

# **THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST**

*with Kirstin Sarfde*

## Ep #2: Why A Binge ISN'T Inevitable Once You Feel an Urge to Binge Eat

Hi! Welcome back! I'm so glad you're here for round two and ready to learn more about how you can end your struggle with binge eating and create your ideal eating habits. I hope you listened to episode 1 already because I'm going to be expanding on that topic today. So if you haven't listened yet, go do that. If you did, then you know that the reason why you binge is because you feel urges to do it and if you stop feeling those urges, then the bingeing will stop.

In order *to* stop feeling the urges to binge, you have to stop doing what is causing you to feel the urges, which is either being overly restrictive with your food or using food to control or escape your emotions, and I went into more detail about those two things in episode one and will be going into even more detail in future episodes of this podcast. So, you're going to work on those two things in order to stop feeling urges to binge, which is absolutely possible for you.

Now, in this episode today, I'm going to be talking about what is going on in your brain when you feel urges to binge and when you start a binge.

Because, understanding this can help you to believe that it is possible for you to not binge when you feel an urge.

As you're working on stopping feeling urges to binge, you'll likely still feel urges.

For most people, urges to binge don't usually just stop right away because doing the work to not be too restrictive and handle emotions in a more productive way can take some time.

So, I want to help you to handle your urges when they do come up as you go through this process.

Just because you're feeling an urge, doesn't mean you have to binge.

For me, when I was binge eating, I had always thought that as soon as I felt an urge to binge, that that was it. The urge was there and now I had no choice but to binge.

And people say the same thing to me all the time. They say they feel the urge and they have to binge. There is nothing they can do to stop themselves.

But, that's not really true.

Now, can it be challenging to not eat and not binge once you feel an urge to binge? Yes.

But is it possible to not eat when you feel an urge? Yes.

And I'm going to show you why by explaining what goes on in your brain when you feel an urge and when you give in to it and eat.

And I'm sharing this information with you because for me, it was a huge game changer when I learned it.

It was what shifted me from thinking that I was out of control and couldn't stop myself from eating, to believing that I *was* in control and did have the power to stop myself, which was such an important belief shift for me.

It's actually what started my whole process of stopping binge eating and helped me to truly believe, finally, that I could stop and be in control.

So, I hope that what I'm sharing with you today helps you to start that transition and shift too.

Alright, let's talk about your brain, your urges, and binge eating.

Starting with what's called The Lower Brain.

The Lower Brain is in the lower, back part of your brain, is also referred to as the primitive brain, animal brain, or lizard brain and the reason why is because this is the first part of our brain that developed. It's the part of our brain that we share with animals and it's main purpose is survival. It's responsible for keeping us safe and alive and it's functions include pleasure seeking, pain avoidance, subconscious processes, emotions, and instincts.

It's also where your urge to binge comes from.

What this part of your brain does, is take information from your internal and external environments and responds automatically with its own information.

This automatic response can be an urge to binge and it could also be accompanied by thoughts like, "You need to eat all that food now."

This response can be triggered by a number of different events, internally or externally.

It could happen after you've not eaten enough food for too long. Your brain gets concerned about survival, so it urges you to eat a lot of food to make up for the fuel it hasn't received and to prepare for future food scarcity.

It could happen when you see a food that you haven't allowed yourself to eat for a long time. You've deprived yourself of this pleasure and so your brain is now urging for it.

It could happen when you feel an uncomfortable emotion and your default response is to eat a lot of food to get away from the discomfort.

Your lower brain may respond with a thought, or command, telling you that you should binge eat because it might think you need to for survival, or because you've conditioned your brain to react that way to emotional discomfort, or because it's reacting prolonged restriction.

Now, when it comes to your lower brain, it's not something that we have conscious control over.

We don't have conscious control over what happens in there or what responses it throws out at us. It's all very automatic.

But thankfully, we have another part of our brain called the higher brain or the Pre-Frontal Cortex.

This part of the brain, is what makes us human. This is what separates us humans from the animals.

And what's so awesome about the higher brain is that this is where we have the ability to plan, to think rationally, to control our motor movements, and to think about what we're thinking about.

In this part of your brain, you make decisions.

In there, you're deciding what you will and won't do.

So, before you binge, your lower brain has an automatic response, and this response is a thought about bingeing which is accompanied by an urge to binge.

Then here's the important part.

That urge is recognized by your higher brain and in there, you get to *decide* what to do with that urge that the lower brain created.

You are making a decision. There is always a decision that is made before you binge.

You will only binge if, in your higher brain, you decide to give in to that urge that the lower brain created.

