

# THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

*with Kirstin Sarfde*

## Ep #8: How Your Thoughts Affect Your Eating

Hi! How's it goin'? I'm so good over here. It's officially autumn and I couldn't be more excited! I lived in California for 13 years and if you know anything about that state, you know there aren't really any seasons. So now I'm back in my hometown in Massachusetts and I'm gonna get chilly weather and foliage so awesome, I can't wait.

Alright, in today's episode, I'm going to be talking with you about your thoughts, what goes on in your mind before, during, and after binges.

Do you even know? Do you know what you think about before, during, or after you binge?

Because, *everything* you do begins with a thought, and that includes how you behave before, during, and after binges and, why you do the things that contribute to you feeling urges to binge.

And here's how it works. You think a thought, it causes you to feel a feeling, and that feeling drives an action.

Here's an example:

You're feeling an uncomfortable emotion and you *think*, "I need to eat right now to stop this feeling."

That thought causes you to *feel* an urge.

That urge then drives you to eat and if you keep repeating the thought that you need to eat right now, you're going to keep feeling that urge and keep being driven to eat.

Thought – feeling – action.

Here's another example:

You've overeaten and now you're *thinking*, "My day is ruined so I might as well keep on eating."

Thinking that causes you to feel disappointed, or defeated, or like a failure.

Then that feeling drives you to keep eating.

See how that works?

Your thoughts cause feelings that drive your actions.

So, if you want to change your behavior, and change how you feel, then you need to change what you are thinking. You need to change your thought patterns, your thought habits. Working on your thoughts is going to be a big part of your work to stop binge eating and you're going to hear me talk a lot about your thoughts throughout this podcast because there could be so many different ones that are contributing to your binge eating and that are making it hard for you to stop binge eating.

Now, the first step for changing your thoughts is recognizing what your thoughts are. You have to know what you're changing if you're going to change it.

But a big problem is that most people have no idea what they're thinking and have no awareness of their thoughts.

For most of my life, I sure didn't!

I *had* thoughts, I heard myself, but I wasn't really paying attention to what they were.

It was like I was just talking to myself but not actually listening.

I had no awareness of my thoughts in general or before, during, or after bingeing because I didn't know I should. I didn't know how much it mattered.

But it does, very much, because as I said before, your thoughts are what begin everything you do.

Now, I bet most of you probably have no idea what you're thinking either.

You might not know what you were thinking the last time you binged, or what you were thinking after it, or what you were thinking that led up to the binge.

When I first ask people what they think about when they feel an urge, usually they say they don't know.

If this is you, why don't you know?

Well, there's two reasons why people have little awareness of their thoughts.

One is that a lot of our thoughts exist in our subconscious mind.

There's a lot of thoughts we can easily see that come across in language and sentences in our conscious mind, but there's also a lot going on in our subconscious, and this is actually a really good thing.

Everything you do requires thinking, but because you do so many of the same things over and over, you're no longer even aware of the thought that goes into them anymore. When you walk in a room and turn on the light, you're actually thinking multiple thoughts in order to do it, but you've just done it so many times that you no longer have to think each thought in your conscious mind. If you did, it would be, "open door, light switch is to the left, reach arm over to the left, extend index finger, lift up light switch, relax arm down." Could you imagine having to go through that every time you turn on a light? Thankfully we don't have to because all those thoughts have been designated into our subconscious so now it's all just quick and automatic.

We are estimated to think about 60,000 thoughts per day. Sounds like a lot doesn't it? It would be excruciating to have to consciously think them all day so it's pretty great that we don't even have to notice them.

Thoughts our brains have practiced over and over and have become good at get designated to the subconscious. This is where automation happens. No need to think all those thoughts to get some light, you can just go on light switch autopilot.

For you, you don't purposefully, or sometimes even consciously think all the thoughts that cause urges to binge or that get you into a binge, you just think what is habitual for you, what is automatic for you.

So although this automation is a great thing for us in most parts of our lives, when we're trying to break a habit, it can make it a bit more difficult.

