

# THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

*with Kirstin Sarfde*

## Ep #396: Binge Eating Success Story: Yolanda Armstrong Hansen

Hi! Today on the podcast you are going to be hearing from an amazing woman named Yolanda.

She had struggled with binge eating since she was a kid and like with so many other people, throughout the years it was restriction, emotions, and body-image that contributed to it continuing on for so long.

She tried countless things to control her eating and lose all the weight she put on with her binge eating, and seriously, you'll hear her list out so many things, but although she did lose weight sometimes, and even significant amounts, nothing really stopped her bingeing.

Until now.

She finally did what really needed to be done – which was working on her thinking, on her mind.

And now, she has changed in so many ways, it's incredible.

That's why I want you to hear her story.

So, here it is, my conversation with Success Story Yolanda!

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Kirstin: Hello, Yolanda.

Yolanda: Hello, hello, hello, hello. So good to be here.

Kirstin: Oh, my God. I am so excited to have you here. This is going to be so awesome. There is so much good stuff for you to share, and I can't wait for everybody to hear it.

Yolanda: Thank you.

Kirstin: Yes. Yes. Okay. So we're going to get started by just having you tell us about yourself. Tell us about your background with eating and with food and binge eating and your weight, and just all of the things.

Yolanda: All the things. Yeah. I would have to say the most powerful memory that I have is at the age of nine, I went to the pediatrician's office with my father. And the doctor came in with the nurse. And he was like, "Mr. Armstrong, do you know that your daughter is 209 pounds?" And I remember vividly my father saying, "There is no way that my nine-year-old daughter weighs more than I do as a full-grown adult male." And we went back to the scale, and lo and behold, they tinkered over on the little metal scale, and it was 209.

And it was at that point where my father just had this all-out assault on overweight, obesity, fat, food, everything, exercise. Did I need more of that? Did I need extra of that? It just was his mission to make sure that our family was more active, that everything was healthy and clean, no fried foods, no fast food. I felt that I couldn't do anything, couldn't eat anything. And it just led into this spiral of just being very hyper-focused about my food, my body, my weight, because my father was hyper-focused. And so he, in his best intentions, wanted us to be healthy. But the message came out that I had to fit into this specific size and weight in order to be attractive, to be desired, to be attractive to my husband in the future. I just had to fit this mold, this standard of beauty. So I saw that in society, but then I heard it from my father. And I totally and completely understand that his intentions were pure and he wanted the best for me and for us. But I received it differently than my mother received it, than my sister received it. And so I internalized it and then started that shame cycle of hiding and sneaking and then just this onslaught of food and this war. It's sort of kind of like this push-pull. "I love it. I hate it. I want it. I'm not supposed to have it. I don't want my dad to see me eating it." And so it just became this avalanche of challenges throughout my life.

Kirstin: Yeah. So when would you say that the binge eating started? Did it start then, or did it start later in life? What would you say?

Yolanda: I remember vividly the age of 13, going on my first diet that I remember going on. I'm sure my mom and dad did things. But 13 was when I really remembered going on a diet and hopping on the scale at home and being really excited and getting praise from my father for losing the weight and looking better. And then I'd get to school, and I'd use my allowance. And I'd go into the school store. And I would just buy the things that I was craving because I was on a diet. And so I was missing out on certain things. And so I was like, "Okay, when I get to school, I'll have the burritos and the french fries and the this and the that and the vending machine stuff." And so that's when I noticed at 13 that I'm like, "I'm living this dual life trying to make my parents happy and sneaking things in my bedroom and my backpack. That's when it really started, when I started getting allowance. And then it just perpetuated and continued when I was on student council in high school and we worked this little

school store. And I was like, "Oh, okay. So I'll sell you some Twinkies and I'll take two for myself." And so I would replenish the school store money with my allowance. But that's when I really noticed it. I'm like, "I'll work in the store. I can do it." And so I looked forward to doing that because I knew I could get my stash that way.

Kirstin: So it sounds like a lot of what you were dealing with in your younger years was restriction. And that was what was contributing to the binge eating issue. Was it always a restriction issue throughout your life up until now? Or was it also emotion-related?

Yolanda: It was restriction because I knew that that's what my dad wanted me to do because I wanted to please him. And then we moved from New York City to a small town in Texas, and I was bullied and teased. And it became this best friend, this comfort. I was very much teased and ostracized. And it just became what I looked forward to enjoying at the end of the day. We stayed with my grandfather when we first moved to Texas. And so he had his own little penny candy store. And so I would just like, "Oh my gosh, I can't wait to get home and go into the candy store," and be able to soothe myself with the food and the sweets and the snacks and the treats that just was like this balm for me at the end of a day of being teased and bullied and people would pick fights with me just because I spoke differently. I didn't sound like I had this southern drawl from Texas and I had this New York accent and kids didn't like me. And so the food literally became this complete sense of comfort and safety for me. And I just would have these visions of sugar plums while I'm sitting in school thinking like, "Oh my gosh, I can't wait till I get home." So yeah, it really was this best friend for me when I didn't have friends at all. Food was there.

