

Emotional Eating: The Connection Between Food and Mood

Presented by ComPsych® Corporation



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12:00-1:00 PM**

**Presented to:
Dartmouth College Faculty &
Staff**

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Agenda

- ❖ Define emotional eating
- ❖ Identify triggers to emotional eating and stressors that contribute to emotional eating behavior
- ❖ Learn how to distinguish between two types of hunger and how to manage each
- ❖ Identify strategies for overcoming emotional eating
- ❖ Develop a personal action plan, including how to deal with setbacks

What is Emotional Eating?

- ❖ Eating when you are not physically hungry
- ❖ Eating for social or emotional reasons
- ❖ Managing stress



What is Emotional Eating?

Emotional hunger vs. Physical hunger

Emotional hunger comes on suddenly

Physical hunger comes on gradually

Emotional hunger feels like it needs to be satisfied instantly

Physical hunger can wait

Emotional hunger craves specific comfort foods

Physical hunger is open to options—lots of things sound good

Emotional hunger isn't satisfied with a full stomach.

Physical hunger stops when you're full

Emotional eating triggers feelings of guilt, powerlessness, and shame

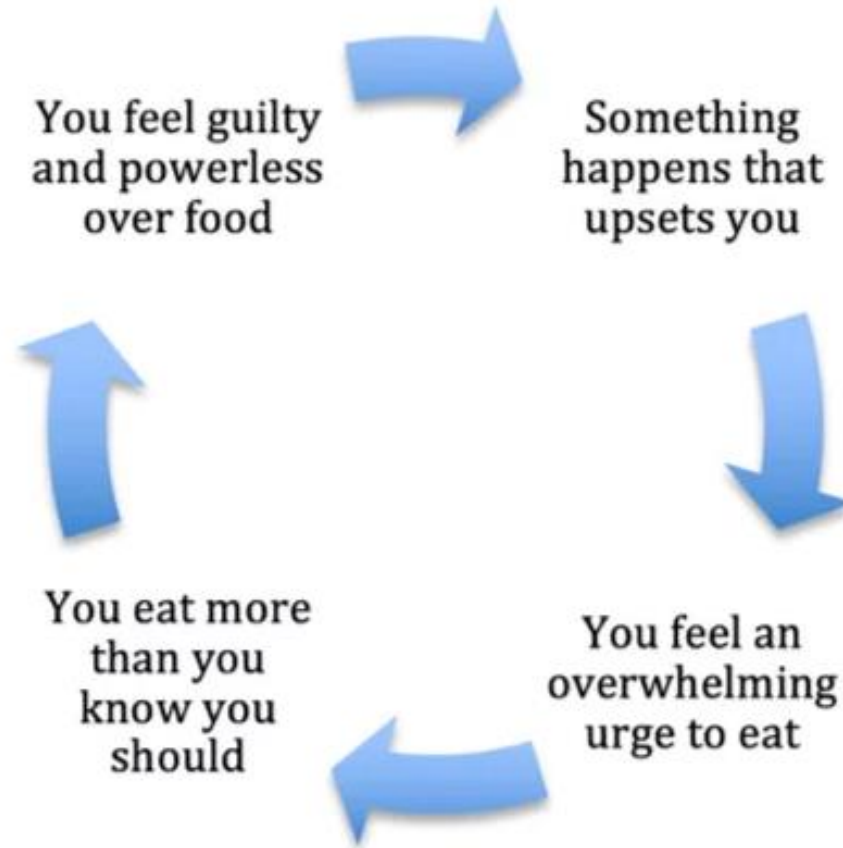
Eating to satisfy physical hunger doesn't make you feel bad about yourself

Characteristics of Emotional Eating

- ❖ Eating for reasons other than physical hunger
- ❖ Usually happens later in the day or evening
- ❖ Cravings for “comfort foods”
- ❖ Often occurs when alone
- ❖ Making several trips to the refrigerator or cupboard
- ❖ Special trips for fast food or ordering out
- ❖ Food is consumed rapidly and/or absentmindedly
- ❖ Associated with feelings of guilt or loss of control
- ❖ Turning to food to manage uncomfortable feelings or stress

The Cycle of Emotional Eating

The Emotional Eating Cycle



Why Do We Do It?

