

# **How To Stop Emotional Eating:**

**Heal With Awareness, Mindfulness  
and Other Holistic Techniques**



## **How To Stop Emotional Eating**

**Presented By;  
The FRED67 Community**



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## **Introduction**

Is food your best friend in times of stress? Do anxiety-ridden situations send you running to your favorite comfort food? These are obvious situations where feeding yourself is a direct response to some emotional need. However, emotional eating is not always so cut and dry.

Aside from being problematic to your waistline, when you eat for emotional and mental reasons rather than to fuel your body, serious health problems can develop. And since in your mind you are justifying your behavior, it can be very difficult to identify the real reasons you are eating, and then reverse this potentially dangerous situation.

In this guide on emotional eating you will discover exactly what this widespread problem is, and the health concerns that arise from it. You will be able to distinguish between eating disorders and emotional eating, and how these two problems are often related.

The symptoms and consequences of emotionally fueled feeding are covered in detail. You may also be shocked to find that weight loss surgery, dieting and other traditional weight control strategies are often a waste of time, if you don't discover the root emotional cause for your unhealthy eating behaviors.

You will learn how becoming mindful while you are eating can lead to healthy weight achievement and maintenance, and other health benefits. Finally, we discuss exactly how to break free from an emotional eating cycle using holistic, natural techniques and strategies. If you have attempted to conquer your unhealthy eating habits traditionally but failed in the past, emotional factors may be the reason.

## **What is Emotional Eating?**

Before we define emotional eating, there is something you need to understand. While most of the time emotion-driven eating behaviors are fueled by negative, unhealthy, unhappy emotions, some people also turn to food when they are extremely happy and overjoyed. Negative emotions are usually related to emotional eating problems, but that is not always the case.

That having been said, it is usually emotions that make you feel poorly and negative in some way that drive emotional eating behaviors.

There are a couple of ways to look at emotional eating. Rather than stick with a textbook definition, which can vary from source to source, let's explore the whole experience that makes up emotional eating.

### **Using Food to Fulfill Emotional Needs Never Works**

Emotional eating is as easy to understand as its name. It is not called hungry eating for a very good reason. You are not eating because your body requires nourishment. That is a normal, healthy eating process. When your body is missing some nutrient, vitamin, mineral or other substance it requires, it tells your brain.

Your brain then sends signals to your body that start your stomach rumbling and an imaginary dinner bell ringing. You walk to your kitchen or head to your favorite restaurant to get your food fix, and since you are eating to fill a naturally hungry body, this is a very healthy process (depending on what you eat).

Emotional eating happens whether you are full or hungry, or somewhere in between. Every one of us has a favorite "comfort food". A lot of us think that we just enjoy those foods because they taste good. While this is usually the case, and why we prefer some foods over others, the science of how you crave certain foods and not others goes way deeper than just taste.

The first time you eat any food, your sense of sight, your sense of smell and sometimes your sense of touch get involved before your sense of taste. It is this process that keeps human beings from eating foods we know are poisonous. The first caveman to unfortunately eat hemlock because it resembled a carrot did not live through the experience.

The fact that this happened let other human beings know that hemlock was deadly. Now we don't eat it. The same learning experience is true with any food that you eat for the first time. Whether you enjoy it or not, regardless if it is delicious, average or extremely unpleasant to your taste buds, your mind remembers.

It recalls how that food smelled, looked and felt before you put it in your mouth. In the future, when one of your senses encounters that food again, your mind immediately re-creates the experience you had, good or bad. Obviously, when food appeals to your senses, you remember that, and you desire to eat that food in the future. The issue with this process occurs when positive feelings are attached to bad food.

## **The Problem with Rewarding Your Brain With Food**

Your brain is a supercomputer. While there are man-made computers which can handle operations quicker than your brain, there is no processing unit known to man that is more capable in so many ways than the human mind. Did you know your brain rewards positive behavior with the release of what nutritionists and neurologists call "happy chemicals"?