Kirstin: Yeah. And then that carried into adulthood, too?

Yolanda: Absolutely. It did. Yeah. And then when I was able to make my own money and I had my own car, it definitely was what I looked forward to doing after a stressful day. It just became my normal routine. And then the interesting thing is I was able to maintain my weight because I was bulimic. So the food, the extra food didn't really catch up with me because I was overexercising. I was bulimic for 16 years. So I was able to hide the food, keep my weight at a certain level when my dad thought, "Oh, great. She's doing a good job." And in the meantime, after our family dinners, I was always excusing myself and going to the bathroom and purging. And it wasn't anything that they ever thought about because bulimia at the time and anorexia wasn't something that people thought that little black girls were going through. That wasn't our issue. And so my dad just knew that that wasn't something that was affecting me. But little did he know it was. My mom didn't know. My sister, my brother, it just wasn't anything that people thought affected people who looked like me. And so I was able to fly under the radar for so long, and then it caught up with me.

Kirstin: Why do you think there's that kind of belief that little black girls don't experience something like that?

Yolanda: It's society. It's the media. It's 17 magazine. It's because my grandmother gave me a 10-year subscription to that magazine. And that also perpetuated my lack of belief that I fit in, that I wasn't thin enough, tall enough, that I just didn't belong because all of the articles and the magazines didn't talk about how this affects everyone. And although I'm sure African American females are a smaller percentage, I think more now. But back then, it wasn't affecting me, little girls that look like me, young African American girls.

And also, because there is this stigma that in the African American culture, it's not okay to be too thin. You need to have more hips. You need to have thicker thighs. And they don't realize that we can get caught up because I got caught up in that standard of beauty, the Cindy Crawford, the Naomi Campbells, the Nikki Taylors. I wanted to look like those models. And it didn't matter the color of my skin. I saw what society said was beautiful, and I wanted to achieve and obtain that at any cost. And I would exercise four hours a day, and then I would throw up at every meal. I did that for like 16 years until I started having heart palpitations in 2001. And I was like, "Okay, girl, you've got to stop." And I had a degree in nutrition because I was so obsessed with food. That's what I was going to study in college. And so I knew my electrolytes were off, and I knew what could happen. And I just had these visions of dying in the bathroom and somebody coming in and finding me dead from throwing up. And so I thought, "You've got to stop." And once I just made the decision, I literally, just like that, stopped throwing up. And that's when the onslaught of weight came along because my exercise was not able to keep up with burning off the amount of calories that I was consuming on a daily basis.

Kirstin: Wow. Wow. So it's kind of everything here where there's the restriction, and then there's the emotions. And then it's all tied to body image and trying to control your body and all of that. Sounds like you've experienced it all.

Yolanda: Yes, the full gamut, really. And then the self-deprecating thoughts and the loathing. And I remember I thought I wanted to go to medical school one time. And I was taking a Kaplan's test exam. And I remember being in that room going through a practice test. And I could not stop focusing on the size of my thighs. And I would look at the other girls around me. And I would look at their thighs. And I'm like, "I'm supposed to be taking this practice test." But as I looked down at the desk, I just couldn't stop focusing on the expanse of my thighs. And I got up and walked out of the-- I didn't have the bandwidth. That is how challenging and difficult and how my thoughts and my self-loathing just totally was so pervasive. I couldn't even sit through a practice exam. And so I just like, "This is really taking over my every waking thought." If I walk past a window, a glass, a car, I walk into a building, and I'm seeing my reflection, it just was all-consuming. It really, really was.

Kirstin: Yeah. So the all-consuming, pervasive thoughts about your body, this comparison to other people, how else was your binge eating negatively affecting you? And why else was it a problem for you?

Yolanda: Well, my gosh, it took such a financial toll. I was spending anywhere from 800 to 1,100 dollars a month on food and restaurants and wine because I had to have the wine with the meal. And I felt like I was an adult. And it really started to take a toll financially. And my lower back, I got hit by a car in an auto-pedestrian accident in 1989. So I always had a compromised L4, L5. And when my weight got to a certain threshold, it was difficult to walk. It was difficult to even exercise to lose the weight. So when I go to the grocery store, I had to lean over on the shopping cart because I couldn't stand up straight. And it just started to take a toll. I'd have to wear or put stuffed paper towels underneath my bra because I was just sweating profusely all of the time. I would have the indentations in my shoulders from where I would wear two bras or a sports athletic bra over my bra to just hold up my breasts because they were so heavy. It just became very labor intense to just move, get in my car. My seat was always leaned back because I wasn't comfortable in the seat. I had to get a seatbelt extension for my car. It just became a very untenable living situation. I was suicidal. I was like, "Something has got to give," because I felt caught up in this vicious cycle, like, "I can't get out of this." And I did so many different programs and different food plans. And it just all perpetuated the notion that this was just my way of life. And I was never going to be able to find a solution and a way out of it.