- ❖ Food has calming effect
- ❖ Childhood associations with food
- ❖ Food = reward/love/acceptance
- ❖ Food as entertainment



Consequences of Emotional Eating

- ❖ Sabotages weight management
- ❖ Overweight/obesity
- ❖ Health conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol
- ❖ Low energy levels
- ❖ Cycle of overeating and calorie restriction
- ❖ Low self-esteem
- ❖ Depression



Emotional Eating Assessment

- ❖ When I am feeling “down” or “blue” a little snack will lift my mood
- ❖ If someone disappoints me I want to eat something
- ❖ When I am pressured or working under a deadline I have the urge to snack
- ❖ I eat more under stress than when I am calm
- ❖ If I am worried or afraid of something I tend to eat

Emotional Eating Assessment

- ❖ Sometimes when people irritate me I want to get something to eat
- ❖ When I get angry, eating will make me feel better
- ❖ I look forward to eating something when I'm bored
- ❖ I eat more than usual when there is nothing to do
- ❖ Being alone increases my appetite
- ❖ Eating makes me feel better when I'm lonely

Identifying Triggers/Emotions

- ❖ Personal History
- ❖ Events
- ❖ Environmental Cues
- ❖ People

- ❖ Depressed
- ❖ Anxious
- ❖ Lonely
- ❖ Excited
- ❖ Bored

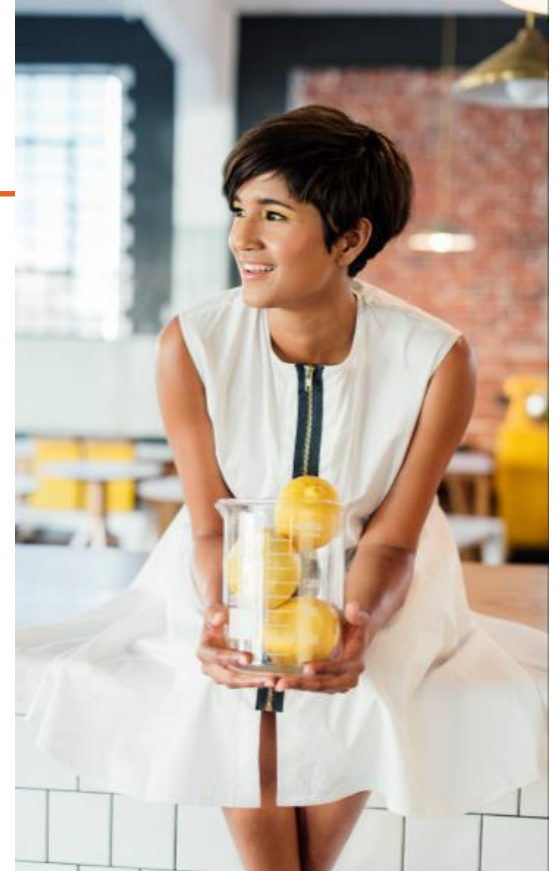


Emotional Eating Log

Date	Time	Food or meal eaten	Reason for eating (hunger or name a specific emotion)	Trigger (cause of emotional eating)
Sample day	9:30 PM	Chips and soft drink	Nothing good to watch on TV	Boredom
Sunday				
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				

3 Key Questions

- ❖ Am I physically hungry or emotionally hungry?
- ❖ Am I thirsty rather than hungry?
- ❖ Have I given my body enough time after eating to register that it's full?



How Hungry Am I?

- ❖ Hungry from above or below the neck?