It's true.

When you do something that is beneficial to your health and well-being, your brain rewards you. This just makes sense, doesn't it? If the human brain rewarded negative, unhealthy behaviors all of the time, you probably wouldn't be here right now. The human species would have died out long ago, if unhealthy and dangerous behaviors were positively reinforced.

Thankfully, that is not what happens most of the time.

When you do things that are good for your health, your brain gives you a proverbial pat on the back and says, *"Good job! Do that again in the future. To ensure that you continue doing these things that are good for you, I will reward you by releasing pleasurable chemicals."*

Stress hormones like cortisol are kept in check when your brain goes through this process, and feel-good chemicals like dopamine and others are released in abundance. You feel good about what you just did, what you experienced, the foods you ate or whatever caused this pleasurable release of chemicals. This reinforces positive behaviors.

The problem is that many unhealthy foods and man-made chemicals trigger the release of these happy hormones and substances. Sugar, salt, MSG (monosodium glutamate) and chocolate are just a few foods and chemicals that register an extremely positive experience in the brains of most people.

While salt, sugar, chocolate and other pleasure-producing foods should not be considered as evil or inherently bad, an overabundance of those foods can cause health problems. Also, you should know that food manufacturers combine these and other unhealthy chemicals to concoct addictive cocktails that create incredibly pleasurable feelings, even though the foods that deliver these positive feelings are less than healthy at best.

These are the foods that you turn to when you eat to feed your emotions rather than hunger.

Since these get-happy components and chemicals are most often found in unhealthy processed foods, problems develop. Any time you eating processed food, something that you purchase in a bag, wrapper, box or can, you miss out on the natural nutrition real food has to offer. When these unhealthy, nutrient-poor foods trigger positive, happy, feel-good responses in your brain, you begin to crave them.

Then, the next time you feel sad, scared, angry, depressed or experience some other "down" emotion, you reach for these foods. They do what their manufacturer intended, and create a feeling of peace and happiness. Since they deliver very little to no nutrition, your brain signals you that it is in need of healthy nutrients, chemicals, vitamins and minerals.

It understands that you have just eaten, but it also knows what your body needs to be healthy. So even though you have just sated your emotions, and given your body unhealthy, addictive, "feel good" food with little nutrition, you are still hungry. This causes you to reach for more food, and guess what food you reach for? You don't reach for healthy, delicious, nutritious vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds and berries.

You reach for those same foods you used to give you an emotional uplift, and this cycle of eating unhealthy foods continues, feeding upon itself. The result is you end up feeling physically and emotionally miserable, guilty, ashamed and frustrated when you realize what you have done. Since your emotions are in the dirt, what do you do as an emotional eater? You reach for these foods again, because they provide a temporary emotional boost.

This is how incredibly unhealthy and dangerous the emotional eating cycle can be. It literally feeds on itself.

Unfortunately, most people don't understand why they are eating the particular foods they do when they feel upset or down emotionally. Food manufacturers understand the science behind certain foods, and the chemicals they release that make you feel happy.

They choose to put these chemicals in foods that are unhealthy and incredibly cheap to make, as all they are worried about is their bottom line. Instead of adding these chemicals to wonderfully healthy and nutritious foods which costs manufacturers more money to market, and which do not have as long of a shelf life, they hand you unhealthy MSG, sugar, salt and other chemicals that do nothing to help your long-term emotional and physical health.

Here are just a few common situations where your feelings and emotions may drive unhealthy eating behaviors.

