

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #368: Giving Yourself Permission to Feel Negatively

Hi! I bet most people would say that they want to feel good, comfortable, and happy all the time.

This can be a reason for many people for why they binge or overeat. They're using food to try and feel better than they are.

Because feeling good, comfortable, and happy sounds so much better than feeling bad, uncomfortable, or negative, right?

Now, if you've listened to any of my episodes about feeling emotions, I've talked about how you can feel better without eating food. I actually did an episode about it recently, #359, How to feel better without eating food.

But, what about those times when you don't actually want to feel good in certain circumstances?

What about when something happens and you think that the emotion you're feeling is valid and appropriate.

Or maybe you just don't want to do the work to change how you're feeling.

Maybe you just want to let yourself feel how you're feeling for a bit.

Or maybe you're just not ready to change how you're feeling.

Then what?

You might then just eat food to feel better temporarily and distract yourself from the emotion you're feeling.

Because at that point, what options do you have?

You don't want to change how you feel, so what can you do?

Well, you can eat to ignore it for a bit or, you can just feel how you're feeling.

I of course, recommend the second option.

Sometimes, when we really take an honest look at certain circumstances, or a circumstance we're in, we actually might not want to feel positive, or even neutral about it.

We might want to feel sad, disappointed, or angry.

And we can absolutely choose that.

You might have experienced something that you think is unfair or an injustice.

And you have some thoughts about this thing and those thoughts are causing you to feel a feeling.

It could be very likely that you are thinking negative thoughts and are feeling negative feelings.

And now, what do you *want* to think about this? How do you *want* to feel about that? You might want to be thinking and feeling exactly how you are.

You might *want* to feel angry. You might want to feel mad about it. You for sure don't want to feel positive about it. And you don't want to change how you're thinking about it right now.

In the future, neutral could be a possibility for you but, maybe right now, you don't even want to go there. You just want to be mad and keep thinking what you're thinking about it.

And you can let yourself be mad. You can let yourself keep thinking what you're thinking.

You don't have to change how you feel right now if you don't want to.

And maybe you'll want to in the future, near future or far but, you can decide to just stay here, in this emotion, for now.

But if you decide to stay in the emotion you're in now, even if it's negative, you do not then eat to escape it.

If you choose to feel how you're feeling, you don't then choose to eat to numb, escape, or distract from it.

Either you're feeling it or you're working on changing it. That's it.

So you're not saying, "I'm so angry, and it's too hard to stop, so I'm just going to eat."

No. You're either saying, "I'm so angry and I'm just going to feel angry," or you're saying, "I'm so angry and I'm going to work on changing my thoughts to change how I'm feeling."

And if you're having a hard time changing how you're thinking and changing your perspective about the circumstances, about what happened, about what's going on, then you choose to feel it.

You'll be okay. You'll get through it. You don't need to escape it with food. And the sooner you feel it and go through it, the sooner you'll feel better for real, rather than that temporary feeling better that you might get from eating food.

Also, please don't judge yourself for feeling how you're feeling.

Someone may have told you otherwise but, know that you're allowed to feel negative emotions.

Your feelings are valid.

Humans feel a whole spectrum of emotions and you're supposed to feel negative emotions.

So please don't judge yourself because that for sure can lead you into excessive eating in order to numb or ignore those feelings you feel because you think you shouldn't be feeling them.

But you should.

When you feel negative emotions, you're not doing anything wrong. You're just having a human experience.

So, give yourself permission to feel how you're feeling.

That's what I did when I injured my knee a couple years ago, which I talked about previously on this podcast.

I just let myself feel how I was feeling. I didn't fight it. I didn't eat to escape how I was feeling or to distract from how I was feeling or to numb how I was feeling. I didn't even try to feel better. Well, I kinda did at first. I did try to look on the bright side but, when I realized it wasn't helping, I just let myself be in my pity-party. I let myself feel bad for myself and I let myself cry. I didn't do any work to try and stop feeling that way.

Eventually, my emotions did shift and I was in a more neutral place but, I didn't force myself into it right away. I let myself be where I was emotionally.

This could be the case for you if someone dies, if you lose your job, if you get divorced or break up, or even if someone says or does something to you that pisses you off.

In the future, whether that be in an hour, a day, a week, a month, months, a year, years, you can work on changing how you feel if you want to.

You can also stay in how you feel if you want to.

You have permission to feel however you want to feel.

You have permission to think however you want to think.

Even if its negative and causes you to feel negatively.

It could even just be for a few minutes.

I remember feeling disappointed about something, I don't even remember what, but I do remember I was washing dishes, living with my ex-boyfriend at the time, and he wanted to help me feel better.

But I declined.

I told him to just let me feel disappointed until I finished washing the dishes.

It was like I was giving myself a set time to feel disappointed and then I would do my thought work to get out of it and feel more neutral about whatever it was that happened.

And that's exactly what I did.

So you could put a timeline on how long you want to allow yourself to feel how you're feeling. Or, you can just feel it until you're ready to work on it.

There's no right or wrong way and in different circumstances, you might experience strong emotions that you might want to take longer with and in others, less intense ones that you'll want to work on sooner.

Just know that you don't have to rush out of it if you don't want to.

And, sometimes it's better if you do just let yourself be in it for a period of time.

It's better for us, and it allows for us to process it, if we let ourselves be in it.

Going through it and processing it is what can help us to get to neutral, or to resolution.

When we try to rush through it, we don't actually resolve it and it comes back again.

So the sooner you feel it all the way through, the sooner you're done with it.

Or sometimes, maybe you're not done with it, but the sooner it will decrease in intensity. That could be the case for grief, which I discussed with Krista St-Germain back in episode #356.

So, if you want to feel how you're feeling, feel how you're feeling. You don't have to change anything unless you want to.

You don't have to change your thoughts or feelings if you don't want to, or if you're not ready to.

And if you choose to stay in it, you commit to that. You don't then try to change how you feel by eating food.

You're either feeling it or working on your thoughts to change it. That's it.

Alright, that's what I have for you today about choosing to feel negative emotions and I'll talk to you again soon. Bye bye!