



ARE YOU AN EMOTIONAL EATER?

In an ideal world we would just eat to provide our body with the fuel it needs to function, but a lot of the time we eat to feed our feelings. For a lot of people, poor eating habits can be down to boredom; when you get home from work is your first stop the fridge or the biscuit tin simply out of habit?

Emotional eating can lead to many problems, including excess weight gain and feelings of guilt which can then lead to more emotional eating to try and suppress the feeling of guilt.

HOW DO YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL HUNGER?



VS



EMOTIONAL HUNGER



- 1 Is specific, you want chocolate, cheese or pasta and you can't substitute it with another food
- 2 Is sudden, you're not even thinking about food and suddenly you are starving
- 3 Is urgent, you feel that the only way to manage the craving is by eating
- 4 You think eating will make you feel better, but you end up feeling more guilty
- 5 You ignore being full and may cover up feelings of sadness and continue to eat until you feel ill or your stomach may hurt
- 6 You might not realise you've finished off a whole packet of biscuits

PHYSICAL HUNGER



- 1 Starts in the stomach, you may feel rumbling, gnawing and even pain in your stomach
- 2 Is gradual, your stomach might start to rumble, an hour later it may start to growl.
- 3 Is a physical need because it may be 4 hours since you last ate, or you may feel light-headed or have low energy levels
- 4 Open to choice, you may have a preference of what you eat but you are flexible and can make the choice to eat both sandwiches or just one sandwich
- 5 Feeling full, because once this need has been satisfied you are able to stop eating
- 6 No guilt, as you are fulfilling a physical need there is no guilt or shame associated with the hunger





TIPS TO OVERCOME EMOTIONAL EATING

1. Are you really hungry?

Has it been a few hours since you have eaten? If not, you are probably not truly hungry. Cravings will pass within 15-20 minutes. Create a list of alternatives to help you avoid binge eating e.g. drink a glass of water, read a book, go for a walk or a swim, do some gardening. Choose something that will keep you occupied.

2. Identify your triggers.

Become aware of why you are emotionally eating. Some triggers include sadness and depression, anger, loneliness, PMS, stress and anxiety.

3. Don't stock up on unhealthy foods.

If you have foods that are high in sugar in the cupboard you are more likely to snack on them. Have healthy alternatives available like fruit, vegetables, nuts, seeds. Don't go shopping when you're hungry (or craving) as you'll end up buying a lot of food you don't need. Plan your meals for the day. Allow yourself one or two days during the week where you can have a treat but watch the amount!

4. Achieving a balanced diet.

If you are not eating a balanced diet or not getting enough calories during the day, you are more likely to give in to emotional eating. To help overcome this you should aim to eat regular meals and don't skip breakfast. If you feel like you need to eat in between meals, then opt for healthy snacks. Plan and prepare your meals and snacks ahead of time. Aim to include some wholegrain carbohydrate, lean protein and fruit or vegetables at each meal.

5. Exercise and rest

Your mood is much more manageable and you are more able to deal with stress when you are fit and well rested. Regular exercise and getting adequate sleep are very important and can make you feel really good. Try and be active every day even if it's just a walk at lunch time. Every little helps! Get enough sleep. If you don't sleep well this can impact your weight loss efforts and tiredness can lead to emotional eating.

6. Learn to cope

We all have cravings and sometimes we give into them. It's not the end of the world! Plan a treat day ahead of time so you have it to look forward to.

7. Overall health

Start looking at food differently. Look at it as fuel for your body. You want to choose nutrient dense foods, foods that will provide your body with all the vitamin and minerals that it needs to maintain your energy levels, appearance, youth and health. Combine this new outlook on food with regular exercise and you are on your way to living and eating guilt free.

