

# **THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST**

*with Kirstin Sarfde*

## **Ep #7: How to Get Through An Urge Without Eating**

Hi! Hello! Welcome! Let's get right into today's topic. Getting through an urge to binge eat without eating.

In some of the previous episodes, I've talked about why you feel urges to binge eat so you can understand the cause of them and work on the cause. Because, when you work on the cause of your urges, that's how you can actually stop them from happening.

But, as you work on the cause, it is likely that you will feel some urges to binge.

Most people, as they're working on stopping binge eating will feel urges to binge because stopping binge eating is a process. It's not something that usually happens overnight.

So I wanted to do an episode to help you manage your urges when you do feel them.

For many of us, once we feel that urge to binge, we think there is nothing we can do.

We think that a binge is inevitable, that there's no point in even trying to ride out the urge because it won't go away until you eat.

But, there is something you can do and a binge isn't inevitable.

Now, before I go further, I just want to remind you what an urge to binge is.

An urge is a really strong desire. It feels like an urgent desire, like you must get what you're desiring immediately.

It's urges to binge that drive you to binge. If you didn't feel urges to binge then you wouldn't binge.

When you're feeling an urge to binge, you're going to feel it in your body, you'll feel sensations in your body, and along with those sensations will come thoughts about eating. Urgent, commanding, needing thoughts about eating, and likely about eating a lot of food.

You're thinking that you need to binge, that you need food now, that you need a lot of food now.

And those thoughts are very convincing, especially since they're coming from your own brain.

Because if it's coming from your own head it must be true, right?

Well, not so much, because the truth is that you never *need* to binge. Bingeing is never a necessity. It's not necessary for your survival even though your brain might think it is. This is just a thought that your brain is producing.

And as I talked about in episode one, the reason why you are feeling the urge and are thinking these thoughts about bingeing is either because you have been overly restrictive with how much or what you're eating, or because eating food is how you deal with, escape from, or change your uncomfortable emotions so you can feel better or feel numb.

You might not be eating enough food so your brain urges you to eat more to make up for the lack of fuel it's been getting and to prepare for future lack if it sees a pattern of undereating.

You might not be allowing yourself to eat foods you like to eat so your brain urges you to eat what you've been denying yourself of for so long.

Or you might not know how else to handle uncomfortable emotions except by eating food so when you feel those emotions, your brain urges you to eat since that's what you've trained your brain to believe is the solution. It's become your default way of handling them.

So, if you're doing any of those, and you feel urges to binge eat, you're also going to have thoughts about bingeing.

You have the feeling of the urge, which is going to show up as sensations in your body, and you have thoughts about bingeing, which are going to be sentences in your mind, such as, "I need to binge, now."

And those thoughts are really just a thought error. Your brain is telling you that you need to do something but, you actually don't. Your brain misspoke. It happens.

I remember so vividly a time when I was first doing this work and paying attention to my thinking and I heard myself say, "I should just give up." But instead of just going along with that, I paused and said, "What?!? No I shouldn't! What's that all about??"

Total thought error and I recognized it as that. It was just a thought that ran through my mind when things got hard and I knew that giving up wasn't really what I wanted to do.

My brain wanted me to give up though because our brains don't really like doing new uncomfortable things, but it doesn't mean I have to agree up in my higher brain where I make my decisions about what I'm going to do.

So there are those urging thoughts telling you that you need to binge, or something along those lines, and then there's the feeling that goes along with it.

That overwhelming urge that seems so unbearable and uncomfortable.

Now, when we feel that urge, what we tend to do is either resist it or react to it.

Reacting is simply deciding that you're going to give in to the urge binge. You just do what the urge is driving you to do. You might do this as soon as you feel the urge or you might do it after resisting it for some time. You might go back and forth and back and forth about whether or not you're going to eat and then at some point, you decide to eat.

So reacting is giving in and eating.

Now, resisting might sound like the right thing to do. People use that word often when talking about urges. They say they couldn't resist it, or they tried to resist or, they say they did resist it and didn't binge.

But here's why I don't recommend resisting the urge.

