

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #398: Eating When “Nobody Will Know”

Hello! Let’s jump right in and talk about eating when nobody will know.

For most people, their bingeing happens in private.

I know for me, there were definitely times when I’d engage in binge behavior when I was around people, but I was sneaky about it, and once I finally had the chance to be alone, I would just go for it and turn it into a straight up binge.

But mostly, my binges happened when I was alone and from what I’ve observed, that’s how it is for most, if not all people who binge eat.

Some of the time, binges are intentional, meaning that there is this intention to eat a lot of food from the get go and some of the time they’re not intentional and they end up being what I call “snowball binges.” What I mean by that is that you start with the intention of just eating one thing, but then you go back for more, and more, and more and it snowballs into a binge as the amount of food and speed of eating increase.

In today’s episode, I’m talking more about those times when it’s intentional that a lot of food is going to be eaten.

Because, this is your chance to do it. This is your opportunity.

Because, nobody is going to know.

And I want to talk about that reason behind the eating – that nobody will know.

Like I said, this is usually a thought that comes up when a binge is premeditated. That can be just moments before or days before.

It can happen for people sometimes when they live with someone - a roommate, a partner, family - and whoever they live with is going to be gone for a period of time whether its an hour, the afternoon, a day, however long.

So the person thinks that this is their opportunity because the person or people won't know. They can do it without the chance of them being caught, they can do it freely, they don't have to worry about being judged.

It can also happen when a person just leaves the room. They're gone, they've stepped away, I'm alone, so now is my opportunity to eat more without them knowing.

So why does this happen?

On the surface, it's because they don't want to be judged by the person, or the people who won't be there.

They worry that if they eat certain foods in front of them, or if they eat more food than the person saw them eat, or if they eat as much food as they really want to eat, then they will be judged.

So when that person leaves the room, they eat more food, or eat foods they wouldn't normally eat in front of that person.

Or when they're home alone, or even if they're out of the house alone because that can actually be part of it too, they're alone in their car or where ever and nobody will know what or how much they're eating.

So when they're alone, they don't have to worry about being judged so they do what they've been wanting to do, eat the food they've been wanting to eat, eat the amount they've been wanting to eat.

So basically, in whichever scenario, they're doing it now because they think they're avoiding judgement.

So let's talk about that for a second, judgement from other people.

There are for sure people who will judge what and how much you're eating. We can't deny that. And they may do it silently or vocally. And I get how hard it can be when people do this.

It sucks to be judged harshly for your choices.

Especially when it's coming from people you love and care about.

But unfortunately, we can't change other people and we can't make them stop judging us.

But that *doesn't* mean that you can't change this behavior of hiding your eating from them, and sneaking when they're not around.

Something that makes other people's judgements feel so awful to us is when we agree with their judgements.

So it's not just that they're judging us, it's that we are also judging ourselves.

Someone says, "should you really be eating that?" and then we think, "I shouldn't be eating that" and we feel so much guilt or shame.

But, what if that self-judgement wasn't there?

What if someone says, "should you really be eating that?" and then you think, "yeah, it's totally fine"? There's no guilt or shame because *you're* not judging yourself.

Now, there could be something like frustration or annoyance because you're tired of this person questioning what you eat and if there is, then I suggest you have a calm conversation with them about this when you're not feeling frustrated or annoyed. Communication is so important because they might think they're supporting you and are trying to help and have no idea how it's affecting you. So communicate that.

But when you're not being so judgy of yourself, then that guilt and shame won't be there.

Because it's not their words, their judgement, that makes you feel how you feel, it's your thoughts about their words.

So if you're trying to hide from their judgement, ask yourself, are you also judging yourself?

Because this whole "eating when nobody will know" could also be you trying to hide from your own judgement.

It's like you're letting yourself take a break from your own judgments and letting yourself just eat how you want to and what you want to.

But of course, you'll be back in your self-judgement once the eating is done.

You might be able to hide from yourself for a moment but you'll be back.

So if you want to get out of this cycle of hiding and judging, *your* judgements need to go.

Because when there is no judgement of yourself, there is no guilt, no shame, and no sneaking and hiding.

Other people's judgements won't bother you as much because you're okay with what you're doing.

So you can more comfortably eat out in the open and eat freely.

You don't have to wait until you get the opportunity to eat alone to eat the foods you want to eat and the amounts you want to eat if you're doing it all the time.

Now, when I say that, you might be thinking that the amounts you want to eat are not okay, they're excessive, are too much, and you don't *really* want to be eating that amount, even if in those moments of opportunity you actually do.

And I get that. I both wanted to eat excessively and didn't, that's part of the conflict a lot of us experience when we're in the cycle of binge eating.

If that's the case, I'd question why you want to eat that much.

It usually comes down to two reasons.

One is that you think that more food means more of whatever you're wanting, whether it be fun, pleasure, good feelings, comfort, relaxation, something like that, some kind of feeling or experience.

The other is because you are having a reaction to being too restricted with food.

So let's talk about each.

A lot of us have the idea that more is more.

I know I certainly did.

For me, I thought more food meant more fun. So I would buy a few different snack items, usually much more than just one serving of each, with the intention of eating all of them, as much of them as I could.

I thought that would be more fun than just buying one, or just eating a little of each.

But I'll tell you, I was so wrong.

Because really, when I was eating all that food, it may have been fun at first but it wasn't long before it wasn't fun anymore. I was just putting food in my mouth, chewing and swallowing. The pleasure was gone way before I finished the food.

