

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #366: What You Can Do To Feel Less Mentally Tired

Hello! Many people binge when they feel tired.

It could be that they feel physically tired because they're not sleeping enough or it could be because they're mentally tired because they've been using a lot of brain energy, thinking about things, planning, making decisions, all the things.

In this episode today, I'm talking about that mental tiredness, when your brain energy is just depleted.

What tends to happen for many people who experience that mental tiredness is one of two things.

Either they're so tired that they just don't care anymore, don't want to make decisions, don't want to think, so they just eat whatever without putting any thought into it.

Or, they choose to eat to try and get some energy. But then, either they just keep going back to food as soon as the energy dips again, which it will, or they just keep eating because again, they don't have the mental energy to do the work to stop themselves. It's just easier to keep eating.

So, how you react to being mentally tired can lead you to overeat or binge.

And my simple answer to what to do if you feel mentally tired is to rest your brain.

You don't try to get quick energy, you give your brain a real rest. A real break.

Now, if you don't have time to take a mental break, then my recommendation is to just let yourself feel tired.

Yes it's not ideal, yes it can be harder to do the things you want to do when you're feeling that way but, ultimately it will be a better option to choose because it won't result in you feeling uncomfortable from eating too much, adding that discomfort to the discomfort of feeling tired, and eating excessively can also create even more tiredness, adding to the initial issue.

So allowing yourself to feel tired or taking a real mental rest break is what I recommend if you are mentally tired.

And taking real, mental rest breaks is also what I recommend you to do help prevent mental tiredness or to at least decrease the tiredness.

And I'm using the word "real" intentionally here.

Because, sometimes we think we're giving our brains a break but we're really not.

We might be giving it a break from thinking about work, or obligations, or what you need to get done, or what's bothering you, or whatever is on your mind but, you're not actually resting your brain.

Just because you're thinking about something else that isn't as stressful, overwhelming, sad, boring, or whatever you're thinking about that's draining your mental energy doesn't mean you're resting your brain.

Here's an example of what I mean.

There have been so many times when I'd be mentally exhausted after a work day and I wouldn't want to do anything. I didn't want to go for a walk, didn't want to talk to anyone, didn't want to go anywhere.

And what I'd choose to do then was go on my phone and sort through my personal emails or scroll through social media or read articles.

I thought it would be entertaining and relaxing. I thought it would be easy. I thought it would be a nice break for my brain to not think about work stuff anymore.

But although I wasn't thinking about work anymore, I also wasn't giving my brain a break. I wasn't resting my brain.

I was over-stimulating my brain, and maybe even reading or listening to things that required focused attention that I already had very little energy for.

So when I'd get off my phone, I didn't feel better. Sometimes I'd even feel a little bit more drained.

It didn't do what I'd wanted it to do.

So after doing this too many times, I finally realized that this is not what I want to do when I'm mentally drained.

What I have found to be so much more useful when I feel that way is to just lay down listening to either nothing or to music. Nothing educational, nothing informative.

Or to watch a tv show or movie that's either really easy to watch or that I've seen before, or both.

There's plenty of other things that you could do too but those have been my go-tos.

The point is that you're allowing your brain to rest.

And you shouldn't just wait until the end of the day to do this, after hours of mental exhaustion.

Do it when you need to, and when you can, throughout the day.

During my workday, I take breaks. And most of the time, I feel mentally okay so usually I'm listening to a bit of a podcast and because I work from home I might be organizing or cleaning up or doing laundry or whatever, or I'll do some stretching, before going back to work. If I could go for a walk, like I sometimes did at my old place I totally would but the street where I live now is busy and doesn't have side walks so I don't do that. But it would be nice!

But other times, when I notice I'm feeling mentally tired and drained during the day, and I still have work to do, I don't listen to podcasts. I listen to music or nothing. I don't try to learn anything. I don't stimulate my brain with scrolling.

I give my brain the break it's needing.

And it helps. Even just 15 minutes can help. Sometimes I even notice a difference in just 5 minutes.

But really, you could do it for just a minute and it would be better than doing nothing.

What matters is that you're giving your brain rest breaks, real rest breaks, when it needs it.

So if you notice that you're feeling mentally tired, as soon as you can, give yourself a real mental rest break.

The more you do this, the less the tiredness will build.

If you push yourself to keep going, you're going to get to the point of mental exhaustion where you're just done with thinking and using your brain, or you're desperately trying to get quick energy with food, like I talked about at the start of the episode.

Now, some of you might have a hard time with this because you're not giving yourself permission to take rest breaks.

You have the time but you're not allowing it.

You think it's lazy, you think you should push through, you might even tell yourself you don't have time when you actually do.

If that's you, then you need to be honest with yourself about how important these breaks are for your mental state and for your productivity.

It will be so much easier to work, and to do the things you want to get done, if you take a break.

You will feel better if you take a break.

And of course, taking these real mental rest breaks can also help you to not overeat or binge if you are overeating or bingeing when you're so mentally exhausted.

These breaks aren't you being lazy, they're you taking care of yourself and your mental health.

That's why it's important that you allow yourself to take them.

And I want to give you another tip for helping you to not feel so mentally tired.

It's doing work on your thoughts.

Usually that tiredness comes from feeling a lot of negative emotions that use a lot of energy. Negative emotions can be quite draining sometimes. They could be stress, overwhelm, anxiety, boredom, dread, fear, and the list goes on.

If you're feeling a lot of negative emotions throughout the day and that's why you're feeling so mentally tired, then it would be helpful to feel them less. Obviously, right?

But what's not so obvious to most people is that change will come from changing their thoughts.

People will often say that they can't change what they're doing so they can't change what they're feeling. They can't change the demands of their job, or change their kids, or change their family, or do less around the house, or just do less in general.

Now, some of that actually is changeable, I mean, obviously we can't change people but, I'd challenge you to question what you could change in your life to make life easier for you. I'm not saying there is anything but, it's worth a look.

And if there isn't, what you can change is how you're thinking about it.

Your thoughts are what cause your emotions so, you can feel less negative emotions if you aren't thinking as many thoughts that cause negative emotions.

You don't actually need to change your circumstances to feel less negative emotions, you only need to change your thoughts.

Here's an example.

I worked with a woman who had young kids and she was telling me how stressful or annoying the mornings before work and afternoons after work always were.

She didn't want to have to do all the stuff to get her kids ready in the morning and she didn't want to do what they want to do in the afternoons.

But after we talked about it, she started to think differently about those times of day. She became much more appreciative of her kids and the time she gets to spend with them, even if it isn't ideal.

She did also make more time for herself to do the things she wanted to do, so that helped too.

But the biggest change in how she was feeling happened when she began to think differently about doing what she usually does during those times of day.

She didn't change anything, just her thoughts, and she felt better.

And therefore, began to eat way less in the afternoons and evenings when she wasn't hungry.

A change in perspective, in how you choose to think about things, can be a huge game changer in how you feel.

So add that into your day too.

So, take real mental rest breaks and also, explore how you can think about your circumstances differently so you can stop feeling so negative throughout the day. Even changing into a neutral thought is better. I'm not saying you should be a positive Polly all the time, that's just unrealistic. But you can at least do your best to shift into neutral.

So that's how you can feel less mentally tired so you don't binge because of it.

Take breaks, manage your thoughts, see if you can make changes by letting things go or delegating or by doing things another day when you're not so busy, and when you can't take those breaks, let yourself be tired. You can do it tired. You don't need to keep eating food to keep your energy up. You'll be okay without it.

Do what you can to prevent the mental tiredness and to take care of yourself when you do experience it.

Alright, that's all for today, I'll talk to you next time. Bye bye.