



## Emotional Eating

Do you tend to eat more when you're stressed? How about when you're tired or sad? The amount of food you eat depending on how you're feeling is called emotional eating. This is what happens when you eat to fill emotional needs rather than your stomach.

When we emotionally eat we tend to listen more to our appetite than our physical hunger. But how can we tell the difference?

Emotional Hunger	Physical Hunger
Comes on suddenly	Comes on gradually
Craves specific comfort foods	Lots of different foods sound satisfying
Lacks complete satisfaction	Stops when you're full
Triggers feelings of guilt and shame	Doesn't make you feel bad about yourself

Emotional hunger can't be filled with food. It may feel good in the moment, but even after you're done eating the bad feelings will still be there. You can even end up feeling worse later because of the unnecessary calories you consumed and the lack of willpower you had in that moment.

The trick to handling emotional eating is to recognize why you want to eat those foods in the first place. Common causes of emotional eating include stress, boredom, habits, and of course emotions. These usually cause you to get wrapped up in the moment and think of only immediate satisfaction rather than remembering your future goals. By identifying why you want to eat, you can find alternate ways to deal with those feelings.

If it's because you're *lonely*, call someone who makes you feel better or play with a pet.

If it's because you're *bored*, read a book or do an activity you enjoy.

If it's because you're *stressed*, dance to your favorite song or try some yoga.

One of the best ways to combat emotional eating is to take a step back and recognize that you are eating because you want to rather than you need to. Give yourself the chance to realize what's happening



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and then try to make a different decision. Try to ward off the craving by doing a different activity and letting yourself know that you can resist if you really want to.

Using food from time to time as a pick me up isn't always a bad thing, but when it becomes habit to eat unhealthy foods whenever you may be feeling down is when it can become a problem. By recognizing these hunger differences and changing our patterns accordingly, we can set ourselves up to be in better emotional and physical shape.