- You are at a party. There is plenty of food available, not all of it healthy. You are not hungry. However, you want to feel like you belong, and just to fit in you eat like everyone else.
- You pack a healthy lunch for school or work. Your classmates make fun of your healthy food, or your coworkers always head out to a popular casual dining restaurant for lunch and you are stuck at your desk. For fear of not fitting in, and possibly missing out on social and business connections, you begin eating a less than healthy lunch, just like your coworkers or fellow students.
- You just got a big promotion you have been working very hard for. You immediately think about rewarding yourself with a decadent, unhealthy, calorie and carb-rich chocolate treat filled with sugar, refined flour and other nutritional nightmares. You rationalize this as a "reward" for all your hard work.
- You have had a tough day. Nothing seemed to go your way. It looks like tomorrow will be the same. You have nothing to look forward to but a repetitive cycle of scraping by, with very little emotional, financial, physical and spiritual rewards. You reach for food as an emotional crutch.

Any emotion you experience, good or bad, can lead to poor eating habits. As mentioned earlier, unhealthy feeding attached to emotional states usually means less than positive experiences. You feel depressed, anxious, stressed out, mad, angry, left out, alone and uncertain, and these unhappy feelings drive poor eating behaviors.

The reason why negative emotions are more frequently attached to emotional eating than positive ones is simple. When you feel good, happy, positive and self-confident, your body rewards you with the release of pleasurable chemicals, as mentioned earlier. Because this is the case, your positive emotions provide good feelings, and you don't have to reach to chemical-ridden food to deliver those positive emotions.

### **Now let's look at the health side of the equation.**

Several times already in this emotional eating report we have referred to health problems caused by this improper feeding behavior.

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Just what exactly do you have to look forward to when you eat to feed your emotions rather than to fuel your body? Let's take a look.

## **The Unhealthy Consequences of Emotional Eating**

In the worst of scenarios, emotional eating leads to incredibly low levels of self-esteem, and even self-hatred. There have been cases where suicide was the final result of an unhealthy mental state which had emotional eating at its base. While that is rare indeed, it highlights how dangerous giving into the beast that is emotional eating can be.

The following consequences of emotional eating can be frustrating and uncomfortable in a best case scenario, and emotionally, physically and mentally crippling at worst.

- Unhealthy body weight (either overweight or underweight) and obesity
- Unhealthy skin and hair, including hair loss in women and men
- Digestive disorders and problems, including but not limited to constipation, diarrhea, acid reflux, nausea and GERD
- Guilt, self-loathing, low self-esteem and self-hatred
- Stroke, heart attack and heart disease
- Poor circulation
- Muscle loss, weakness, fatigue and an unhealthy reduction in bone density
- Extremely low or high blood pressure
- Severe dehydration which can lead to kidney failure
- Inflammation throughout the body, leading to multiple health problems
- Tooth decay
- Pancreatitis and peptic ulcers
- High cholesterol

- Diabetes
- Gallbladder disease
- Any negative human health condition which arises from a nutritional or mineral imbalance that is caused by unhealthy emotional eating behaviors

## **The Differences (and Similarities) Between Emotional Eating and an Eating Disorder**

Your emotions drive nearly every conscious thing that you do. On the flip-side of the emotional coin, whether you are happy or sad does not influence actions like flicking a light switch, tying your shoes or brushing your teeth. These are behaviors that, once they become habits, are automatically performed. You don't have to think about them. Your emotions are not involved.

On the other hand, consider any action you take that is conscious. These are the things that you think about before you do them. Choosing an outfit to wear, planning a vacation and preparing a meal are just a few examples of things which require a conscious, willful thought process.

This helps explain the difference between emotional eating and a full-blown eating disorder.

- Emotional eating is impulsive.
- An eating disorder is compulsive.

When you eat for instant gratification that is emotional eating. You are eating to answer an emotional need you just experienced. Consider it "instantaneous self-destruction" with food used to treat emotional needs. Compulsive eating, which occurs with diagnosed eating disorders, can be considered "continuous self-destruction".

Emotions drive impulsive eating behaviors, eating disorders drive compulsive eating behaviors. Compulsive overeating often occurs because of an addiction to food. The compulsion to eat is there all day and all night. This can occur because of chemical imbalances or other conditions which lead to the diagnosis of a recognized eating disorder.