Kirstin: Why do you think those things that you were trying didn't work long-term?

Yolanda: Now I know that it's because I can't hate myself then. And that shame cycle and the restriction and the deprivation, it's just like a hamster on a wheel. It's doing the same thing and expecting a different result. And it's just like, "This isn't working." I didn't see it then. Then I just kept trying program after program after program. I have a list of like 200 and some odd different plans, pills, potions, programs. Susan Powter, Stop the Insanity, Richard Simmons, Deal-a-Meal. I mean, I did everything. I did Oprah's plan. Oh my gosh, there was so many-- fat burners, Hydroxycut, Bill Phillips, gym memberships, personal trainers. It all spent so much money. But it wasn't until I found you that I really started working on my mind. Everything else was food-focused. Here in Minnesota, there's the Emily program, there's Melrose, and everything just-- it didn't click with me. It didn't work with me and for me and what I needed. And then I just stumbled upon your podcast and just took a leap of faith. But it was a long, arduous road to get here. It really was.

Kirstin: Yeah. Well, why do you think you decided to sign up for my program and do the coaching when you did?

Yolanda: When I did. I stumbled, literally stumbled upon your podcast on Spotify. And so I just was scrolling through, found your podcast. I listened to another podcast, but you had a very contagious energy and this charisma that totally jumped off the page, so to speak. And I was like, "Oh, I like what she's saying. This is exactly what I'm dealing with." And I was listening to a-- I thought, "Oh, I'm going to start from one and go forward." And then I thought, "Maybe I'll start with something a little bit more current." And that's when I found listening more current that you were having a class start in August of '25. And so that's when I was like, "Let me just bite the bullet," because I'd done so many other things. I was like, "Well, I just might as well try something else," and spent so much money on videos and the firm workout DVDs, which are amazing, by the way. But I couldn't get the food part. And so I decided to try yours because of the reviews also. I read the reviews and what everyone was saying, "If you've tried so many other things, you've come to the right place because this actually works."

And so I read the long review-- I just read it over and over and over again. And I just decided, "Heck, I've tried so many other things. Might as well try this. And if it doesn't work, I'll just keep on searching for something that clicks." And this really did; it clicked.

Kirstin: Yeah. That is such an amazing quality about you, though, because there are many people who could be thinking the other way, "Oh, I've tried so many other things. I don't want to try something else. I might fail at this too," and already be down on themselves before even trying. But you have this drive, this resilience that keeps you going and keeps you believing that there is something. So let's try everything because there has to be something.

Yolanda: Something that will work. Yes. That's very true. My friend Fina, she says, "Yolanda, you just never give up. You never give up." I was like, "I don't. I won't. I will never give up. I will keep trying. I will keep searching. Something's got to work if I put it up in the atmosphere. Eventually, something is going to work for me. And I can be a testimony and help other people." Because I know there's so many people suffering, but they don't even know they're suffering with. They're just like, "I like to eat. It's part of my culture. That's what we do." It's like, "No, that's not okay." And so I really, really am grateful to be here and share my story because I know that it will resonate with so many people. And that's just sort of kind of what I want to do is to be able to tell the story and help other people get free.

Kirstin: Yes. So why do you think that you were so committed to this process and so committed to there being something that will work for you? Why do you think that you are that way?

Yolanda: Well, it's interesting. My father, even though a lot of the things that I'm working through stem from him, he would always say, "Yolanda, when you walk into a room, you have that it factor. You have something about you that commands attention, that draws people to you." And so I knew innately that I had a story to tell, that I had a mess. This mess, I'm going to turn into a message. There's going to be a testimony from my test. I knew that. I know I had that. And there was just something when I was an Overeaters Anonymous and 12-step programs. I just knew that being caught up in a shame-based philosophy and the restriction and the deprivation, that that wasn't going to work. It worked for other people, but there were just that-- I'd go to meetings, and I'd sit, and I'd talk, and I'd lose all this weight, and I'd give my story. And then I'd pick the food back up because I was deprived. And I was like, "This isn't working." I wish that I could do what other people are doing and say, "I'm going to stay away from it for the rest of my life. I haven't touched sugar in 40 years." I'm like, "Oh my God." I got married recently, and it's like I just didn't want to have to live that way. And so I just believed, "You have to be able to do it. Other people have done it. Kirsten did it." And if I just believe that if somebody else did it, then there is the capacity and the potential for me to do it as well. Because I had all of the success in all of these other areas of my life. Most people who are dealing with binge-- we're high functioning. We do what it is that we need to do. We take care of other people. We get the tasks done. I just wasn't able to apply how well I can apply myself in other areas to this. And I was like, "Well, she's got this podcast. She's doing it. So if I want what she's got, I have to be willing to do what she did." And so I just bit the bullet and jumped in feet first. And it wasn't easy. It wasn't easy because that default thinking of, "Okay, where's the weight-loss plan?" I know you said that there was no weight-loss plan, but I'm sure that's just to get us in the door. But now I'm here, "Where's the plan? [laughter] What's the calorie number? What do I need to do? Where is it?" And you're like, "Ah, yeah, no. That's not this program." [laughter] "Yeah. Oh, oh, okay. You were telling the truth about that. Okay." [laughter]

Kirstin: Oh, that's so funny. So what did you find to be the most challenging part of doing this work?

