

Healthy Eating Tip of the Month

November
2021



Emotional Eating

Why it happens and
how you can
counter it

Common Triggers for Emotional Eating

Emotional eating is a very common coping mechanism that many people use to deal with stress and other negative emotions.

It may be triggered by:



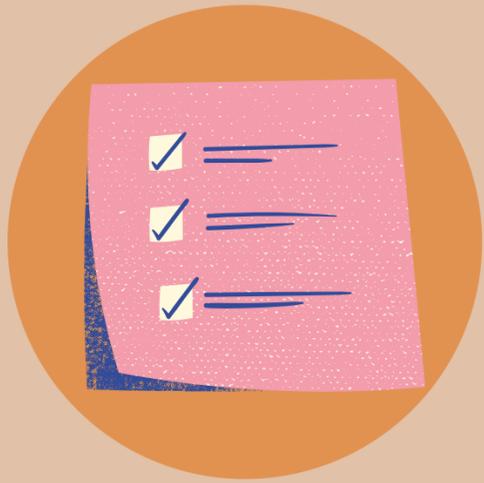
Financial worries



Health issues



Relationship struggles



Work-related stress

How to determine if your hunger is physically or emotionally driven:

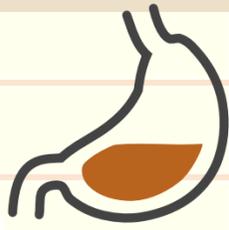
Physical Hunger

Develops gradually

Any food will satisfy you

You become full and stop eating

No negative feelings follow



Emotional Hunger

Comes on suddenly

You crave certain foods

Ignore your body's cues for fullness

Guilt or shame follow



Emotional eating can lead to feelings of shame and guilt, which can further feed into the cycle of overeating.



The combination of negative emotions and accessibility of comfort foods drives excessive urges to binge on tasty foods.

If you feel that you have no control over your eating and it is negatively impacting your life, you may consider therapy with a mental health professional. They can help you uncover the source of your negative emotions and develop alternative coping skills.



Tips on how to manage emotional triggers:

Keep a food journal. Take note of:

- Level of **hunger** at the start
- **fullness** at the end
- **emotions** you are feeling
- **feelings** towards the food
- enjoyment and **satisfaction**

Date/Time	Craving	Hunger Level (1-5)	Fullness After	Emotion	Notes
Mon, 2 pm	potato chips	1	satiated	bored	waiting for email response
Mon, 7pm	cookie	2	stuffed	distracted	craving after dinner
Tue, 10 am	cheese	5	not full	stressed	upcoming deadline

Look for other ways to manage emotions that induce cravings:

- Take a walk or do yoga
 - Exercise can help boost endorphins and help you stay grounded
- Call a friend
 - Having a support network reduces stress and improves mental health
- Read a book or watch a movie
 - This can serve as an alternative to counteract snacking out of boredom
- Meditation
 - Can help with stress reduction and mindfulness
- Sleep
 - Getting adequate sleep can help manage cortisol levels- a hormone that drives cravings

Practice mindful eating

Strict dieting is not an effective way to manage weight in the long term. It may amplify cravings and cause you to feel increased levels of guilt which may contribute to episodes of emotional eating.

Instead, try to focus on increasing the amount of nutritious foods in your diet with lots of variety so you don't feel deprived. Using the 80/20 philosophy (80% nutritious foods, 20% treat foods) can help with satisfaction.

Eat less nutritious foods in moderation instead of banishing them completely.

For example: try focusing on increasing your daily fruit and vegetable intake by 1-2 servings.

Emotional eating does not stem from being powerless over food; it comes from feeling powerless over our emotions.



Tip: next time you feel an emotionally-driven urge to eat, put a timer on and wait 5 minutes. Sometimes your craving will pass just as quickly as it came.

References

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