When you're trying to figure out what is causing your bingeing, a lot of the time the thoughts causing it are subconscious ones, they're not existing out in the open in your conscious mind, floating around as clear sentences. You don't even notice them anymore. Therefore, you have to put in more effort to uncover them.

I'll show you in a minute how to do this, but first I want to talk about the second reason why people don't know what they're thinking.

It's because they're just not paying attention.

As humans, we have been given the gift of being able to look at our thoughts and think about what we think about. Other animals can't do that. All they can do is go off instinct and impulses.

We can look at our thoughts and actually see the cause of our feelings and actions, but most people don't do it. They don't take the time to hear themselves and listen to how they talk to themselves.

And it's really not their fault, this is not something we're taught to do. Like i said, I didn't know to do it for most of my life!

But it's so important to look at them because like I said before, these thoughts we think are the cause of how we feel, everything we do or don't do, and what results we have in our lives.

As soon as your brain produces a thought saying, “You need to eat a lot and now,” you feel an urge.

As soon as you think, “I can’t eat that food,” you feel deprived.

As soon as you think, “My body is disgusting,” you feel shame.

And what will you do when you feel an urge, or feel deprived, or feel shame?

I bet it’s not something you want to be doing.

So how do you find these thoughts causing all these feelings and behaviors in your life?

Start by doing what's called a thought download. This is a writing exercise where you free-write, without editing or judgment, and see what's going on in your mind. You let your mind flow freely and whatever comes up, write it down, even if you think it's silly or completely untrue or really embarrassing. If it pops into your head, write it down.

This is a fantastic way to uncover those subconscious thoughts. When you just let your mind go, you'll seriously be amazed by what you find within yourself and the best part is that once you know what's there, you'll know what to watch out for. You do a download, you see what's going on, you find your problem thoughts and then you can keep an eye out for when you're thinking them.

You can do this when you feel an urge to binge, after you binge, or really any time of day when you can make time to do it. I recommend it as a daily practice. I myself write most days, and it's sometimes only for a few minutes. There's so much insight into yourself that you can gain from it.

Just make sure you spend some time looking at what's currently going on in your mind. A lot of the time we like to jump into what we want to be doing or thinking or how we want to be, but before you can get there, you have to gain awareness of what's going on with you now, what you’re thinking now.

Then, once you’re aware of your thoughts, you’re going to gain awareness of how your thoughts are affecting you.

I want to teach you an amazing awareness tool that was created by Brooke Castillo at The Life Coach School.

It's called The Thought Model or simply just The Model and I've already shared it with you in some of the previous episodes of the podcast, and at the beginning of this one, but now I'm going to put it all together for you.

The first thing you need to do in order to use The Model is separate out the facts from your thoughts.

This can sometimes be the hardest part because so much of the time we think our thoughts are facts. But they're not!

Facts are things that we would all agree on.

Your thoughts are your opinion, your perspective, or your interpretation.

Here's an example:

The statement, "My body is fat and ugly" is not a fact. It's your perception of your body, it's your opinion about it. The facts would be that you have a body, it weighs x number of pounds, and you could also say you have x% of body fat or say that certain areas measure to be x number of inches. These are facts. They are things everyone can agree on.

Your body being fat and ugly is a thought. Someone could disagree with you. Someone else could use different words to describe your body. Someone else could be bigger than you and think you're thin or average, but not fat. Someone else could have the same body stats as you and not say that about you or themselves.

Here's another example. Say you ate a bag of chips, 15 cookies, and 3 bowls of ice cream. Those are the facts. Then what do you think about that? Was it way too much? Was it a binge? Was it disgusting? Was it shameful? Or was it super fun and satisfying? Now, I'm not saying it is or should be any of those but, I just want you to see that there are different ways you can think about it and the way you decide to think about it is up to you. Just know that the only fact is what you ate and your thought about it is your perception.

Now let's look at the whole Model and see why this distinction is important.

We start with the fact, or what we call the circumstance.

To show you how this works, I'll just say the circumstance is that you ate 3, 4 inch cookies. Facts.

Circumstances then trigger us to have a thought.

You might be triggered to think, "I blew it" or something like that.