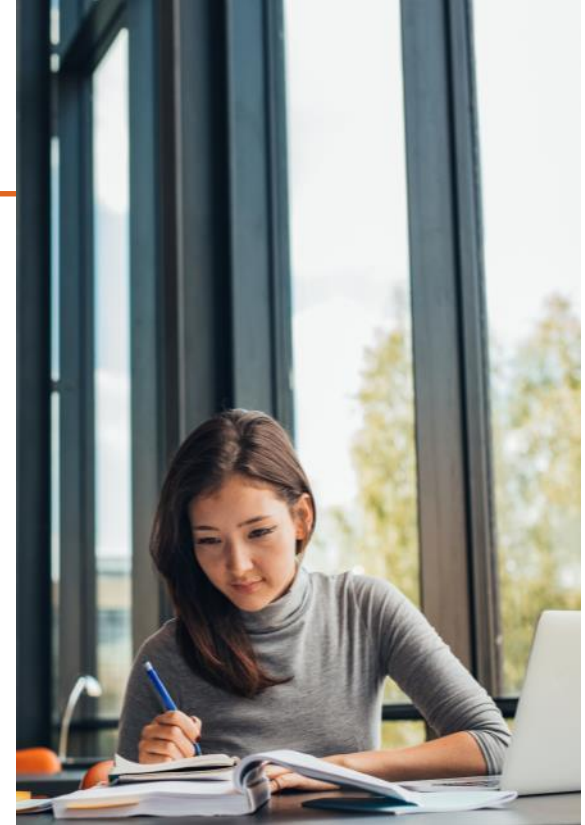
Take the apple test:

“Am I hungry enough to eat an apple?”



Managing Emotional Eating

- ❖ Monitor your intake
- ❖ Distinguishing the type of hunger (emotional vs. physiological)
- ❖ Labeling your emotional state
- ❖ Affirming your ability to cope with the emotion
- ❖ Choosing a different activity



BASICS of Mindful Eating

B = Breathe and Belly Check for Hunger and Satiety before you Eat

A = Assess your Food

S = Slow Down

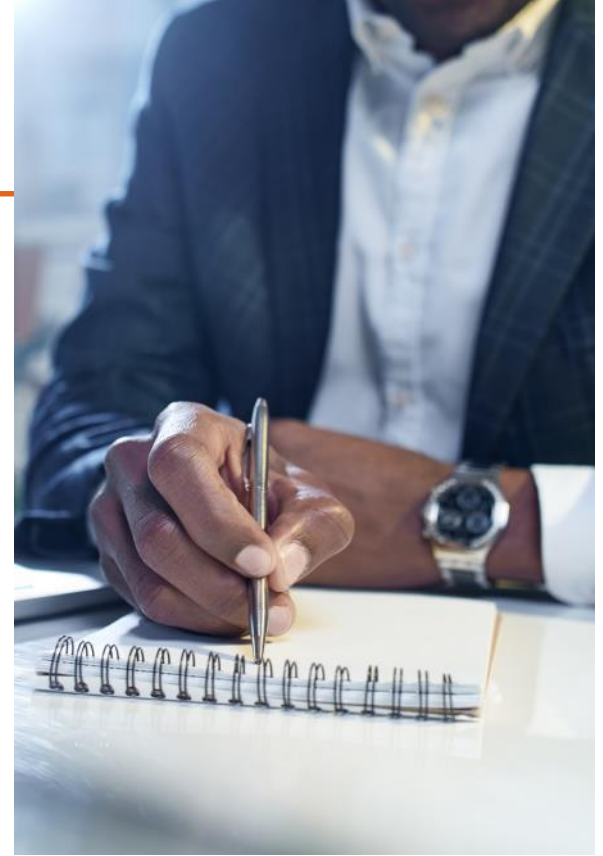
I = Investigate your Hunger and Satiety throughout the Meal

C = Chew Your Food Thoroughly

S = Savor Your Food

Develop a Plan to Respond to Eating Triggers

- ❖ Be specific
- ❖ Make it a priority
- ❖ Dedicate time
- ❖ Identify barriers to success
- ❖ Be realistic in your goals and expectations