Yolanda: Getting out of my own way. Getting out of my own way. Because I went into this thinking it's going to be like everything else. And at one point, I had to tell myself, "Well, everything else up to this point hasn't worked. And so she told you from the beginning, in the modules, this is different than what I've done before." And I had to get out of my own way and really commit to doing what you said. And you've got this blueprint and this map where you're laying these breadcrumbs for us, and all I have to do is pick up the breadcrumbs and follow the trail and I, too, can have success. Like, "Is it that easy?" But then it's simple but not easy. And we've talked about that. I had to really work hard to get out of my own way and not lean on the default, which was diet and exercise and restriction. And the reason why it was also a good time for me is because I had just had left hip replacement and then I had rotator cuff surgery. So I couldn't be the physically active Yolanda that would try to override not weight loss right now. I'm going to do all the physical work, and I couldn't. Because I had a right hip replaced earlier in the year, left hip replaced at the start of the program. So I really was physically down and out. So it also forced me to focus on the mind work and the thought work, and that's where the battle raged for me. Because even though I couldn't move as much or as well physically, I still would have those thoughts of, "Oh, I'm fat I'm this, I'm that. I can't wait till my leg and my arm and I can lose weight and I can work out. And I'm like, that's still that diet mentality, that's still self-loathing and self-deprecating thoughts. And it was probably around two and a half months, month three, where I realized I've got to really dig in deep and fight really hard to run away from my own internal demons. Because even though I was miserable, that's all I knew was diet and restriction. And that's all I knew since 13. And it's been like I've been dealing with this for 40 years. And it's like, that's all I knew. And to be able to

finally, it took me three months of hearing and the group coaching and the one-on-one sessions. Like, "Oh, okay, I've got to do something different to get what I want." Okay. And so that's when it really kicked in for me. The last three months, I really focused on two things, which was allowing all foods, really, really allowing all foods and working on the negative thinking, befriending myself, saying good things about my body, loving myself, realizing I've had three surgeries in one calendar year and loving my body and recognizing that it is resilient. And it's there for me on the highest of my highs and my lowest of my lows. It bounces and it ebbs and flows. And it's like, "Oh, okay, so we're putting on 211 pounds. We lost 207. Now we're gaining to 11 back." And it's there for me. And it has been strong and resilient throughout all my highs and lows. And so I just decided I needed to become a friend again or not again. I needed to become a friend to my body because it's been there for me. And I just would always hate it and say negative things about it. And I just needed to shift that paradigm that you can't hate yourself then. That is one of the things that I realized. And so, yeah, allowing all foods and really starting to think about what I was thinking about when it came to how I viewed my body were the two main things that worked for me.

Kirstin: Yeah. So how would you say your relationship with yourself has changed through this process?

Yolanda: Oh, yeah. That is huge. I'm more kind to myself, more loving, more gentle, more tender, more compassionate. I would catch myself saying negative things about myself. I'm like, Yolanda, you would never say that about anybody else. So why are you saying that about yourself? And it was also wonderful. The two other members that you paired me with, Christina V. and Elizabeth M. We were just an amazing group together. And we just would continually support and reinforce that we are in it together. And so it just, I get so emotional when I think about where I was just six months ago compared to where I am now. But it was just really, really, really working hard to change my relationship with myself because that's where it starts. I'm with myself 24/7, 365. Yolanda is with Yolanda. And though that negative loop was so overwhelming and so where I am now, it's just more loving. I'm also more more aware of, if I'm tired, let me go to bed. Let me turn the TV off. If I'm full, let me stop eating and save the rest for later on or for dinner or for tomorrow. I stopped taking my GLP-1 because I wanted to befriend my body. I didn't want to believe that I'm going to have to spend all this money every month. And I really wanted to pay attention to my natural hunger and fullness. And with the GLP-1, it just wasn't allowing me to do that. I would just go hours without hunger. I'm like, "This can't be okay." And when I am eating in a day, it's so little food that it didn't sit well with me. Eating so little, I'm like, "My metabolism is going to slow down." I found that it was skewing my connection with my body. And so I'm like, "If I'm in this program and I'm not focusing on weight loss," and I had to stop my GLP-1 for my surgery. And so when I stopped taking it almost two weeks prior to surgery, I just kept on not taking it and just really started to better connect with my body. And so that's sort of kind of how the process evolved with me thinking better about myself and wanting to take care of my body and befriend myself and really work on this internal connection because that's where I felt that it had been missing, that I never really was a friend to myself, never loved myself, loved other people, did things for others, but never really applied that self-love and that self-care to myself.