*Emotional eating does not occur all of the time.*

It only happens when you experience an emotional need that goes unfulfilled. Turning to food in this instance does not happen for everyone, but for the emotional eater, it can create the serious social and health problems mentioned earlier. Understand that emotional eating and eating disorders are closely related, because they both usually have some type of mental factor at their base.

## **Most Common Eating Disorders**

Eating disorders include anorexia, bulimia, binge eating, and a clinically recognized problem called EDNOS (an Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified by the criteria which describes the better-known disorders).

EDNOS issues include purging, night eating syndrome, anorexia nervosa without showing below normal weight, occasional binge eating and any other feeding or eating disorder that doesn't qualify as anorexia, binge eating or bulimia.

Sometimes these eating problems include restrictive, avoidance-related feeding behavior - only certain foods are eaten or ignored, which leads to nutritional deficiencies that launch a vast number of health concerns. Pica and rumination are other EDNOS conditions.

As we just mentioned in the previous section, eating disorders are present 24/7. This is why they are so difficult to deal with, and usually require medical treatment. One particular eating disorder, binge eating, qualifies as an emotional eating problem as well, ***if that binge eating is triggered by an emotional need*** rather than an underlying chemical or mental imbalance in the body.

## **Symptoms of Emotional Eating**

It is important to know what signs can point out an emotional eating problem. Some of the symptoms of emotional eating below are also indicators that some other condition may be present, but when you experience several of the following "red flags" of unhealthy eating, your emotions are probably the cause.

- You eat when you are not hungry
- You consciously reach for foods that you know are bad for you and you

know will have a negative health effect

- You look upon food as your best friend
- You get cravings that make you feel "out of control", as if you have no choice but to give in
- You often eat until you are "stuffed"
- You feel that you are not hungry enough to eat any amount of healthy food such as a banana, apple or orange. However, you are extremely hungry for massive amounts of unhealthy food like cake, chocolate treats, sweets and baked goods
- You feel guilty or ashamed after eating
- You eat large portions and quantities of foods that make you feel "naughty" and sneaky
- When you feel worn down and need a shot of energy, this is often because of an emotional need. If you frequently turn to food and beverages for an energy boost, this could be a sign of emotional eating
- You find yourself frequently going out of the way to look for opportunities to "reward" positive behavior with unhealthy eating episodes.
- You try to spend your time with others that use food as an emotional bandage
- You know that an unhealthy eating behavior is driven by an emotional need, but you don't care
- You equate eating with poor self-esteem
- You are fascinated with eating and food, and think about it literally all of the time
- You attach emotionally charged words to food and your eating experience. These include, but are certainly not limited to, words like sinful, love, enticing, craving, tempting and decadent

Experts believe that as much as 75% of all overeating is emotionally driven. When this impulsive and widespread activity takes place, the following foods are often what you reach for.

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## **Common Foods People Reach for When Their Emotions Drive Their Feeding Behaviors**

We mentioned earlier the connection between certain foods and "feel good" chemicals and hormones your body releases when these foods are eaten. We will discuss this connection again, later in this report. The reason why this relationship needs to be mentioned time and again is because it lies at the core of why people reach for food to comfort their emotional state.

Accordingly, certain foods seem to be the target for emotional eaters much of the time. If you enjoy eating the following foods, that doesn't necessarily mean you are consuming them because of an emotional need. However, if the foods on this list are connected to important negative or positive emotional occurrences in your life on a consistent basis, you need to re-examine your relationship with them.

- Chocolate
- Sugar
- Salt
- MSG
- Ice cream
- Cake
- Bread and baked goods
- Doughnuts
- Potato chips
- Chocolate chip cookies
- Pasta
- Macaroni and cheese
- French fries
- Pizza
- Fast food
- Pancakes

As you can see from this short and incomplete list of foods emotional eaters turn to, there are a lot of refined, unhealthy, simple carbohydrates listed. Simple carbs are processed incredibly quickly by your body, enter your bloodstream rapidly, and are stored as fat. This is one way in which emotional eating leads to overweight and obesity, to conditions which cause other significant health problems.