Resisting is fighting. When you're resisting the urge, you're fighting against it. You're telling the urge, "No, no, no, I'm not giving in, I'm not going to binge." And what usually happens is that you mentally push against the urge, you argue with it, you fight it, then the urge gets stronger, more uncomfortable, more intense, and it gets exhausting. Then at some point, you get so tired of fighting, of resisting, that you just surrender to it.

Just like when you verbally fight with another person, and that person fights back, and it escalates, that urge is going to fight back and it will escalate. It's just going to create more discomfort.

So although sometimes you might resist and win, and you don't binge, it's likely that more often, you'll lose the fight and binge.

So resisting is not going to be the best option. Even if it does work for you sometimes, it probably won't work more than it will.

So, if you're not going to react to the urge, and you're not going to resist the urge, then what the heck are you supposed to do?

Well, you can allow the urge to be there.

You can let yourself be in the discomfort of the urge, open yourself up to it, and talk yourself through it, calmly.

Does that sound like a terrible idea to you?

It might if the thought of feeling uncomfortable sounds awful to you.

But hear me out.

Learning how to be in discomfort is one of the most important skills you can acquire in life.

Not even just to stop binge eating, but with anything.

My first coach always said, “Discomfort is the currency to your dreams,” and I really believe that.

You want to achieve your dreams, you want to achieve big goals, you gotta go through discomfort.

You want to stretch yourself and grow, you’re going to have to get uncomfortable.

And if you want to get through an urge to binge without bingeing, then you gotta be willing to feel uncomfortable.

If you're willing to feel discomfort, then there is no need to run to food to make it go away.

You can feel it, get through it, and once the urge passes, that’s when you’ll feel better.

So you can learn to experience the discomfort or you can eat to escape it.

Either way you're going to feel uncomfortable. Once you feel that urge, you can either feel uncomfortable while feeling it or you can feel the discomfort of having binged. You get to choose which discomfort you feel.

Now, if you are going to allow yourself to feel the urge, without eating, without bingeing, there is something really important that you must do.

You must think calmly, encouragingly, and supportively to yourself.

If you're feeling that urge, and you’re thinking the urge is too powerful, or that you can’t feel it, or that you shouldn’t be feeling this way, or that you hate it, or that it’s too uncomfortable, or that you’re gonna binge anyway, then this is not going to work. These are resistance thoughts, you’re resisting the urge, you’re fighting with it, and those thoughts will cause you to feel frustrated, annoyed, powerless or out of control. Then of course when you feel those ways you're likely going to just give up and binge.

When you think that way while feeling the urge, you’re making your experience of it more uncomfortable. You’re making it into a more difficult experience.

Let me give you an example of how this works but in a different type of scenario.

Say you've brought a little boy, a toddler, shopping with you. He's hounding you to buy him candy and he will not stop. You start feeling really aggravated and argue with him, telling him to stop, telling him no, but that just makes him argue back and whine more. Finally, just to shut him up, and so you can stop feeling so aggravated, you buy him that candy even though it’s not what you really wanted to do.

That toddler, is your binge urge. The urge hounds you to binge, if you argue with it, you get more aggravated, it just gets louder and more intense, so you finally just give in to it and eat to shut it up even though it's not what you really want to do.

But what if you just allowed that little boy to do his thing. If you just stayed calm, telling yourself that you can get through this, that this will pass, that you're okay, that he's just being a kid, and you let him hound you and let him be a whiny kid. Then you leave the store without buying him candy, just as you wanted to, and eventually he gets over it and quiets down.

That can happen with your urge too. If you can calmly let it be there and you don't react to it, don't argue with it, and commit to your decision that you will feel it and not binge, it will go away eventually.

You don't have to fight it, or argue with it, or resist it. You can just let it be there. It's just a feeling. You're just feeling sensations in your body. It's not going to harm you, you are safe, and you are capable of feeling it.

The key here is staying calm and not reacting. That's where your thoughts come in.

Your thoughts cause your emotions. What you think with determine how you feel. So with your thoughts, you'll create calm for yourself or you'll create aggravation, frustration, annoyance, fear, panic, or powerlessness. You decide what emotion you want to create while feeling that urge.