Kirstin: Yes. Oh my gosh, what an amazing transformation for you.

Yolanda: Yeah, no, thank you. It's been wonderful. It really has. It's mind-boggling.

Kirstin: Yeah. What would you say is the biggest change that you've noticed in any component of this?

Yolanda: The biggest change that I have noticed is having a different relationship with food. It's like I did this song and dance where I would have all of this control over the food in front of other people,

and then I'd stop off at multiple gas stations and restaurants, and then I would just have all of this food on the couch, with the television. And it was this love-hate relationship. And the biggest change now is, okay, all foods fit. They really do. And I now look at it and it's like, "Do I really want that? Am I hungry for that? Do I want it right now? Am I full? How am I feeling?" And just really being able to look at it with this neutrality that I never was able to do before because it was like, "Oh my God, it's off-limits." Or it's off-limits in front of other people and then when people would leave, I'd just go in and I would shove all the free stuff in my lunchbox and make sure that no one would see me eating it. It was like I was having this affair. And I was this prim and proper pristine person in front of other people, and then I was just lusting after it and coveting it and stealing it and taking it and hiding it. And it just like, "Wow, I can be neutral." And that is something that I never have had. It's always been good foods, bad foods, healthy, unhealthy, and being able to, like you said, look at a Krispy Kreme donut, it's just like, "I'm just a donut. Don't blame me." [laughter] It's like, "It's right. It is just a little donut." And I would put all of the blame on the food. And so I was just like it is. It's just one donut. Like you said, one M&M isn't going to make you fat. One little donut is not going to make you fat. But when I hoard a dozen to myself, that's going to perpetuate this thought process of it's not allowed. I have to binge it because I'm going to go on my diet tomorrow, or well, no, not tomorrow. Tomorrow's Saturday. So let me just finish the weekend out and then the stroke of midnight Monday, I'm back on plan. Oh, but wait, there's something in my backpack. So maybe Tuesday, I'll start. I'm like, oh, I forgot about that. So maybe, well, let's just finish the week, and I'll start next Monday. I have my stashes here and my stashes there. And so I would just put it off. Oh, my gosh. I'm so grateful to not be in that space anymore.

Kirstin: I think a lot of us can relate to that thinking. I know I can, for sure. So you wanted to lose weight right from the start of this. So what was it like for you to go through this and be told that you're going to put weight loss on hold and just focus on the binge eating, and you will lose weight later? We'll get there. But right now, we're going to focus on this. What was that like for you?

Yolanda: That was really hard because this was the first program that I had ever tried that weight loss was not the main focus because everything I'd ever done was weight loss-based. This plan, that plan, this gym, that gym, this program, this pill, this whatever, this potion. It was always about losing weight. And then that's when I got to a point where I was like, if you want what Kirsten has, you have to do what she did. You've only got this finite amount of time to really jump in. And that was why I decided to allow all foods, because that would help me move away from the weight-loss mentality whenever I wanted it, however I wanted it, as often as I wanted it. And then at the same time, which seems so diametrically opposed, that I'm allowing all foods and then working on loving my body because it's like, I can't do both at the same time. It's like, how am I allowing all these foods? Because it's like they're, air quote, bad foods in my mind. And I'm eating all the bad foods and loving my body as it is at the same time. But that is what you have to do. And so it was so vastly different than anything that I've ever done. And so I was like, well, you have to trust the process, Yolanda, because this is what she said worked for her. You're here. And I know that's some phrase about when the student is ready, the teacher will come. And I just really felt like, "Okay, you literally stumbled upon your podcast. I stumbled upon it." I just was like, "Oh, what's this?" And I was at a point where I was ready. And then at month three, I was like, "Okay. Allow all foods, Yolanda. Just go for it and work on loving yourself exactly as you are," because even when I had lost the 207 pounds, I was still caught up in how I looked. And I need to get from a size eight to a size six. And I got to a size six. I was like, oh, can I get smaller? Or if I'm a small, can I get an extra small? And so I still wasn't content with where I was. And so I said, "If I want to get there, I have to love myself exactly where I am now and enjoy the journey." And I had never done that before. I just always was steeped in looking at other people and wanting what they had and was disappointed that I wasn't there. So it's like, "Okay, I've got to really work on loving myself exactly

as I am." I say that I'm in my plus-size Barbie phase. And it's like, "Okay, I've got to love plus-size Yolanda exactly as I am right now." And that was really transformative for me because it just sort of kind of-- I felt like I was carrying the weight of the world on my shoulder of just this pressure of wanting to be somewhere else and wanting to get there in a hurry. And it's like, "I need to just enjoy the journey, and it's going to take time to work on my thoughts." You can lose the weight much faster than it takes to really hone in on the thinking because inevitably, I was losing the weight and still in this restrict binge or this deprivation mindset, and it would take over. Like we talked about, the brain is going to get what it needs eventually. And that's why I felt like, "I'm an addict. I can't stop. Why can't I not stop?" Well, because you've been restricting for so long, and that deprivation kicks in. And so I just didn't realize the cycle that I was caught up in. And so I just was like, "Okay, allow all the foods, and love yourself exactly as you are." And so those are the two things that I focused on to get me where I am.

