THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #387: How Your Past Can Help You

Hello! Today I'm talking with you about your past.

A lot of the time, when it comes to binge eating, people think about their past and negative emotions come up.

They think about how long they've been bingeing.

They think about how their body used to be, compared to how it is now.

They get mad at themselves, they feel sad, they feel ashamed.

Thinking about their past can be an uncomfortable experience and when it is, it might actually contribute to overeating and binge eating if they feel so bad about themselves that they eat to feel better, or just give up on themselves because they don't think they can change anything that they've created in their past, or they are so desperate to change that they go to drastic measures, overly restrict their eating, and end up perpetuating their binge eating and end up recreating what they created in the past.

Of course, dwelling on the mistakes of your past and getting mad at yourself about what you did in the past is not useful.

It's not going to motive you, it's just going to make you feel bad about yourself and when you feel bad about yourself, you're likely not going to take positive action to improve yourself.

It's also not at all useful to tell yourself that your past is evidence for what will happen in the future. Because, it's not. You can do differently in your future and create different outcomes.

So what I don't want you to do is use your past as a reason why you can't stop binge eating.

Don't think about your past mistakes and binges and make them mean that you can't do it.

The self-doubt that you'd create from doing that is just going to make it so much harder for you to be successful.

Now, with all that being said, thinking about your past doesn't have to bring up only bad memories and negative emotions.

And it doesn't have to derail you.

Because, there are actually some things in your past that can help you to do better.

They are there if you look for them.

And today I want to help you find them.

Starting with this one.

It is so easy to find what you did wrong in the past. But what about what you did right? Do you ever look for that?

I would bet that your past isn't filled with only fails. I bet there are successes in there too.

And when you take the time to actually acknowledge those wins, without downplaying them, you're going to do two things.

You're going to feel good about yourself and build confidence in yourself.

Both of those sound really great, right?

When you're only thinking about your past fails, you're not going to get that. You'll get the opposite. You'll feel bad about yourself and lose confidence.

So think about what you did right.

Because when you feel good about yourself, you'll be setting yourself up to do more good for yourself.

So think about the times when you didn't binge for a period of time, when you went through an uncomfortable emotion without bingeing, when you weren't so hard on yourself, when you didn't binge on a food that you've binged on so many times.

Those thing matter. You did them. And if you did them before, you can do them again, you just need to learn how to repeat it.

But you having done those things shows you what you're capable of. Be proud of them.

And you can use those things in your past to help you create a roadmap for your future.

Here's what I mean.

When you do look at what you did right in your past, and also look at what worked well for you, you get an idea for what you can do now to help yourself.

Like I said, if you did those "right things" in your past, it shows that you're capable of doing them.

Rather than looking at your fails and saying that you will keep repeating them, what about the successes?

You can keep repeating those.

If you did it before, you can do it again.

So you can use your past successes to show you what you are capable of.

That time that you felt an urge but didn't binge, you proved that you are capable of not bingeing when you feel an urge.

That time you ate that food without bingeing on it? You proved you are capable of not bingeing on that food.

That time you felt an uncomfortable emotion and didn't eat to escape it? You proved you are capable of feeling discomfort without bingeing.

How great would it feel to think about those things? So great, right?

Do that for yourself. Use your past successes to prove something good to yourself.

And here's something else about your past.

Those mistakes, those binges, the fails you had, those can also be useful.

When you don't dwell on them, or beat yourself up about them, or get mad at yourself for them, you can actually use those to help you.

They can teach you lessons. They can show you what doesn't work. And that can be helpful.

Too often, we do things that don't work and we either get mad at ourselves for them not working for us, or we ignore that they're not working and keep trying them, which is so frustrating.

I did that for so long with my calorie goals and lists of foods that I would not buy.

I ignored the fact that neither of those actually helped. So I kept doing them, kept failing at sticking to them, kept bingeing, and kept getting frustrated.

But what would have been way more helpful would have been if I had explored, deeply, why they didn't work.

Now, I can imagine that I would have probably said I wasn't trying hard enough. But that wasn't the problem.

If that's what you think about yourself, then please listen to the previous episode I did, #384, about just trying harder.

The problem wasn't that I wasn't trying hard enough, the problem was that I wasn't handling my emotions and that I was being too restrictive with food.

That's what I really needed to learn.

Now, I didn't have the guidance or knowledge that I needed to know then. One of the reasons why I created this podcast and do the coaching I do now is to be the person I wish I had when I was bingeing. So I do hope that listening to all the episodes of this podcast has helped you to learn about yourself the way I wish I had been able to learn about myself.

But anyway, I needed to learn what wasn't working and why so I could then find what would work.

We're not going to search out other things to do if we think that what we're doing will work.

I kept going back to those things because I was so sure they were the solution. Yes there were times when I would search the internet for other ideas but I kept going back to those because for a long time I wasn't able to find something that made more sense to me.

So, look into your past. What have you been trying to do that isn't working? What has failed you? What doesn't help you like you think it should?

Once you find that, you can either tweak what you've been doing or thinking to help it to work or, you can explore other options.

But at least knowing what isn't working can help you to move forward.

And if you're anything like me, there's definitely something you can find that's not working.

And when you can honestly see that it's not working, even after trying different versions of it, even after tweaking, it's so much easier to let it go.

I wish I had seen earlier that no matter what calorie goal I set, whether it was high or low or in between, that it didn't help me to stop binge eating.

I wish I had seen sooner that my do-not-buy lists didn't help me to stop binge eating.

But thankfully, eventually, I saw it. And it opened me up to what would work.

So often when I'm coaching my clients, that's where we start. We take an honest look at the whole story of what they're doing. And when they can see that they're not getting the results they want, that's when they're ready to try something new and let that go.

There's a thing, or things that haven't worked, but something else will.

Knowing what didn't work in your past can help you to move on to something new.

And the last thing I want to talk about is how your past can help you grow as a person.

All of us have done things we're not proud of. All of us have made mistakes.

All of us have binged...many times.

And one of the most important things we can do after having done what we've done in our past is to understand ourselves, forgive ourselves, and have compassion for ourselves.

I've worked with so many people who are lacking all three of those things.

They look to their past and are so mean to themselves about it, like I talked about at the start of the episode.

And it could be something they did years ago, something they did for years, it could be something they did yesterday or an hour ago.

But one of the best things we can do for ourselves is to practice understanding, forgiving, and having self-compassion.

You can use your past to practice all of those.

And you will have such a better relationship with yourself, and feel so much better when you do.

You'll get to let go of anger, shame, embarrassment, sadness, so many emotions that I bet you don't want to carry with you.

And the more you practice doing this with your past, the better you get at it.

So, your past doesn't have to be something that you dwell on and feel bad about. It also doesn't have to be something you use against yourself.

You can use it to help you understand yourself, strategize better for the future, practice treating yourself more kindly, feel good about yourself and build confidence.

Your past can be a really helpful tool if you use it right.

So start using your past for good more.

Alright, that's all for today, I'll talk to you next time. Bye bye.