THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #386: Finding Balance With Your Eating

Hi! Today I'm talking with you about finding balance with your eating.

A lot of the time when people are making their eating decisions, it's either all about, or too much about, what they want *or* what the body wants.

So either they're mostly ignoring what their body wants or they're mostly ignoring what they want.

And usually over time it will go back and forth from one to the other.

At first, you might only eat healthy, nutritious food that makes your body happy. You might feel good in your body when you eat this way, your body really appreciates the nutrition, and it's possible your body might release excess weight if you're eating this way.

So it sounds like a really great way of eating. You're taking care of your body.

But what about your mind?

Do you love this way of eating? Does it satisfy you in your mind?

For a lot of people, they don't and it doesn't.

Yes they do like eating healthy but, they don't like only eating healthy and never eating something that's unhealthy or not nutritious. They want to be able to enjoy treats like the people around them are.

So when they're only eating in a way that makes their body happy, they're not entirely happy.

They feel like they're missing out, they feel deprived, they feel restricted because their desires aren't being met.

So at some point, they flip.

They're tired of eating that way so, they start eating how *they* want to eat and because they felt deprived of what they wanted for so long, they're likely not eating in moderation. They're eating a lot.

So now, they're eating way more for their mind without as much consideration for their body.

They're eating what they want, what satisfies them, regardless of how healthy or nutritious it is.

And they're happy but, their body isn't.

Their body doesn't feel so good anymore. Their energy and mood isn't what it was and actually, after awhile, they're not even happy about it anymore.

So after a period of eating for themselves, they go back to eating for their body.

And the cycle repeats.

I've talked with so many people who have experienced this and I have for sure experienced this myself so many times.

I tried to eat only nutritious foods so I could feel good and lose weight and for a period of time, it was easy and felt good. But then, I started urging for a change, urging for something different, for something more satisfying.

And I'd flip. I'd go in the complete opposite direction. I'd care way more about satisfying my cravings and urges than I did about taking care of my body.

And yeah, I'd be happy while eating that food but, my body wouldn't.

After doing that for a period of time, I'd get tired of feeling so physically bad that I'd vow to go back to only nutritious, healthy eating.

And the cycle would continue.

What never occurred to me during those times, was to find a middle ground.

I was all or nothing, and it was mostly because I wanted to lose weight, quickly, and thought that if I could just buckle-down and only eat nutritious foods then it would happen.

But as I described, that's not what happened since at some point I'd start feeling urges to binge on what I hadn't been allowing, and because I saw it as only temporary, I felt an urgency to eat a lot before I stopped allowing myself to eat it again.

I thought I was doing the right thing by prioritizing my body in that way but, I wasn't, because my mind was suffering.

So I worked on finding the right way for me.

I worked on finding a balance between the two.

And that's when the back and forth stopped.

When I took care of both my mind and body, I got to feel better in both my mind and my body.

So, what do I mean by "balance?"

I mean finding a way of eating that satisfies both you, in your mind, and your body.

There's no specific percentage, so it does not mean 50/50 so you're eating 50% nutritious foods for your body and 50% non-nutritious foods for your mind.

We all have different food desires in our mind. We all have different bodies that react differently to certain foods and amounts of foods.

So balance will look different for everyone. What balance looks like for me might not be what it looks like for you.

So that means you're going to find a balance of eating for you while still considering how your body will feel, eating for your body while still doing your best to choose foods you actually like rather than foods you don't just for the sake of health, and hopefully you're also eating foods and amounts that are great for both you and your body at the same time.

There are going to be times when you're eating a food that's not nutritious, because you want to, and the balance comes in when you're considering your body and are choosing to eat an amount that won't make your body feel bad and then also taking care of your body's needs soon after with the next meal or snack you eat.

There are going to be times when you're limited with your choices and you're going to eat just to fuel your body but, the balance comes in when either you're finding something that you don't dislike, even if you don't love it so you're not completely dissatisfied or, you're eating just for fuel but are then going to make sure you eat something satisfying for your mind the next time you can.

And there are going to be times when you're eating foods and amounts that both you and your body love, and that's the most beautiful balance. It would be great if that was how it was all the time but realistically, it just won't be. And that's okay because you're going to practice balance in the other two ways I just mentioned too.

So your mind and your body are always being considered but, sometimes you might lean more toward one or the other and that's totally okay as long as you're leaning more toward the other soon after.

It's like you have this seesaw and even if you start moving away from the balance point it's okay, you're just going to make sure you move back afterward.

Now again, where that balance point is is going to be different for everyone.

And this is why I can't just tell you what balance will look like for you or how much of what foods you should be eating and when.

I really wish I could but, it's something that you're going to experiment with for yourself.

But I will give you some ideas that can help you to find balance for yourself.

When you eat foods that aren't nutritious, pay attention to how they feel in your body.

But also make sure you're paying attention to how different amounts feel in your body.