## **Why Dieting, Weight Loss Surgery and Other Symptom-Based Treatments Don't Work For the Emotional Eater**

We mentioned earlier that weight gain, sometimes obesity, is the most common symptom of out-of-control emotional eating. This is because of the very nature of the foods we reach for when our emotions drive eating behaviors.

So-called "comfort foods" provide exactly that. They are full of the natural and man-made chemicals and nutrients that make our brain content. As a result, the substances that neurologists and nutritionists call "happy chemicals" are released when these foods are eaten.

What ends up happening is your mind incorrectly rewards you for eating unhealthy foods. Since a pleasurable response is received by your brain when you reach for these comfort foods as a response to emotional needs, dieting, weight loss surgery and other attempts to fix resulting weight problem don't work.

**This is because traditional weight loss and weight gain treatments are simply bandages to the emotional eater.**

Imagine for a moment that you suffer from some type of emotional problem that causes you to cut yourself. Cutting is a self-imposed, intentional injury that some people use to treat emotional problems. They are angry, frustrated, scared or experiencing some other type of negative emotion, and they get some measure of relief when they cut themselves.

In our example, you experience an emotional turmoil. You cut yourself, as you have before, in an effort to conquer your emotional state. After this episode you place a bandage on the cut. Eventually the cut heals, but you continue to cut yourself as a response to emotions in the future. All the bandages in the world may help your cuts heal temporarily, but they will never heal the underlying emotional issue that is causing this destructive behavior.

**This is why diets don't work as a long-term weight loss, healthy weight management answer for so many. They are treating the symptom, and not the cause of the problem.**

Exercise, weight loss surgery and nutrition management (whether gaining or losing weight is the goal) can show extremely positive results. As long as the emotional eater does not have some type of emotional outburst or issue to deal with, proven weight loss, weight gain and weight management strategies can provide some very encouraging results.

The problem occurs when something triggers the low self-esteem, anger, frustration, desperation, stress, self-loathing or other emotion which causes unhealthy eating behaviors. The diet or weight loss surgery has worked up till now. However, now these techniques are faced with an individual who is eating improperly because of emotional reasons. Since the underlying cause, emotional distress, is not addressed, protocols which treat symptoms (exercise, diet, weight loss surgery, etc.) can't help but fail.

### **This is when an even bigger problem occurs.**

Here's the scenario. Someone realizes they have eating and dietary problems. They check out the latest diet trends and find one they like. They talk to a nutritionist or fitness expert, and develop a plan of action which includes smart, healthy eating and regular exercise. It just so happens that during this commendable self-treatment phase, this particular person suffers no seriously negative set of emotions.

Everything is going swimmingly.

The pounds are dropping off (or healthy weight is being gained, if that is the desired result). The person in question begins to develop high levels of self-esteem and self-love, seeing positive body weight results, often for the first time. This positive feeling of self-worth impacts all areas of that person's life, and it is easy to stick to the exercise and/or diet program that delivered these life-changing results.

### **Then they hit a speed bump.**

Something happens that triggers a negative emotion. In many people, dealing with emotions does not lead to unhealthy eating behaviors. However, in the emotional eater, any diets, surgeries or exercise programs that have up till now been acting as an effective bandage to the symptoms of emotional eating are instantly rendered useless.

The extremely underweight person that was finally gaining and maintaining healthy weight begins to lose weight again. This is attached to emotional eating behaviors. The overweight person who for the first time in his or her life was losing weight and keeping it off, begins to pack on the pounds once again. Emotional eating destroys all of the benefits the person's hard work and effort have created up to this point.

The bigger problem we mentioned occurs when that person realizes that his or her own behavior has ruined all of the wonderful results they experienced.