Now, I totally understand that it might not feel like those two things are happening separately. It might seem like you just go from urge to binge without any thought and like no decision is made.

But there is a thought, even if you don't notice it. There is a decision, even if you're not aware of it.

It always goes: thought about bingeing, then feeling an urge to binge, then deciding to binge....or deciding to not binge.

You are not reaching for food until you decide to.

The urge itself can't make you do anything.

Your lower brain can't make you do anything.

It doesn't control your motor movements, it doesn't control your legs or your hands, you do that in your higher brain.

The lower brain can demand that you binge, it can make you feel the uncomfortable sensations that come along with the urge, it can make you feel driven to binge, it can send thoughts about eating, but no motor movements, no eating will happen until you decide, in your higher brain, what to do.

And that decision can be to not eat.

For me, there were so many times that my lower brain made me feel an urge, made me think about food and eating, and I had no idea that I could shut that down. I had no idea that I could have chosen to not eat.

I thought my only option was to do what I was urging to do, but it wasn't. I always had the option of saying no.

Urge does not equal binge, an urge is a command to binge and then you in your higher brain get to decide whether or not to follow that command.

Every time you binge it's because you make the decision to do it.

Now, to be clear, I'm not saying that you choose to feel the urge, or that you decided to be someone who binge eats. What I'm saying is that you are deciding to give in to the urge that you're feeling in that moment and to eat.

You make that decision in your higher brain, in your prefrontal cortex, to follow the urge the lower brain presented.

Now, this all may happen very quickly, going from urge to binge, or it may take a few minutes.

Maybe you're going back and forth in your higher brain, negotiating with yourself or trying to justify bingeing, or trying to talk yourself out of it.

Or maybe you're just letting yourself go on autopilot without utilizing the power of your higher brain.

As I look back, I can see that I would do both and a lot of the time I'd be sitting there thinking, "I don't want to be feeling this, go away, I don't want to binge.....okay, I'm going to do it."

Other times I'd think that as soon as I felt that urge that a binge was inevitable so I'd just go for it.

But I want to tell you that a binge is NEVER inevitable.

You always have a choice.

So you may be wondering, if you have a choice, then why the heck would you CHOOSE to binge?

Well, I will do many episodes in the future that will answer that question but, I'll give you the simple answers today.

Before listening to this episode, you might have chosen to binge because you thought there was no other option. But now you see there is.

You might also choose to binge when feeling an urge because it's the quickest and easiest way for you to stop feeling it.

Or because you don't know what to do with the urge if you don't give in to it and eat.

Or you think it will never go away so you end it by eating.

Or the urge is really strong and it's hard for you to think rationally.

Or you're afraid of the urge because you think it's too powerful or painful or scary.

Or you don't believe you'll be able to not binge.

There could be many reasons why you would decide to give in to the urge and as I said in future episodes I'll be addressing those reasons so they don't have to be your reasons anymore.

But for today, I just want you to understand the separation between you feeling the urge and you deciding to eat, and for you to start noticing when you make that decision while feeling the urge.

Start paying attention to what you think about the urge when you're feeling an urge to binge. What are you thinking that is leading you to make the decision to give in and eat?

Are you thinking like I was, where I thought I might as well just do it because it was inevitable anyway? Is it just, "F it, I'm doing this?" "I don't care anymore?" "I can't feel this urge any longer, I need out of this?"

What is the thought that is the deciding factor for you? What are you thinking in your higher brain that gives you the go ahead to follow the demand from your lower brain?

Take notice of what's going on in your mind right before you reach for that food. Recognize that you are deciding to eat it. No one is forcing you and you are not out of control. Your urges do not control your actions, you do.

Urges can't make you do anything, they just drive you to do something. And you don't have to do what you feel driven to do.

Ever felt driven to yell at someone but you don't do it?

That's you not doing what you feel driven to do.

You feel the urge to yell and you don't.

And you can do it with your urges to binge eat too.

Now, I will be honest that the more intense the urge, the more challenging it can be to not give in to it.

This is going to be easier the less intense the urge is.

And as I've said with other things, I will be talking on future episodes about how to make the urges less intense and how to actually work through the urge.

But today, my goal is to help you see that you have more control than you might think you do, that the urge is not in control of you, and that a binge is not inevitable once you feel an urge.

Alright, I hope you found this information as helpful as I did when I first learned about it. If you have any questions you can email them to [info@coachkir.com](mailto:info@coachkir.com).

I hope you have a wonderful week practicing awareness of your thinking when you feel an urge to binge and I will talk to you next time!