

Emotional Eating



By Sara Colman Carlson, RD, CDE

Emotional eating usually occurs when we are stressed, when we are experiencing feelings of loss, sadness, fear, anger or worry. It often comes with a loss of control, movement away from our usual schedule or routine. We find ourselves in an unbalanced space. Going for comfort foods or crashing on cravings for high sugar, high fat or salty snacks and meals is common.

Most of us have been through periods of emotional eating. Sometimes we need to feed our emotions and those cravings to get through the rough times....and that's okay.

But there comes a point where taking control and dealing with our emotions helps lift us back into balance. We start craving health over the absence of health. Making healthy choices becomes important again. It may even help to reduce the stressors that tipped us off balance in the beginning.

How do you get back on track? Here are some things I have found helpful.

1. Acknowledge where you are and set a time to return to health. For example, "I have craved and eaten sweets, replaced lunch with a milkshake, and snacked on chips and dip instead of eating a balanced meal. Tomorrow starting with breakfast, I will have a smoothie with fresh fruits, veggies and yogurt to kick off my return to balanced and healthy eating."
2. Take note of possible causes for emotional eating and think about what you might do to better deal with it. Talk to a friend or consider meeting with a therapist.
3. Make it a point to do daily exercise—it's a great stress reliever and may help you focus on healthy eating habits.
4. Plan your sleep to get 8 hours; put away your phone and tablet; listen to soft music or relaxation app instead of the news or television shows.
5. Focus on the 3 things that make you feel good about yourself—and incorporate into your day.
6. Be around positive people. Ask your most encouraging friend to join you for lunch or dinner.
7. Realize that you may not be able to change people or circumstances. Instead focus on yourself and the things that are in your control.



Regaining control to get back into your healthy habits is within your reach. And once you take those steps you will be empowered and encouraged. Be your best friend to take care and nurture yourself.