***Self-hatred and self-loathing can set in, as well as self-doubt and a feeling that they cannot control their own actions.***

This leads to an emotional and mental "giving up", and a conscious and intentional giving in to poor eating habits that deliver temporal, fleeting, "right now" rewards.

The brain recognizes that comfort foods are being consumed again, pleasurable chemicals like serotonin, norepinephrine, endorphins, oxytocin and dopamine are released, and a temporary "high" is experienced. Because foods related to emotional eating are almost always processed, sugar-filled, carb-heavy, loaded with white flour and other unhealthy preservatives and additives, multiple health conditions can develop.

A crash follows the emotional eating high, emotions plummet, self-loathing is embraced, and the process starts all over again.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with proper diet. You should be giving your body the proper nutrients, vitamins and minerals it needs to function properly, whether emotional eating is an issue or not. Nutritionists, doctors and other health experts understand that the things you put into your body, the foods and beverages you eat and drink, are responsible for up to 75% of your health and wellness.

So we are definitely not saying that you shouldn't be following a smart diet. We are also not claiming that weight loss surgery doesn't work. This type of surgical answer to a weight condition has proved incredibly beneficial to millions of people. The same is true of exercise. You should be exercising regularly, especially since a lot of the "feel good" chemicals your brain triggers when you eat comfort foods are also released after exercise.

All we are saying is this ...

"If your eating issues, and any resulting health problems, are the result of emotional eating, traditional weight loss and weight management efforts will not provide a long-term answer, *until your emotional needs are addressed.*"

By all means seek any traditional answers to eating problems you may have. Just understand that if you have emotional reasons leading to poor eating behaviors, until they are addressed, the chances of you correcting any poor health conditions linked to those behaviors are minimal at best.



## **How To Break Free from Emotional Eating Using Holistic Techniques**

There are a lot of simple, natural, very successful ways to fight emotional eating. Use the holistic emotional eating treatments below to regain control of your emotions, and to learn to treat them in a healthy manner.

- Keep a food and mood journal. Write down your emotions before, during and after you eat anything. Look for patterns where your emotional state drives feeding behaviors, and also where you feel guilt, shame or other negative emotions after you eat.
- Exercise. It bears repeating that the same pleasurable chemicals released by unhealthy comfort foods are also delivered as a reward for physical activity.
- Purge your pantry. Foods that come in a jar, a box, a wrapper or a package are highly processed most of the time. Be honest with yourself. Clearing your kitchen, pantry and refrigerator of unhealthy foods makes sense for a lot of reasons. Limiting exposure to the foods you turn to for emotional bandages is just one of those smart reasons.
- Join a support group, online or off.
- Eat more frequently, eat healthier foods in reasonable portions, and try not to go too long without eating. What are you more likely to reach for when you are "starving to death", an apple, or two slices of apple pie with ice cream on top?
- Keep healthy snacks like carrot sticks, hummus, nuts, berries and avocado readily available for snack-time at work and home.
- Change your associations. The next time you feel like an emotion is driving your eating behavior, do something else instead. Tie that emotional need to exercise, healthy socialization or some other activity other than eating.
- Meditation offers a wide variety of benefits, mentally and physically, as well as spiritually and emotionally. It has worked for literally billions of people over the centuries to deliver health and well-being, and it can work for you as well.