Kirstin: So do you love your body now?

Yolanda: I have an appreciation for my body. I love my body, yes, because I know that it is strong, and it has been there for me. I love the strength. I love my muscle memory. I love its resilience. I don't love the extra pounds that I'm carrying, no. But I have this focus and this urgency. I'm sort of kind of this hyped-up urgency. It's not impatience like it used to be, but it's an important motivation and focus like I never had. I was thinking the other day, it's like, "Okay, Yolanda, you know that you are good at your job. You're a loyal friend. You are organized, diligent, persistent, resilient. In all of these other areas, it's now time to apply that to loving yourself and jumping 100% into the program and applying all of the wonderful aspects about who I am to this." And I never thought about that before. It's like I know that I'm phenomenal and fantastic in my job and all of these other areas. I need to apply that mindset to this. And it just never clicked that my high-functioning potential can be course-corrected to what I call this biggest obstacle like, "Why can't I do it? I'm so good and all these other things." And so now it's like, "Oh, okay. You got to work on your thinking first." And so that's where I am now and what I'm doing. And it's really liberating and freeing. And my husband and I are going to Florida soon. And I finally don't have those thoughts of, "Oh my God, what am I going to wear?" And it's like I'm excited to buy some outfits and some shoes and enjoy life exactly where I am right now on the journey because I just look at pictures of myself where I'm hiding, ducking behind somebody. Or as soon as I look at an image of myself, I'm like, "Oh my God, I look so fat." And it's like, "No, I want people to see, 'Oh, wow. She's got this new energy and vitality that I haven't seen.'" Because my husband met me when I had just lost to 207 pounds and I had arrived. And then in the course of two years, I put back on 211 pounds, and I felt like this farce and I was so full of shame. And so being able to accept that he loves me exactly as I am right now, I had to believe that for myself, if he loves me and all of my friends love me. And I remember I had this one coach. She said, "Yolanda, do you love people any less when they gain weight?" And I said, "Oh, no, absolutely not." And she said, "Then why do you think people love you less when you gain weight?" And I just cried.

And it's like, wow, I never really thought about it like that. I would never not love someone because they gain weight, but that's the restriction that I put on myself. And that really helped me in that moment. But then I got back into that shame spiral. But I will always remember that I don't love anybody less when they gain weight, and so why would I think that they would love me less? So that was very, very helpful for me. And it sort of kind of bleeds into where I am now, is that why am I loving myself less? Because I am heavier than I was.

I'm still the same person, the same personality, the same drive, the same determination. I'm still the same individual. Like you said, the circumstances, I have eaten more calories than my body was able to burn. And so I have to reframe what I think about that because I'm always thinking, "Oh my God, what

are you thinking about me? Oh, my gosh. I'm heavy. I shouldn't be eating that. Oh, okay." And so it's because it's what I think and I'm projecting it onto other people.

And so that has been a big game-changer, eye-opening moment for me, because I'm always comparing and thinking and worrying about what other people are thinking about me, but it's because I'm thinking that about myself and projecting my thoughts onto them.

Kirstin: Yes. So throughout this process, you have changed how you think about yourself in this body. You've changed how you choose to think about your body. So you're loving it for more than just how it looks. You're finding all of these qualities about your body that have nothing to do with how it looks. And you are loving these qualities, which is so important because our bodies are so much more than how they look.

Yolanda: Yeah.

Kirstin: As far as how your body looks, have you changed your perspective on that?

Yolanda: Yes. I had a doctor's appointment the other day and I grabbed this blouse and I put it on. I'm like, "Huh, that's a little bit more snug than I remembered it being. But that's okay. I have other blouses that I can wear." And in the past, that would have totally and completely derailed me. I would have been late for the appointment. I would have cried. I would have just been throwing clothes all over the place, and I would have gone into that shame spiral.

And I just thought, "Okay, you are setting healthy boundaries for yourself when it comes to joy foods, and you will get there," because my body has always been very responsive to whatever I've done. My body responds whether or not I'm overeating, it gains weight quickly. If I'm eating clean and healthy and moving my body, it loses weight very quickly. And so it's very quick to respond to whatever I do. And so I just remember thinking, "You are on your path, Yolanda, and your body will respond. So don't say anything negative. Hang it back on the hanger. Find something different and get to your doctor's appointment." And so that is an example of me paying attention to my thinking. It's like, "Don't go down the shame spiral. You are in a different place in your life right now." With the old Yolanda, it would have just been, "The day is a wrap," and then I'm like, "Well, I'm fat, so I might as well stop off at this place and stop off at that place." And I didn't do that. And so it's so refreshing. Every day that passes that I'm moving away from that old mindset and stepping into a new way of living and thinking and being and doing.

