

How to Manage Emotional Eating

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE REGISTERED DIETITIAN AT
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Emotional eating can be challenging. On some days, it can feel like you need every ounce of your willpower to fight off the urge to eat. And although each person's situation is different, there usually is a pattern of thinking and lifestyle factors that can drive emotional eating. This issue will provide a glimpse of how you can start to curb these unhelpful cravings.

Compassion Over Judgment. Emotional eating is often met with a lot of judgment from our own selves. "I was bad for eating that." "I should be eating healthier snacks." Do these thoughts sound familiar? When we put judgment and labels of good versus bad to our eating habits, this can often trigger emotional eating. This is because having overly strict rules of how we should be eating can lead us to eat in more extreme ways - one minute we are eating the perfect, healthy diet and the next we relapse back into the so-called bad eating. Instead of judgment, try to have compassion on yourself. Understand that there is an actual underlying reason that is driving the emotional eating. By taking some time to explore this in a non-judgmental manner, you will be able to tune in to your body and emotions and tackle emotional eating from its core.

Look For Clues. Take time to pause and listen to your body without judgement - not just when you feel the urge to eat but on a regular basis. Are you engaging in regular self care so that your body's basic needs are being met? For example, are you eating in a timely manner and are you eating enough? Are you getting enough sleep? Are you doing activities that you enjoy and make you happy? Are you



taking time to de-stress? These self-care activities are the foundation to start giving you a better sense of control around your eating decisions. When our body's basic needs are met, we have much better physical and brain power to deal with difficult situations that trigger emotional eating.

Mindful Eating. A quick check in before eating is helpful. Do you have any physical sensations of hunger? If so, listening to your body and nourishing it with food is important. If not, then what is the emotion that is triggering you to eat? Try some different strategies that address the emotion you are feeling. If you are happy, reward yourself with something that is not food. If you are sad, call a friend! Sometimes you may decide that eating is the only way to go and if that's the case, then proceed with eating...mindfully! Eating mindfully will keep you connected with your body and help you make a more intentional decision on how much to eat. See the next page for a mindful eating activity.

Sources: 1. Evelyn Tribole & Elyse Resche. Intuitive Eating. www.intuitiveeating.org



Mindful Eating Exercise

Ingredients:

Choose a food, snack or meal of your choice.

Tip: Initially you may want to practice this exercise when there are less triggers present. Set aside some time so you don't feel rushed, and start with practicing mindful eating when you feel more emotionally neutral.

Directions:

1. Start with taking a few deep breaths. Do a mental check in with your body. Do you feel any physical sensations of hunger in your belly? How hungry are you on a scale of 1-10? Do you have any particular cravings? Do you feel thirsty?
2. Engage your five senses as you slowly start to eat your food. How does the food look like? How does it smell? Is the food appealing to you? If you are eating with your hands, how does the food feel between your fingers? Slowly taste and chew each bite of your food. Pay attention to the sounds of your chewing and notice the texture of the food. How does all this change as you chew and swallow your food? Do you notice any new or changing sensations in your belly as you are eating?
3. Consider where your food comes from. Give appreciation for nature and the people involved with bringing this food to you today. Continue to check in on your hunger level as you continue to eat. If there are any distractions, try to bring your attention back to the food.
4. Continue to eat and chew your food slowly. Take time to savour the food and check in to ensure that you are enjoying what you are eating.

Sources:

1. Rossy, L. BASICS of Mindful Eating. Retrieved from www.tastingmindfulness.com
2. Photo by Kaboompics .com from Pexels