

emotional eating

Emotional eating can be, in part, the consequence of not allowing feelings to flow naturally. Emotions can often be felt physically in such ways as a knot in the stomach, a gripping feeling in the chest area, a tightening of the shoulders and neck or perhaps a pounding tension in the head. If we do not recognise our emotional feelings and deal with them appropriately rather than 'sweeping them under the carpet', then a natural response is to seek some way to make ourselves feel better. This is usually in the form of food.



When we eat emotionally, we tend to eat carbohydrate-rich foods like cookies, cakes and pasta (comfort foods). These foods will increase your serotonin levels which will help increase your mood for a short period of time but may result in further cravings.

If you do consider yourself an emotional eater you must first figure out what situations or feelings trigger the emotional eating for you. Some eating triggers include:

Social – Eating when you are around other people, eg, excessive eating can result from being encouraged by others to eat; eating to fit in; arguing or feelings of inadequacy around other people.

Emotional – Eating in response to boredom, stress, fatigue, tension, depression, anger, anxiety or loneliness.

Situational – Eating because the opportunity is there, eg. At the movies, at a restaurant or a sporting event.

Thoughts – Eating as a result of negative self-worth or making excuses for eating, eg, feeling bad about yourself because you missed a workout.

- To find out what triggers your emotional eating keep a journal and record what you ate, where you were and how you were feeling at the time.
- To avoid emotional eating you must make a list of things that you can do besides eat, for example:
 - Exercise: Go for a walk or swim or go to the gym
 - Exercise helps to relieve stress and anxiety and it makes you feel good!
 - Phone a friend: Talking to a trusted friend or relative can be a great support and a nice distraction
 - Read
 - Clean something
 - Run an errand

Reference: <http://www.fitwoman.com>, <http://www.lamasbeauty.com>, <http://www.dental.am>, <http://www.exercise.about.com>

SSATEmotionaleating021205 V1.0