Kirstin: Yeah. So just a lot more neutral?

Yolanda: Yes. The neutrality, I've never had that before. Never.

Kirstin: Yeah. And I think that where you're at with your body thoughts is such a useful, great place to be, where it's, like we were talking about, loving your body for all these other qualities. And then as far as how it looks, we can just be neutral, as neutral as possible about that. We don't have to make it into this huge, shameful thing because a article of clothing is tight.

Yolanda: Exactly. And that's so new and refreshing. Yeah. It's a new paradigm. Oh, my gosh. Yeah.

Kirstin: Yeah. Oh, my gosh. That's so great. So what would you say to someone else who has been binging for as long as you were, was doing it as often as you were, and may have doubts about whether or not they would be able to stop too?

Yolanda: I would say trust the fact that others have done it and just believe that there is a smacking of hope that you can do it too because, what I was doing, I never did think that I would be able to be here after six months of just really, really working on my thinking. I would say trust the process and be willing to do something different because we have to get past our own selves because we can hold ourselves back so often because it's just fear of "other things didn't work, so this isn't either." And just be willing to take a chance on yourself and just never give up. Never, never, never give up. And it can be so hard to silence that negative voice. But what I would say is just believe that it has worked for other people and know that you have to work hard. It's not an easy process. The brain is wired in such a way where you have those pathways that are just highways, and you have to form a new route, and over and over and over again, just continuing to be patient and loving and kind. But just believing internally, don't let that fire burn out that you can do it. You just have to still find a way to believe in yourself and to trust in the process.

Kirstin: Yeah, I could not agree more, because that really is such a foundational thing in in this and with any big goal that we may have. And I agree with you, too, where we have to trust the process because you were talking about how it wasn't until month three that you were like, "Okay. We need to make some changes here. We need to really get on board with these kinds of things." And another person may have gotten there and been like, "It's been three months, and this isn't going to work. And I'm never going to be able to stop binging and all of this stuff." But that was very different for you. And that is why you were successful, that you stuck with it, you kept believing in yourself, you kept trusting the process. And even though it was hard, you kept doing it, anyway. And I want to encourage everybody, do the hard thing, because that is going to be the most rewarding thing. The things that we're so proud of in our lives, I bet most of us, if we really take an honest look at it, those things we were most proud of were probably the hardest.

Yolanda: Hardest. Choose your hard. I remember reading this book. Being overweight is hard, losing the weight is hard, maintaining the weight is hard, and choose your hard. And so I don't want the hard of going up the stairs and hearing my knees creak and my back ache. It's just the physical limitations and the ramifications of carrying that weight. My body was talking to me. And I'm just so grateful that I am now more in tune to what it's saying. And finally, she's like, "She's listening. She's listening. Finally. Thank you, Kirsten. She's hearing you. She's hearing me. She's hearing us." The knees, the shoulders, the neck, the back, it's just like, "Finally, we have an ally."

Kirstin: Your body's so happy now.

Yolanda: Yes, yes. And there's just so much energy and energy shift. My husband can see it. My sister can see it. My friends can see it. There's just this confidence that I have. And it's like, "Okay, I'm going to get there." And that is new. And it's just this lightness. Even though I still have a ways to go in my journey-- like I told you recently, I'm working on this. I have this notebook where I give myself a star if I go to bed early or if I drink a glass of water, or I turn a TV off, or I do my Legos or some adult coloring, anything that I can do to not necessarily focus on the number of pounds, but let me do a number of good things for myself. Because I got to focus on the small goal of one day, what can I do today? Because building these habits along the way will reinforce these good habits, and then the weight will come off when it's supposed to come off in due time. But I was constantly thinking about how many pounds I have to lose and it's like, "Just think about what good things you can do for yourself today and then do it again tomorrow and wash, rinse, repeat." And I'll get there like I got there the first time, but I just want my focus to not be so shame-based and so negative with such focus,

intense focus on the number of pounds that I need to lose. It's more, how many good things can I do for myself today to get a gold star? It makes a difference. It really does.

Kirstin: Yes. And most people have it backwards. I'm just going to lose the weight, and then I will stop shaming myself, stop being negative, and do good things. But it is so much easier when you do it the other way around.

Yolanda: So true.

Kirstin: Right? If we have the body neutrality and the love for the qualities, and are being kinder to yourself, kinder to your body, connecting with your body, doing good things for yourself. It makes it so much easier to not use food in the way that we previously had.

