# REDUCE THE URGE
# FOR EMOTIONAL EATING

**Reduce the Urge for Emotional Eating**

If you're an emotional eater, you're not alone. ***Food is the most common means of dealing with negative feelings.*** While the occasional bowl of ice cream won't cause any harm, many people take it too far. Unhealthy foods can cause a myriad of health issues when consumed in large quantities.

Negative eating also takes a toll on your self-esteem. Feeling out of control isn't empowering. ***You can regain that sense of control by eliminating emotional eating from your life.***

**Understand the factors that control emotional eating:**

1. **Develop pleasures other than food.** Emotional eating is challenging to give up because it's so pleasurable. Food can make us feel much better, at least in the short-term. Scientists consider food, especially sugar,as addicting as narcotics.
   - The most effective way to give up a pleasurable habit is to find a substitute. You can find another way to soothe yourself without eating. You might listen to music, exercise, get a massage, take a bubble bath, or chat with a friend or family member that is supportive.

2. **Slow down.** If you have to eat, slow down. Focus on the feeling and taste of each bite. ***You'll eat less and feel better about yourself afterwards.***

3. **Learn your trigger points.** It might be coming home after a long, hard day. Or maybe you turn to food when you're bored or lonely. Recognize the situations that bring food into the picture. Develop a strategy for staying ahead of your urges. Carry healthy snacks so you're always prepared.

4. **Learn to accept feeling uncomfortable.** Rather than trying to make yourself feel better, just sit with your discomfort and examine it. What does it feel like? Where is it located? If you can look at it dispassionately, it will begin to wane.

   - Keep in mind that emotions are just a collection of chemicals that result in physical sensations. We then label a particular set of body sensations as anxiety, fear, loneliness, and so on. Your emotions are just physical sensations. You don't have to do anything about them.

5. **Be more aware.** Sometimes we plop down in front of the television and devour a bag of chips before we even realize what's going on. If you're going to eat, then do nothing but eat. *Be mindful while you're eating and you'll eat less.* You'll also be more aware of the quality of the food you're consuming.

   - Ask yourself, "Why am I eating this? Am I hungry?"

6. **Love your body.** *If you dislike your body, you're more likely to mistreat it by overeating.* It's almost impossible to make changes that affect your body in a positive way if you hate your body in the first place.

   - Think of all the unique and amazing things your body can do. Find a way to love your amazing body.

7. **Fill up on healthy food.** If you eat a healthy diet, it's difficult to eat enough to gain weight. Keep yourself comfortably full with healthy foods especailly vegetables. If your stomach is full, eating is a less appetizing idea.

8. **Get sufficient sleep.** When we get tired, our mood suffers. Eating is also a response to a lack of energy. Get enough sleep so you're not tired. Willpower also suffers when we feel fatigued. Go to bed earlier and follow healthy bedtime rituals.

Eating is an effective, but unhealthy, way to make ourselves feel better in the

moment. ***Stopping the cycle of emotional eating requires finding another way to deal with discomfort.*** Emotional eating is a learned behavior. You can learn to deal with life differently. Love yourself and make a commitment to gain control of your behavior.

- Peter Marino

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