- Spend more time with people that make you feel great, without food being part of the process.
- As soon as an emotionally triggered feeding behavior enters your mind, call a friend or family member that you enjoy talking to, one that always makes you smile.
- Aromatherapy is now in place by the traditional medical community. Your sense of smell is incredibly powerful, noted as having the strongest connection to your memory. Diffusing essential oils that release aromas related to pleasurable past experiences can help you overcome emotional eating urges.
- Yoga is not just for Buddhist monks and lifelong spiritualists. A regular yoga practice delivers calming emotional and spiritual benefits, as well as physical health rewards, to anyone.
- Get busy. Do some yard work, wash the car, write a letter, go for a walk, listen to your favorite music or read a good book. Involve your body and your mind in anything that distracts you from an unhealthy eating behavior.
- Seek individual or group counseling. Sometimes understanding that there are other people just like yourself struggling with this issue is enough to help you through.
- Adopt a healthy diet. Healthy eating and good nutrition have been linked to emotional balance and happiness. This means you feel emotionally needy less frequently, which logically limits your emotional eating behaviors.
- Reward positive behaviors. Any time you defeat an emotional eating urge, give yourself positive reinforcement. Even if the victory seems small, you are doing an incredibly good job fighting a very difficult battle. ***You deserve to feel great about yourself for any and every episode where you defeat emotional eating.*** Remember, human beings tend to repeat behaviors that have been positively reinforced, so reward yourself in some positive way every time you conquer your emotional eating impulses. You deserve it.

## Using Mindfulness to Start a Healthy Eating Plan

If you are not mindful of what you are doing while you are driving a vehicle, you could endanger the lives of yourself and/or others. Not minding what you are doing while preparing or cooking food could mean cutting yourself, or burning the centerpiece of a meal you have been working on for hours. Simply put, it pays to be mindful.

Dictionaries will give you some variation of the following definitions of mindfulness:

"The quality or state of being conscious or aware of something."

"A mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique."

That second definition applies perfectly to emotional eating.

Any time you put a food or liquid into your body, ***be absolutely aware of what you are doing***. Focus on that single moment. While doing so, acknowledge your feelings, senses and thoughts. Are you engaging in this eating behavior because you are hungry, or because of some other reason?

You can see by that second definition that mindfulness can be a "therapeutic technique". When you are perfectly aware of your present existence, not your past and not your future, not judging your behavior, and simply being aware of what you are doing right now, you experience a sense of calm and peace.

In this state of being, it is easy to objectively look at your situation and see exactly what is triggering your eating.

This applies to snacks big and small, seemingly insignificant eating sessions as well as regular meals. BEFORE you reach for any food or beverage, take a minute to be mindful of your emotions, feelings and physical state.

Get into a comfortable sitting or standing position, take a deep breath, focus on your breathing, and exhale. Think of nothing but your breathing process.

Close your eyes if it is necessary to drive out distractions. Be honest with yourself. Look inside your mind and body and see if you are hungry, thirsty, or if you have just experienced something that has triggered an emotional response.

Using this mindful practice you will begin to notice certain triggers or cycles that are causing you to eat for the wrong reasons. This is a simple practice that works for men and women, young and old alike, and can be very powerful in identifying unhealthy eating behaviors.

### **Training Your Brain With Mindfulness**

The human brain craves order and discipline. This is why a cluttered, messy environment filled with distractions leads to poor productivity, and even health problems. Your brain prefers to be given "marching orders", step-by-step instructions, and "A, B, C" processes to follow.

You can use this natural inclination of your brain to program yourself for smart eating habits.

Be mindful of everything you eat during a meal. This means with each forkful or spoonful, you fully taste and appreciate every bite. Truly experience the chewing and swallowing process, and the texture of the food as well as its flavors. Make sure you chew your food properly, and be mindful of everything you are doing while you are eating.

This means turning off the television and your phone while eating. Distracted eating is unfortunately the "normal" way that most people eat today. This is how you can polish off an entire bag of potato chips while watching television, even though that was certainly not your intent when you first started eating. Your distractions keep you from realizing exactly how much you are eating.

This mindfulness slows down mealtime.

It gives your stomach time to tell your brain you are full. When you are mindful of being full or still being hungry, your eating actions are appropriate. This allows you to train your brain to see food as fuel, not as an emotional bandage.

Mindfulness can be employed in every area of your life, not just eating. When you combine mindfulness with your approach to nutrition and health, you learn to eat so that you nourish your body, and not to artificially medicate your feelings and emotions.

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