Yolanda: Absolutely. Absolutely. And one of the other things that I was thinking, I have been afraid to shine. Like And the thing about me is I'm always going to wear the makeup, the jewelry, the clothes, whatever size I am, I'm always going to be jazzy. And one of the things that I have struggled with is shining. I want to dim my own light because I'm worried about what you're thinking about me because I've lost the weight or are my friends going to be intimidated or uncomfortable or jealous. And it's because I was, when I saw somebody who'd lose the weight, I'm like, "Bitch, oh my God, I can't believe. Oh my God, I'm a fat ass. I can't do anything. We're never going to go out to eat again. Oh, God." And so I would pull away. And I now think that that's what people are thinking about me. And so whenever I would slim down, I would always be like, "I'm sorry." I just was so steeped in. I am not deserving of being happy and being attractive and being engaged and being in love and getting married and have somebody who adores me. I felt like I had to apologize. So I can't be good at my job and be in love and be thin too. No. So let's eat. Let's drink. And so I would put myself in this position where I was apologizing.

And I've been recently listening to Rihanna's diamonds and shine bright like a diamond. And I realized that I have been wanting to dim my own light to apologize. And I was like, I can't do that anymore because I am my own saboteur. And so I have got to shine bright like a diamond exactly as I am right now. Because my sister said, "Yolanda, there are people, you don't have to get to a goal weight in order for people to look at you and be motivated or inspired or want what you have right now. You think that nobody is inspired or motivated by you because you're in a plus-sized body." She's like, "But you've got to get out of that mindset and realize that you have personality, drive, desire, motivation, compassion, kindness, loyalty, and characteristic traits that people would love to have as you are right now. You are limiting yourself and thinking that, "Oh, it's when I'm thin that I'll be able to shine." And she was like, "You can shine right now exactly as you are and love yourself in the process."

And that is mind-blowing and mind boggling because I was like, "What?" Because I've always put these limits on myself that I'm not desirable. I'm not worthy enough unless I'm in a thin body. And it has really, really limited what I allow myself to do and think that I'm capable of doing. And so it's just sort of kind of breaking free from the shackles and this prison that I have put myself in for decades. And so it's just like this enthusiasm and this vibrance that I have that it's truly, truly new for me, a new mindset that I'm walking into. It's just mind-boggling and amazing. It's such a blessing.

Kirstin: Yes. Yes, it absolutely is. So is there anything else that we haven't talked about yet that you would like to share? Or any words of wisdom that you would like to share that you haven't already? You've shared tons.

Yolanda: No, I think what I really am so glad that I said it. It was don't dim your own light and don't apologize for your beauty and your charisma, your charm. Everything. Just embrace who you are and love yourself now would be my words of wisdom because that is what I have really started to embrace. And it really is making phenomenal monumental strides in just my outlook and just the pep in my step. There's a certain zip that I have. And so just believing in yourself and never giving up is one of the things that got me here and just like keep on trudging through. Keep on one step in front of the other.

Kirstin: Yes, yes, I love it. I love it. Well, thank you so much for being here, for sharing all of your story. It is so incredible. It is so incredible where you were, where you are now. Wow. Wow.

Yolanda: Yeah. No. Thank you. And recognizing that I am a success story. And this is part of my journey and just so excited that I am where I am and enjoying the journey, enjoying the process is new for me. So yeah, for sure.

Kirstin: Yeah. Yeah. You are absolutely a success story. I have no doubt. That is why you are here. I believe it, and you believe it, and it's true.

Yolanda: It's absolutely true. It is. It really is.

Kirstin: Yes. Well, thank you so much. Thank you.

Yolanda: You're welcome. Thank you.

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I told you she is amazing, and isn't she??

Her persistence and openness are so admirable and are a big reason why she is successful.

She has changed so much with her relationship with food and herself and her body and all that of that is what resulted in her stopping binge eating.

She did that, she put in the work, and it's paying off big time not just with how she's eating but how she's being in her life, her energy has noticeably changed, people can see it, I can see it, and she just feels so much better mentally and emotionally.

That's what all of this is about.

And I want you to remember what she said: believe in yourself and never give up.

And also remember that if other people have done it, believe there is hope that you can do it too.

Yolanda, and me, and all the other people who have stopped binge eating after doing it for years and years, we are not special. We are just people who finally did what needed to be done.

And that can be you too.

If you want to go through the process that Yolanda went through, and you want to work with me to stop binge eating, come join The Stop Binge Eating Program. Registration is opening tomorrow, on March 4<sup>th</sup> of 2026.

If you go to [coachkir.com/group](http://coachkir.com/group) you'll find information about the program, and tomorrow you'll also be able to register on that page.

If you have any questions that aren't answered on that page, feel free to send your questions to [info@coachkir.com](mailto:info@coachkir.com).

You can be like Yolanda. You can be a success story too.

And you can become one in this program.

Let's make it happen together.

Alright, I hope you enjoyed hearing her story and I'll talk to you, and hopefully work with you, soon. Bye bye!