So often people tell me that they don't feel good when they eat certain foods but when I ask them how much they usually eat, it's a lot.

So of course that's not going to feel good.

But how would it feel if you ate less? Might it feel okay? Maybe. There's only one way to find out.

So you can find the limits for your body. How much and what feels good and what doesn't.

You're finding the balance of how much of the foods you like, particularly the non-nutritious ones, you can eat while still feeling good in your body.

You can also add non-nutritious foods to your nutritious foods to create a balance.

That could mean that you add non-nutritious foods to a recipe or you could add non-nutritious foods on the side, like having a salad with a side of fries.

So you're compromising and eating foods that satisfy both your body and your mind.

And like I said before, compromising can also mean that you're eating just for your body at this meal but you'll make sure to include something for your mind at the next one.

Finding balance is so much about learning what foods that aren't nutritious, and what amounts, you can eat while still feeling good in your body.

And also learning what foods, both nutritious and non that you like to eat and making sure you include them in a satisfying amount.

Now, you might worry that a satisfying amount might mean a lot of food.

You might think that you can't be satisfied with a moderate amount of food.

And you might say that it's because of how you've seen yourself be in the past. You've seen yourself not be satisfied and need more.

So often we use the evidence of our past to determine how we'll be in the future.

But for you, I bet a lot of the time when you were unsatisfied by a smaller amount it was during those back and forth times.

And that's not an accurate depiction of what it will be like for you when you find this balance for yourself. When you are in that balance, you can be satisfied with less, with the amount that still feels good in your body.

This is because when you're eating in a balance that works for you, you'll so often be eating foods you love so you won't feel such strong urges for a lot. When you get something all the time, it's so much easier have a smaller amount while when you never get something, you want a lot of it while it's available.

And when you know that this balance of eating the non-nutritious foods sometimes is going to be so much better for your mental health then you'll know that you're not doing anything wrong so then you won't feel guilty.

You'll be so much more relaxed, you'll know that this is actually so very right for you.

And, when you are living in this balance, you'll notice that you might have more equal desire for nutritious and non-nutritious foods. I've worked with so many people who tell me they do like and want to eat nutritious foods. But they also want to the non. Living in the balance, when it's truly balanced for you, will take away the strong desire to eat a lot of unhealthy foods, the strong desire to only eat healthy foods, and you'll have a much more relaxed approach to both.

Now, what can make it hard for you to find, or even experiment with finding the balance is fear.

Fear of gaining weight, of not losing weight, of bingeing.

But tell me this. When you're not balanced, what happens? Likely, one of those things you're afraid will happen.

Not being balanced is actually what causes the negative outcomes.

So be open to giving this a try and when you do, it's so important that you are mentally on board with this.

It's not going to work if you keep telling yourself you're doing something wrong by not choosing the nutritious option, or shouldn't eat a food that's not nutritious, or can't eat what you want.

You're allowed to make whatever choice you want to. Every food, every option is on the table.

And again, you're going to keep balance in mind which means you're going to keep your body in mind when choosing foods you want to eat and you're going to keep your mind in mind when choosing foods to fuel your body.

Both your body and mind matter. Consider both. Satisfy both as best you can.

And remember that you don’t need to be perfectly balanced all the time. The balance will shift, and it’s okay.

Think about the seesaw – if you go off balance, if you go too far to one side and the seesaw isn’t perfectly horizontal, you can get back to the balance point. You don’t need to panic. This is okay. This is how balance works with eating.

The goal isn’t perfection, it’s more about re-centering.

You’re gonna go off-balance sometimes. Don’t give up on yourself if you do. Don’t make it mean anything negative about you if you do. It’s normal.

You went over in this direction, now you’re going to go back to center. That’s it.

Balance with your eating is about the big picture, not every single moment of eating. You can balance it out.

And one last thing I want to say about balancing it out.

You are not going to overcompensate.

You’re not going to go from one end of the seesaw to the other. That’s the back and forth I was talking about in the beginning.

What that means is that you’re not going to go from eating too much non-nutritious stuff for your mind and then remove all that and only eat healthy stuff for your body, cutting out what satisfies your mind.

You’re going to go back to center, to the balance point to balance the seesaw.

So think about balancing the seesaw rather than running back and forth.

That’s what going to help you create peace, satisfaction, and relaxation with food.

Alright, so, experiment with what balance is for you. Try different foods and amounts and make sure you’re giving yourself unconditional permission to eat those non-nutritious foods. It really will be so much better for you in the big-picture if you eat them sometimes. Forcing yourself to never eat them, or rarely eat them, will likely eat you up inside your mind and cause a backlash that you don’t want.

Do your best to satisfy both your body and mind to stop that back and forth cycle.

And when you find yourself at one end, just go back to center. Don’t run to the other side.

Alright, that is all for today, do you best to find balance in your eating today and I’ll talk to you next time. Bye bye.