

# **THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST**

*with Kirstin Sarfde*

## Ep #355: Why You Should Be Kind To Yourself

Hello! Today I'm talking with you about kindness.

And I want to talk about it because many people I work with are lacking it.

And they're not lacking it with other people, they're actually very kind to other people but, when it comes to themselves, not so much.

And it's a problem because it perpetuates negative feelings and behaviors for them.

So often when people are struggling with bingeing after bingeing, and have a hard time stopping themselves from bingeing again, and when people are struggling with bingeing after overeating or eating a food they think is "bad" or after making a mistake that isn't even eating related, it's because they're not being kind to themselves.

They tell themselves they're a failure, are too weak, that they can't do it, that they will never stop bingeing, that they're a disgusting loser, such harsh and mean things.

Now, I want you to imagine that you binged, and I came to you and said, "You're a weak, disgusting, failure and you're never going to be able to stop doing this."

How would you feel?

You'd feel awful! You'd feel so bad about yourself, you'd feel inadequate, ashamed, hopeless, defeated.



And what would you do if you felt that way? Nothing good likely. That's when most people would give up and just keep eating or keep bingeing, or eat to avoid feeling that way.

So often people speak to themselves that way because they think it's going to be motivating. They think it will push them to do better.

But usually, it actually does the opposite.

It brings you down, it makes you feel unmotivated because you feel so bad about yourself, you don't put in effort because you don't believe the effort will be worth it, because you are telling yourself that you can't be successful.

So if that's what really happens, and you've actually seen it happen over and over, why would you keep doing it?

I'd say the simple answer is because it was what you were taught and it's become a habit for you. That's just how you've been talking to yourself for such a long time. It's normal and natural for you.

It's likely that someone either modeled this way of speaking or, you were directly taught it.

Maybe someone spoke to you that way often, maybe a parent or a sports coach or a teacher, or someone else in your life that you looked up to, or who's opinion you really cared about.

They were hard on you, trying to motivate you, and maybe it even worked sometimes. Maybe you did do the things they were trying to motivate you to do. But, that kind of motivation isn't usually sustainable. Because, you keep fighting against the belief that you're a weak, loser, failure rather than working with the belief that you're a capable, strong person who is capable of succeeding.

Don't you think it would be so much easier to work with *that* than to fight against feeling awful about yourself?

I certainly do.

So you were likely taught that being hard on yourself is useful, so you kept doing it, thinking it would help you.

And again, maybe it did in some way.

Kinda like how binge eating has helped you in some way...such as it helped you cope with strong emotions or helped you feel a sense of freedom. But in the end, as you know, it causes more harm than good, and backfires into more uncomfortable emotions, feeling out of control and stuck in bingeing.

So, being hard on yourself, even mean to yourself, might have become a habit. It's become a natural way for you to talk to yourself.

And to break this habit of unkindness toward yourself, one thing you need to do is acknowledge how unhelpful it really is.



It's not motivating. It makes you feel awful, and it is so hard to take positive action when you feel awful about yourself.

And also, you'll need to recognize the ways that you are being unkind to yourself. Because, it can show up in different ways.

I already talked about just using cruel, harsh, mean words when talking to yourself after making mistakes.

You made a mistake, or you binged, so you call yourself things like a failure or a loser.

But being unkind to yourself can also show up in other ways too.

Such as, comparing yourself to others. That can be unkind when you use their successes or things you see as admirable as a reason to be unkind to yourself. You bring yourself down because you're telling yourself that they're better than you because of x, y, and z and telling yourself that you're less than because of x, y, and z.

I see this a lot with body comparisons but it can also happen when you see other people stopping binge eating more quickly than you or when you see people eating foods in moderation that you tell yourself you can't control yourself around. You look at them, see how they are, and start to be really mean to yourself because of where you are compared to them.

And having too high expectations of yourself can be unkind. You expect yourself to do more than you can do when you simply don't have the capacity, or time, or skill level to do it. Then, you mentally beat yourself up for not doing what you simply weren't able to, not because there's something wrong with you, which is what you might unkindly tell yourself, but because circumstances prevented it. It's unkind to put that kind of pressure on yourself, or to have unreachable standards and expectations of yourself.

This can happen when you're trying to make too many changes, or too big of changes at one time. Or, it can just be a general expectation for who and how you think you should be, when you are rather far from being that person right now. You try to push yourself too hard too fast and it's not achievable or sustainable so you're setting yourself up for failure and disappointment, which can then lead you to feeling all kinds of negative emotions like self-doubt, hopelessness, or inadequacy.

