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Curb Emotional Eating

Like many people, you may seek occasional solace in a bowl of ice cream or slice of pizza after a bad day. When you find yourself seeking out food to comfort you, you are eating in response to your emotions, rather than to hunger.

Occasional emotional eating isn't a problem for most people. After all, that's what makes

comfort food so appealing. But turning to food every time you have unpleasant feelings — or even positive ones — can lead to weight gain, says the American Dietetic Association (ADA). Being overweight can increase your risk of obesity-related health problems, such as diabetes and heart disease. It can also take a toll on your self-esteem and emotional health.

Understand your cravings

The first step in dealing with emotional eating is to learn to recognize the difference between emotional and physical hunger, the ADA says. Here are some clues that can help you identify emotional eating:

- Sudden hunger
- Craving one specific type of food, such as pizza, because no other food will satisfy your hunger
- Difficulty stopping eating once you are full
- Feeling guilty after eating
- Eating to reward or nurture yourself

What you can do?

Once you learn to identify emotional eating, it helps to keep track of those things that trigger you to eat when you are not hungry, the ADA says. Many people often eat in response to feeling sad, anxious, depressed or lonely. Come up with substitutions for emotional eating. For example, take a walk, call a friend, engage in a hobby, or do anything else that can distract you from wanting to eat. It also helps to replace unhealthy comfort foods with healthy ones and practice portion control. You don't need to completely give up foods that comfort you, just eat less of them.

If you need extra help

If you've been an emotional eater for a long time, you may find it difficult to stop on your own. In particular, if you are depressed or have low self-esteem, it may be helpful to talk with a therapist or a dietitian who works with eating disorders, the ADA says. Finding a support group for people dealing with similar issues can provide needed guidance for dealing with emotional eating. Talking with your health care provider about your concerns is a good place to start.

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FEATURED SERVICE

Keep Your Resolution and Discover a Better You

At this time of year, most people's New Year's resolutions have faded. We usually know what we need to do to keep us on track, like:

- Eating healthier
- Exercising more
- Organizing ourselves at home and at the office
- Managing our money more wisely
- Working on relationships

But change is hard. Sometimes talking to a counselor can help us understand more about ourselves so we can live better. Call First Sun EAP to get connected with a counselor.



Passport to Success

Using your EAP can help put your dreams within reach! Learn how easy it is for you and your immediate family members to get started.

Letting Your Emotions Interfere with Eating

Excessive stress, not sleeping well, anxiety, and needing emotional comfort lead many of us to snack leaving us with



unwanted weight gain, health issues, and lowered self-esteem. Learn how identify your triggers and how not to use food to fulfill an emotional void in this engaging, introspective webinar.

[Log in](#) to watch the webinar and view answers to reader's questions or submit your own.



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