yourself, then stopping being too restrictive will solve the issue. You won't be doing both because then nothing would be causing the excessive eating anymore.

But, if your excessive eating, your binge eating, is also happening for another reason, such as because you're eating to try and control how you feel, to comfort yourself, numb your feelings, to relax, to feel better, then you'll need to work on that reason too. And you can work on it, and do better.

All of the causes of your excessive eating can be worked on so they're not longer causing it.

So don't fear not being so restrictive and then just don't stop doing it. Stop being so restrictive, because that will for sure help, *and* then work on anything else that might be contributing to the binge eating.

I say all this because instead of normalizing that food is just fuel and that you should only eat when you're hungry, eating for fun, pleasure, and enjoyment needs to be normalized.

I mean, it already is. People do it all the time, and it's not a problem for them so much of the time.

People do all those things I mentioned before, they eat dessert when they're not hungry, they eat a random cookie because someone offered it and it looks good, they go out for ice cream with their friends, they eat pizza, fried foods, and other foods during their meals that aren't super nutritious.

But many people, especially people who binge eat, or people who are trying to lose weight, don't normalize it for themselves.

It may be okay for other people to do it but, not them.

And when they don't think it's okay for themselves, they run into the problem I mentioned before – being too restrictive, which can lead to bingeing on what you've been overly restricting.

And I understand that it can seem like a Catch-22. But it's not.

The excessive restriction is a cause of excessive eating, so if you address the cause, the excessive eating will stop.

Now, when you stop being overly restrictive, at first, you *might* still be eating like someone who has been overly restrictive so you do still binge. It doesn't always happen but it can because your mindset hasn't yet fully shifted into abundance, freedom, allowance, full permission. But it will if you keep reminding yourself that it's okay to eat these foods and it's okay to eat even if you're not hungry, that you're allowed to, that you have the freedom to choose. Give yourself time to adjust. It's a process. Don't quit on the process if changes don't happen immediately.

So, it's okay to eat for fun, pleasure, and enjoyment. You're allowed to, you have permission to, you are free to eat when you want, regardless of hunger.

But, then comes the question – do you want to?

This isn't necessarily a blanket question with one answer, meaning that you don't need to have just one answer for every moment.

Instead, it's a question to ask yourself each day, when the opportunity arises, or even before it does.

It's a question that sometimes you might answer yes to and sometimes you might answer no….because it depends on the circumstances.

Not every moment and not every circumstance will be the same. You're not going to be thinking or feeling the same. Your body isn't going to be feeling the same.

And you're going to give yourself permission to make the decision yourself. You're not going to follow someone else's rules, or only do what's best for your body because you think you're supposed to.

You can eat just because you want to, if you want to.

Many times when I'm coaching my group members, they'll tell me they shouldn't have eaten something because they weren't hungry.

And I have to remind them you don't have to be hungry every single time you eat.

So it's okay that they ate that brownie after lunch, or the cake after dinner, because truthfully, they felt physically fine after. It wasn't really a problem.

But, let's make sure that we like our reasons for eating.

For me, I will for sure eat just for pleasure but, I don't want eating to be what I do for fun.

Like, if I have free time, or I'm bored at home, I don't want eating to be my go-to for something fun to do.

It used to be, back in my binge eating days, and I don't want to be like that anymore.

What I want to do instead is to take a moment to think about what I *really* want to be doing for fun. And it will be easier to do that if I've come up with options ahead of time.

I don't want eating to be my fun. I want activities I enjoy, that fulfill me, and time with people to be my fun.

Yes, of course I want to eat for pleasure when I'm not hungry, like I've been talking about in this episode. But I want eating it to just be that moment, and that's it. Not my activity for the hour, or for that day.

Now, I'm not saying you need to think about it that way too. You get to decide how you want to include eating that's not for hunger, joy eating, into your life.

You get to decide what you use it for, and how often, and for how long.

So, what do you want? What do you want in general? What do you want today? And tomorrow you get to decide what you want tomorrow.

Don't just do what's easy, or what you've always done, or what's habit, or what you think you should do.

Take a moment to explore what you want to do. You have this time available to you, you have the opportunity to do something you enjoy, what do you want to do?

So, yes, food is fuel but, it's also pleasure.

Yes you should eat if you're hungry but, you're also allowed to eat when you're not hungry.

And you get to decide when you do that.

Just make sure you know what your reasons are for doing it and that you like your reasons.

The decision is in your hands.

You are in charge of you what you're eating.

Make your own rules, and have fun how you want to have fun.

And that's all I have for you today. Have a wonderful day, having fun in whatever way you want, and I'll talk to you next time, bye bye.