And now, when I eat one food slowly and mindfully, and I really taste it and take my time with it, and I don't rush through eating it, it's so pleasurable the entire time. Even more than when I would binge on it.

In my program, I do workshops where my clients get to experience this first hand and it's so shocking to them when they have a similar experience.

We think more is more but really, less can be more.

It's like having a super fulfilling 3-day weekend where you're present the whole time vs having a distracted, fast-paced week-long vacation. I bet most of us would be so much more satisfied with that 3-day weekend than the week-long vacation.

Not because of the quantity, but because of the quality.

I want to share another example for this too.

We think that more food means more time eating but that also doesn't have to be true.

The other day, I had half a brownie leftover from the day before and I split it with my boyfriend. He ate his half in one bite. I ate mine in three. Guess who spent more time enjoying the food. Me of course. I got to enjoy it for pretty much three times longer than him, and we ate the same amount of food.

When you're eating when nobody will know, are you eating handfuls at a time, not even paying attention to what you're eating, and eating it fast? Or are you eating slowly and mindfully, and maybe less at a time? Guess which will create more pleasure.

More isn't always more, less can be more if you're doing it with intention and are present with your food.

Now, when it comes to eating more to keep yourself from feeling uncomfortable emotions, because the longer you're eating, the longer you get to numb, that's another issue.

That's showing you that you are resistant to working through your emotions so you try to avoid and escape them instead.

So if you're wanting to eat a lot because you're wanting to avoid a lot, then that's what you'll need to work on – your willingness to feel and work through your emotions.

Because when you're willing to do that, you won't have such a strong desire to eat so much food. You won't even want to eat an amount of food that seems embarrassing to you. You'll be taking care of your emotions without the food.

So then you won't have a desire to eat that amount in secret when nobody will know.

And if you want to learn more about being willing to feel and work through your emotions without eating food, I have tons of episodes that talk about different components of that but here are two you can start with:

#259 Describing Urges and Emotions

#359 How to feel better without eating

So that's the emotional side, now let's talk about having a reaction to being too restricted with food.

If you haven't been allowing yourself to eat certain foods for awhile, your desire for them can build.

You go from wanting them to urging for them, and you're not just urging for some, you're urging for a lot.

That's how we react to prolonged deprivation.

So that's where the desire for that much food can come from too.

And if you add to it that you won't allow yourself to eat them again after you eat them this one time when nobody will know, you're adding to your desire to eat a lot....because when this is your only opportunity, you're going to want to go big and take advantage.

This is why it's so important that you allow yourself to eat the foods you want to eat rather than constantly telling yourself that you can't.

And if you're resistant to allowing yourself to eat the foods you usually restrict, I get it. It can be scary because you might be afraid you'll gain weight or binge if you eat them.

But really, the bingeing happens when you *don't* allow yourself to eat them.

I also have tons of episodes about this topic too that you can listen to but I do want to share a couple that I did recently that think will be especially helpful with letting go of the excessive food restrictions.

#392 Why You Overly Restrict Your Food, and How to Stop

#388 What It Really Means to Have Unconditional Permission to Eat What You Want

But definitely go through the whole library of episodes for this podcast to find other helpful episodes about restriction.

So, if you aren't being overly restrictive with food, and aren't using food to avoid and escape your emotions, and see that less can be just as good, or better than more, then that desire to eat so much food won't be there.

So we need to be willing to work through emotions and allow ourselves to eat the foods when we want them so the desire doesn't build.

And, stop judging yourself for enjoying delicious foods and for wanting the amount of it that you want, and of course I'm not talking about the excessive amounts that I just talked through, I mean the amount you want after having worked through what I just talked about. The amount that you feel totally okay with.

So what if you want another piece of cake?

So what if you want 2 servings instead of just one?

So what if you want that food that full of sugar?

You're allowed to eat it, just like everyone else is.

And it doesn't matter what size your body is or if you're wanting to lose weight.

People your size are allowed to enjoy all the foods too and are allowed to eat amounts that are satisfying to them too.

And even if you want to lose weight, you don't need to deny yourself of what you want, and you'll actually be better off if you don't because that constant denial is something that leads to binge eating as I was just talking about.

If you stop your self-judgment, which is really the judgement that affects you the most, then you'll be more willing to eat out in the open, rather than saving all the foods for when nobody is around.

You can eat in peace, no matter who is watching.

You can more easily let people's own judgements roll off your back and not be so affected. You can let them think what they think, and you can be assured in what you think, knowing you're not doing anything wrong.

You'll also have less assumptions that other people are judging you.

So often, we think people are judging us when really they aren't at all, and maybe don't even care about or notice what or how much we're eating. But we think they must be judging us because we're judging us. So we're projecting our own judgements. We think that what we're thinking they are also thinking, but they aren't necessarily.

So if you're not thinking judgmentally in the first place, you won't assume they are too.

So I hope you can see what you're going to work on to stop this "eating when nobody will know."

If you're not judging yourself then it won't matter as much who will and won't know what you're eating. You'll eat freely, without guilt or shame, and be at peace with it...which will really make it so much more enjoyable because guilt really can take away enjoyment.

And don't forget to communicate and have calm conversations with anyone who does judge you out loud, and know that setting boundaries is an option as well.

And if you're allowing yourself to eat what you want more often, and are willing to work through your emotions, and eat more mindfully, you won't even have a desire to eat foods in such large quantities that seem embarrassing to you.

Okay?

Alright, that's what I have for you today, eat freely, and I'll talk to you next time. Bye bye!