

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 for obesity-related health problems, such as diabetes and heart disease. And it can 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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About Perspectives...

We are a private outpatient group practice offering individual, couple, family & group counseling services. Our goal is to provide clients with affordable treatment in a sensitive and understanding manner, tailoring the treatment to their individualized needs.

Our counselors have been providing services since 1981 and are committed to providing clients with the highest quality personalized treatment services possible. Experienced and caring clinicians will work with you to determine the nature of your problems and develop a treatment plan to assist you in their resolution.

For a complete listing of our office locations and a directory of our staff, please see page 2 of the newsletter. You can also visit us online at www.perspectives-counseling.com for more information.

To Contact Us:

Contact our Intake Coordinators at 866/296-5262 to set up an appointment with one of our staff.

For information you might find useful in your every day life, visit us on the web at:

www.perspectives-counseling.com.

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Eating Disorders and Depression

One third to one half of people with eating disorders report struggling with depression and anxiety.

Sometimes depression can lead to eating disorders – and for some, eating disorders can trigger depression. There are three major eating disorders: anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating disorder. While the symptoms of each are different, people experiencing these illnesses generally are also suffering from stress, social pressure, and other mental health problems. Each is treatable, but can cause serious physical and emotional problems, if left untreated.

The Basics:

Anorexia Nervosa – Anorexia's core symptom is an intense, unreasonable fear of becoming fat, which doesn't ease even with severe weight loss and extreme reduction of food intake. Untreated anorexia has severe physical consequences – disrupted menstrual periods, malnutrition, and even death.

Bulimia Nervosa – The key characteristic of bulimia is ongoing bingeing (eating large quantities of food) and purging (vomiting, excessive exercise or use of laxatives). Stress, intense fear of gaining weight and depression are some triggers for bulimia. People with the disorder eat to ease these stresses, and then seek to relieve the guilt they feel for overeating by purging. All the purging methods cause physical problems in time, including electrolyte imbalances, which impair nerve function, dehydration, and stomach and muscle cramps.

Binge Eating Disorder – Binge eating is compulsive overeating throughout the day. People with this disorder often eat quickly, feel out of control while eating, hoard and hide food from others. They are often depressed, with feelings of self-disgust, guilt and isolation. Binge eating, like anorexia and bulimia, is harmful to one's health. Problems triggered by binge eating can include high blood pressure, heart problems, joint pain and fatigue.

Body image disturbance underlies the development of all eating disorders. Women, in particular, are socialized to believe their worth and power comes from rigid cultural definitions of beauty, including thinness. The result of this may be the development of depression, self-loathing and eating disorders.

Getting Help

Your doctor, a mental health professional or these other sources may also help.

- National Mental Health Association: www.nmha.org, 1-800-969-6642
- National Eating Disorders Association: www.nationaleatingdisorders.org
- The Eating Disorders Site: www.closetoyou.org/eatingdisorders
- The Something Fishy Website on Eating Disorders: www.somethingfishy.org
- AnorexicWeb: www.anorexicweb.com
- Anorexia Nervosa and Related Disorders: www.anred.com
- American Dietetic Association: www.eatright.org
- Overeaters Anonymous: www.oa.org

Source: NMHA Campaign for America's Mental Health

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