What's also not kind is being overly critical of yourself. This can absolutely be tied to what I've talked about already with how you judge yourself when you make mistakes or when you compare yourself to other people. And can also just be in general, when you think about yourself or think about your body. You might just be regularly telling yourself that you're not good enough, that your body is fat and gross, and point out your flaws both on your body and with yourself and your personality. It's just critical judgement again and again and when you do that to yourself, you're unkindly making yourself feel so bad.

And one more thing I want to mention that's unkind is holding on to your past mistakes, not letting them go, and not forgiving yourself for them. You keep reminding yourself of them, keep mentally beating yourself up about them, keep criticizing yourself for them, keep berating yourself for them. It's not kind to keep bringing up old stuff, it can stop you from moving on from it.



So many of these things you wouldn't do with the people you love, right? And why?

Because you don't want to make them feel bad, or feel worse than they already do.

So why would you do that to yourself?

You get to choose your words with yourself, just like you get to choose your words with other people.

When you think about the whole story, and what effect your words have on you and how you feel, you just might decide to use different words.

Now, if you aren't used to using kinder words, it will take some practice.

You'll likely still say the unkind things to yourself sometimes, and sometimes you won't even realize you're doing it or won't even remember that kindness is an option, and that's okay.

You're going to do your best to redirect to kindness and the more you do it, the more natural it will become.

And please, when you do choose kindness, don't then negate it with unkindness.

For example, don't tell yourself something like, "It's hard and you're trying your best," which is kind and compassionate, but then say something like, "But your best just isn't good enough and never will be."

No, end with kindness. Period.

Now, when it comes to kindness, sometimes people think you're letting yourself off the hook if you're kind but, sometimes letting yourself off the hook is the better option. Sometimes it's actually cruel and unhelpful to keep yourself on the hook.

But also, kindness doesn't mean you're making excuses either. It just means you're not being so mean to yourself.

You can be kind and encouraging. You can be kind and curious.

You can also be kind and assertive. I actually did an episode about being assertive with yourself, #324 if you want to hear more about being kind and assertive.

Sometimes we just need gentle kindness and sometimes we need assertive kindness. But we don't need to be a jerk to ourselves.

So stop being so hard on yourself if you make a mistake. Don't give up on yourself. Be kind by having compassion, getting curious so you can understand yourself and what happened, and encouraging yourself to keep trying.

And stop bringing yourself down with comparisons. What could be more kind is to separate yourself from that person, meaning that you are not supposed to be the same. And listen, you can also use them as inspiration. Looking at them just showed you what it is you want to work on for yourself. Use that to



guide yourself toward what you want to work on. You can be like them, in your own way of course, and instead of comparing and despairing, you can get to work on what you want to change about yourself.

And set realistic expectations for yourself. Keep your daily goals small and doable rather than unattainable. Set goals you'll actually achieve because when you do, you'll feel good about yourself and encouraged to do it again, and to do more.

And rather than ripping yourself apart with critiques, focus more on your qualities that you do like. Spend more time thinking about what you do like. Now, I'm not saying to ignore what you don't like. But instead, you can work on what you don't like, without criticizing yourself the whole time, and accept what you can't change.

And lastly, have compassion and forgiveness for your past. Have compassion for your past self who really did do their best with what they had and what they knew, who may not have been aware of a better way, who didn't know how to be or do different, and who thought they were making the best decision. And forgive yourself for the things you're not proud of, or your mistakes, or decisions that didn't turn out how you wanted them to. Because when you have compassion and understanding and forgiveness, it's so much easier to move on and not dwell on it.

When you do all of this, when you are kind to yourself, you'll feel better about yourself, feel less self-induced pressure and stress, feel supported, and have a better relationship with yourself. You're going to be listening to yourself for your entire life, and it will be so much nicer to hear things that are kind. And, it will help you to engage in more positive actions.

So practice kindness with yourself. The more you practice it, the more natural it will become. Be patient with yourself as you practice redirecting from the unkind thoughts you're used to thinking. Give yourself time to adjust.

It will be so worth it if you do.

So, no matter what happens today, be kind to yourself because it's simply a better, more useful option than being unkind, mean, critical, and hard on yourself. And do the same tomorrow, and every day after that.

Alright, practice more self-kindness and I will talk to you next time. Bye bye.