And it's going to be so much easier to get through it if you're creating calm, are encouraging yourself, and are supportive of yourself.

You can create those feelings by telling yourself thoughts like....

I can get through this.

This is just a temporary feeling.

This will pass.

I can feel this discomfort.

I don't need to eat.

I am not going to eat.

I will be okay.

I am okay.

I am feeling this.

And thinking that way can help you to get through the urge.

The urge is not more powerful than you. You're the one who gets to decide what to do with your urge

up in your higher brain. You get to decide how you respond to the urge, what decisions you make, and how you talk to yourself while you're feeling the urge.

So you're not trying to force the urge away, you're not trying to ignore the urge, and you're not just giving in to the urge.

You're helping yourself to calmly go through the urge, you're going to commit to your decision to feel it without eating, and as you do that, the urge will decrease in intensity and quiet down, just like the toddler will.

And as it does, it will be so much easier for you to not give in to it.

Now, I do want to say that getting through an urge when it's really intense is going to be challenging. When emotions and urges are intense, it's harder to think rationally and logically and to be calm and encouraging.

But it's not impossible.

It is possible that you can get through it without bingeing.

But, if you are typically feeling really intense urges, then what I recommend you do is to work on decreasing the intensity of your urges, which you are absolutely capable of doing.

Our urges aren't intense just because. There's a reason. And it's related to what you're doing that is causing the urges in the first place.

As I mentioned before, you feel the urges because you're being overly restrictive with food or because you aren't willing to feel your uncomfortable emotions and use food to deal with them, escape them, numb them, change them, and to feel better.

The more restrictive you are with food, and the more eager you are to escape or change your emotions, the more intense your urges will be.

So, on the flip side, if you are less restrictive, and if you are willing to feel that emotional discomfort and actually work through it, then you won't feel such a strong urge to eat. You'll be taking care of your needs and wants on your own, and won't feel the need to eat a lot of food.

You have more control over how intense your urges are than you might think.

You also have more control over whether or not you binge when you feel an urge than you might think.

You are capable of managing those urges. They don't manage you, you manage them.

So here's the breakdown of how to manage an urge.

Notice the thought errors that come with the urge. These are just sentences that pop up in your mind encouraging you to binge. There's no need to make a big deal out of them and you also don't have to comply. You can just dismiss them.

Then decide to feel the urge. Yes it's uncomfortable but, it will be so worth it. There is no feeling you can't handle. Don't push it away, just let it exist.

Then decide what you want to think when you're feeling it.

Choose thoughts that will cause you to feel calm, encouraged, and supported, not anxious, frustrated, annoyed, scared, powerless, or out of control.

Keep calm and allow the urge.

It will pass. You can help it to pass. You don't need to eat to make it go away and it will go away much quicker if you just accept and allow it's existence rather than trying to fight it off.

You have the power to intensify or weaken your urges.

It all comes down to how you respond to them, what you think about when you feel them, and what you're willing to do.

Be uncomfortable until it passes, and it will pass. How long it will take can vary - minutes, hours, it's up to you and how you respond.

And, as final tip here, while you're feeling uncomfortable, think about what amazingness is on the other side of that discomfort.

Think about how good it will feel to have gotten through it. Think about how proud of yourself you will be. Because when you do, you'll give yourself more incentive to go through that discomfort.

Learning how to manage and get through urges is a skill that needs to be practiced for you to become good at it. And as I said, it's a skill that is ridiculously valuable not only for your binge eating, but anywhere else in your life where you find yourself consistently reacting to urges whether it be with drinking, shopping, procrastinating, or even checking your phone.

Doing this work is absolutely something you can do on your own but if you find yourself having a difficult time or find it to be too challenging then I want you to consider doing this work with me. It can all be done more quickly and easily if you have someone who is knowledgeable and skilled in this process and who can help you see obstacles and solutions where you may not be able to.

You can learn about how you can work with me by clicking the link in the show notes or you can go to [coachkir.com](http://coachkir.com) and click on Work With Me in the menu bar.

Have a wonderful week, feel those uncomfortable urges if they come up, and I'll talk to you next time! Bye bye!