Then, as you know because I've repeated it many times to drill it in, your thoughts cause your feelings.

You think, "I blew it" and you feel defeated.

Then our feelings drive our actions.

You feel defeated and then your action is to give up on yourself, don't even try to stop yourself, and just keep eating.

Then finally, your action creates your result, which ends up proving the original thought true.

After you eat more, you blow it even more. You might then look at that result you create for yourself and say, "See, I blew it."

You ate 3, 4 inch cookies.

You think "I blew it"

You feel defeated

You give up on yourself, don't even try to stop yourself, and just keep eating.

And you blow it even more.

So here's the breakdown of the components of The Model again:

You have a circumstance, which is a neutral fact that everyone would agree on.

That circumstance triggers a thought which is your opinion, perception, or interpretation.

Your thought causes a feeling, an emotion.

Your feeling drives an action, reaction, or inaction.

And your action creates your result.

CTFAR, circumstance, thought, feeling, action, result – The Thought Model.

Just so you know, I'll be posting this in the show notes at [coachkir.com/8](http://coachkir.com/8) if you want to check it out to get a visual as well.

Now, the reason why this Model is so amazing is because it helps you see the effect of your thinking in your life. You get to see exactly how everything plays out.

You also get to gain an understanding that it's never the circumstances of our lives that create our feelings, behaviors, and results, but our thoughts about them.

Circumstances are neutral. They don't cause us to feel or cause us to do anything. Our thoughts do.

You could have the same circumstance of eating 3, 4 inch cookies, think a completely different thought and then feel differently, act differently, and have a completely different result.

Here's an example:

The circumstance is that you ate 3, 4 inch cookies

You think, "I'm okay, it's not a huge deal, and I'll just stop and eat again when I feel hungry.

You feel at peace.

So your action is to stop eating and move on.

And your result is that you're okay and you've stopped at just that amount.

Now, I totally understand if this Model seems out of reach for you at the moment but, that's okay. I'm just showing you what's possible and showing you how different thoughts, in the same circumstance can create different feelings, actions, and results.

And this is important because we can't always change our circumstances.

You can't change the fact that you ate those cookies. But, after having done it, you get to choose what you think about it.

And what you think will actually have a greater impact on you than the circumstance of eating those cookies because your thoughts will determine what happens next for you.

So give these tools for awareness a try.

Do a thought download, pull out a thought from there and plug it into a Model. See where it leads.

Also, as you go throughout your day, stay aware. I hear this from so many people, and I used to do it too, that they just zone out, let go, and binge. Don't do that.

Stay conscious and aware of what's going on with you in your mind. Even if you end up bingeing, you should know exactly what you were thinking before it happened. It doesn't even have to be a big, juicy reason. Even if it's just, "I need to binge," that there is a thought that's going to cause you to feel an urge.

When you see a pattern of thinking, thoughts you find yourself thinking over and over again, and thoughts that keep showing up in your thought downloads, then you'll know a big piece of what needs to be worked on.

Then what's so awesome is that once you know what your thoughts are, you get to choose which thoughts you want to keep and which to work on letting go of.

Awareness is the first step towards change. You have to know what you're changing before you can change it. So start paying attention to what you're thinking since that is the main thing you're going to work on changing in order to stop binge eating. Do thought downloads, plug a thought into The Model and see what the result is, watch your thoughts throughout the day, before you binge, and after you binge.

What thoughts were going through your head before you binged, during, and after?

And see what your thoughts are causing you to feel and do.

Now I just want to remind you that I'm available to help you uncover your subconscious thoughts and show you how they're affecting you. Sometimes it takes a little digging and the right questions to get to them. And if you work with me I can help you to not only gain the awareness but also to change your thoughts. Your thoughts, your thought patterns and habits are changeable and that is what we will work on when you work with me. You can find the link to learn about how you can work with me in the show notes, on the show notes page at [coachkir.com/8](http://coachkir.com/8) or go right to [coachkir.com/work-with-me](http://coachkir.com/work-with-me).

That is all for today, have a fantastic week! Bye bye!