Develop a Plan to Respond to Eating Triggers Exercise

Example 1: Eating in front of TV after work to relax

Example 2: Absentmindedly eating candy off co-worker's desk

Example 3: Eating in the middle of the night because you can't sleep

Example 4: Ritual of eating chocolate before a meeting with your boss

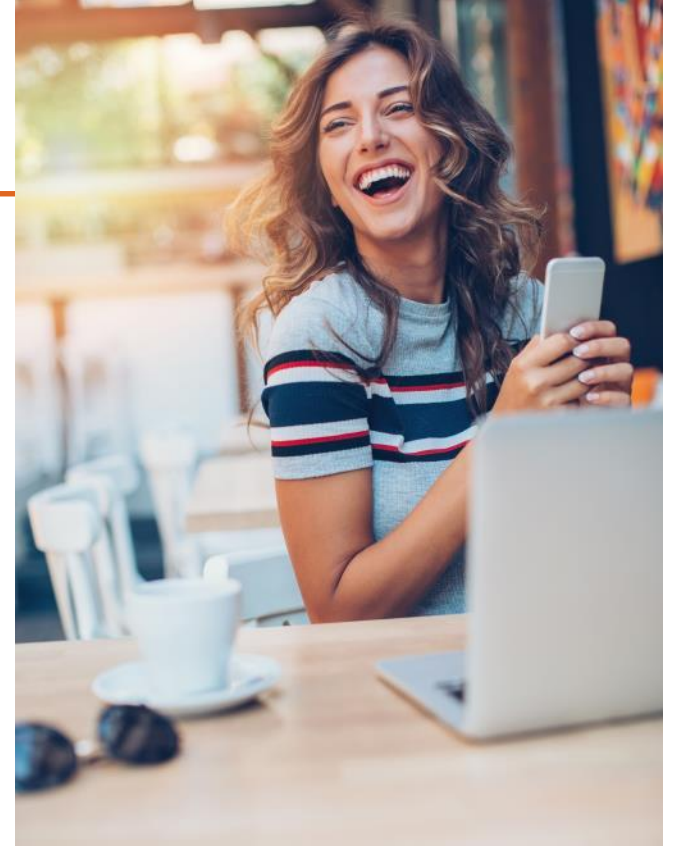
Support yourself with healthy lifestyle habits

When you're physically strong, relaxed, and well rested, you're better able to handle the curveballs that life inevitably throws your way. But when you're already exhausted and overwhelmed, any little hiccup has the potential to send you off the rails and straight toward the refrigerator. Exercise, sleep, and other healthy lifestyle habits will help you get through difficult times without emotional eating.

- **Make daily exercise a priority.** Physical activity does wonders for your mood and energy levels, and it's also a powerful stress reducer. And getting into the exercise habit is easier than you may think.
- **Aim for 8 hours of sleep every night.** When you don't get the sleep you need, your body craves sugary foods that will give you a quick energy boost. Getting plenty of rest will help with appetite control and reduce food cravings.
- **Make time for relaxation.** Give yourself permission to take at least 30 minutes every day to relax, decompress, and unwind. This is your time to take a break from your responsibilities and recharge your batteries.
- **Connect with others.** Don't underestimate the importance of close relationships and social activities. Spending time with positive people who enhance your life will help protect you from the negative effects of stress.

Additional Tools

- ❖ Self-Talk
- ❖ Visualization
- ❖ Become more Assertive
- ❖ Stress Management
- ❖ Modify Your Environment
- ❖ Follow the Rules
- ❖ Create a Motivation List
- ❖ Create Loving Reminders/Messages



Dealing with Setbacks

- ❖ Develop a relapse plan
- ❖ Use positive self-talk
- ❖ Modify your goals or expectations, if necessary

**It's progress,
not perfection!**



Thank You for Attending

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