THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #358: If You Feel Controlled By Food

Hi! Something that many people who binge eat experience is feeling controlled by food.

They feel powerless, like there is nothing they can do. They think they can't say no to the food. They think they can't stop eating the food.

They think that as long as they food is there, they will eat it.

Because they think they are not in control. The food is.

It's as if the food is making their decisions for them and making them eat it.

But it's not. It can't. It can't do anything.

The food just sits there. It's an inanimate object with no power at all.

It can't move, it can't make you eat it.

So if that's true, then why do you feel out of control and like the food controls you?

The main reason is because of your urges.

When you feel an urge to eat, or an urge to binge, and you're feeling like you have to eat the food, you might blame that urge you're feeling on the food.

You might think it tastes too good, or blame what the food is made out of. Or you might just blame the food because you don't know what else to blame.

But you're not feeling that urge because of the food. The food isn't making you feel that way.

You are making, or have made yourself feel that way.

You feel that urge because you've been overly restrictive with what or how much you've been eating. You've been denying yourself of foods you want and like so your desire for them has grown stronger, into an urgent desire, and urge.

Or you are letting yourself eat something you don't normally allow yourself to eat but are telling yourself you won't eat it again so now you feel an urgency to eat as much as you can while you can. The urge to eat a lot is strong.

Or, you're actually wanting to change, numb, soothe, or avoid an emotion quickly and the way you know to do that is be eating so you urge to eat so you can stop feeling how you feel.

Your urges are self-created.

And this is good news because if you are creating it, that means you can *not* create it by giving yourself unconditional permission to eat what you want, and allowing yourself to eat it again, and learning how to feel your emotions.

So, the food is not making you feel urges *and* it's not making you give into them either.

As I said, the food can't make you do anything, it can't move your hands, it can 't make you pick it up.

You are the one in control of what you do and don't do, not the food.

Now, I totally get that when you're feeling that urge it feels like you are not in control.

But feeling that way does not mean the food now has power over you.

It doesn't. It never does.

The food just becomes the thing that will help you to feel better.

So it's not controlling you, it's just desirable to you.

It might be because you think it's delicious, it might be because you think of it as your source of comfort or relaxation or calm. It might be because you've been denying yourself of it. It might be because you think this is your one chance to eat it. It might be because it's your favorite source of pleasure and enjoyment.

And like I said, what happens a lot of the time is people feel that desire, maybe a strong desire that feels like an urge, and immediately make it mean they're out of control, the food is controlling them, and they have to eat it.

But this just isn't true.

When you feel that desire or urge, that's all it is. It's you wanting. It's not you being forced.

And when you feel desire and are wanting, you don't *have* to give yourself what you're wanting.

There have been so many times that you've wanted something, really wanted it, and didn't give it to yourself.

Because, you had reasons to not get it that were so important to you and they overrode your desire to get it.

When it comes to food, yes you desire it but, sometimes you might have reasons for not eating it that are more important than whatever your reason for eating it is.

And you can choose not to eat it, even though you initially felt desire for it.

But, what about the times when those reasons don't cut it?

You tell yourself all reasons why you don't want to eat it, how it will physically affect you if you eat it, and you still desire it, still want it, and still think about it.

If that happens, it's still not the food that's doing that. It's not the food causing you to keep thinking about it or to still desire it.

It's you.

You are causing that to happen.

And you're likely causing it to happen because of your underlying desire.

What I mean by that is that yes you're desiring the food but really, underneath that desire, there's a desire for something else. It's a desire for what you think the food will provide for you.

That underlying desire could be for comfort, calmness, freedom, pleasure, enjoyment, numbness, or connection.

Your desire for something like that is what is causing the desire for food to continue.

And then, if you give in to that desire and eat the food, you are the one making the decision to do it, whether you realize it or not.

You are deciding to answer that desire, to give yourself what you're desiring, to eat the food.

The food isn't making you eat it. You are choosing to eat it.

This is so important to acknowledge because as long as you think that the food is controlling you, the more powerless you'll feel. And when you feel powerless, you don't put in effort, you don't even try to not eat or to stop eating. You just let it happen. That's what powerlessness drives us to do. Nothing.

Also, when you think it's the food controlling you, you put all your focus on trying to control the food.

You make strict plans and rules for yourself and you try to avoid being around the food.

But, at some point, that attempt at controlling the food will eventually backfire.

At some point, you're going to be in a situation where you simply can't control what food is available or around you, like when you're at an event or someone's house and other people are deciding what food is being served.

At some point, your plans might change, maybe because you didn't have time to meal prep, or you forgot your food at home, or your planned food went bad, or somebody caused you to need to change your plans for whatever reason and you didn't have a backup plan, or couldn't have even made a back up plan for the new circumstances.

Or, at some point you'll be urging for flexibility and freedom, away from those strict rules you've set for yourself.

And if any of those happen, and you don't have full control over what food is available, or what your food options are, or if you're just dying to eat something different than what you've been forcing yourself to eat, and are dying for something you haven't allowed yourself to eat in forever, you might have no idea how to handle yourself, and the thoughts and feelings that come up.

So trying to control all the food isn't the answer because you simply can't. We aren't *always* going to be able to follow through on our eating plans. Life happens, things change, plans change.

We can't have full control over all the food that exists and where and what's going to be available to us.

And thankfully, you don't have to.

Because you have control over yourself.

You are in control of what you do and don't do, what you do and don't eat.

You are in control of how you respond to your desires.

You also are in control of how you choose to think about food. And that includes fearful thinking.

For some people, the problem isn't just desire, it's fear.

They fear that a bad thing will happen if they eat a certain food, they fear bingeing, they fear gaining weight, they fear being out of control.

And when they're feeling that fear, their thinking is clouded, it's hard to think rationally, and they usually end up doing exactly what they feared.

But what they might not know is that they are creating the fear. The food isn't. Their past even isn't.

They're thinking about what bad thing will happen and, that bad thing is *not* inevitable.

Just because it's happened before doesn't mean it has to happen again.

They can do something different this time.

You can do something different this time.

And that something different is going to come from you *thinking* differently.

You have a lot of control over your thoughts and thought patterns.

None of us are entirely in control of every thought that will come into our minds but, we are in control of how we respond to them. Do we simply agree? Or do we challenge our thoughts, or redirect them, try to understand them?

We also have the ability to change our usual thoughts through repetition and consistency.

What I'm trying to say with all of this is that if you have been believing that the food is in control and is more powerful than you, you're not giving yourself enough credit.

You have more control than you think.

But if you're going to use it, you have to acknowledge that.

Really be honest with yourself about what the food is doing and what you are doing.

And not from a place of blaming yourself but, from a place of taking responsibility and seeing the truth.

Because when you do that, you can start to work on what you actually can control, and what will actually help you to eat less.

So, the food does not control you. It cannot make you think, or make you feel, and it can not make you eat it.

You are in charge of what you think.

You are the one creating your feelings with your thinking.

And you are the one deciding to take action and give in to your desire.

This is good news. If you weren't in control, there would be nothing you could do. It would be out of your hands.

But you *are* the one who is in control here.

So today, focus on you, your thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Alright, work on you and that is all I have for today, bye bye.