

Week 4: Emotions and Eating

Opening Thoughts

- We are taught that food is love, comfort, soothing, reward, etc.
- Dieting itself is an emotional experience.
- The emotional comfort of food is negated by the guilt we feel afterwards.
- Loss of control eating can be mistaken for emotional eating.

The Continuum of Emotional Eating



Emotional Triggers for Eating

- stress, anxiety
- boredom, procrastination
- bribery, reward, celebration
- soothing, comfort
- frustration, anger, rage
- love, connection
- excitement
- release

— “

Emotional eating is only a problem when you abuse it; feelings go straight to eating, with no interpretation.

- Ellyn Satter

— ”

The Four Essential Questions

Am I biologically hungry?

What am I feeling?

What do I need?

Would you please...?

Healing Emotional Eating

- Prioritize self-care.
- Identify the reward you have been getting from emotional eating.
- Replace guilt with self-compassion.
- Appreciate the gift of emotional eating.

PHYSICAL HUNGER	vs.	EMOTIONAL HUNGER
Develops gradually	HOW IT STARTS	Happens suddenly and feels urgent
In the stomach (stomach growling)	WHERE IT'S LOCATED	A thought you can't get out of your head
Almost any foods	WHAT SOUNDS GOOD	Only specific comfort foods
Once your stomach is full	WHEN IT'S SATISFIED	Not until you feel uncomfortably full

Deconstructing Eating Behavior

Some people cope with uncomfortable feelings and unmet needs by eating, binge eating or restricting food. Many times, people are not even aware of this behavior - even while they are doing it! These two practices can help nurture awareness and change.

What am I feeling, now?

Refer to this list of feelings to help you label you identify and name your emotions.

Fearful	Angry	Sad	Joyful	Disgusted	Surprised	Shame
edgy	exasperated	dejected	amused	appalled	amazed	disgraced
frightened	hostile	gloomy	delighted	contemptful	astonished	embarrassed
nervous	irritable	grief	gratified	disdainful	dumbfounded	guilty
scared	outraged	hopeless	happy	indignant	flabbergasted	humiliated
wary	resentful	lonely	satisfied	repulsed	shocked	mortified
worried	vengeful	sorrowful	silly	revolted	startled	remorseful

What do I need, now?

What do I need, right now, to deal with my current feelings? Refer to ideas below. It's okay if you don't know what you need. The action of being aware, and just checking-in with your possible needs is progress (if your needs were obvious, you wouldn't be turning to food).

Distraction	Support	Confront Feelings	Self-care
change your environment	call loved one	journal	set boundaries
funny movie or video	email loved one	CBT	be vulnerable
internet	text loved one	match music to feelings	self-massage
music	group text/chat	talk with therapist	rest/nap
friend hangout	talk with spiritual advisor	sit with feelings for 10 minutes	go outside
window-shop	talk with therapist	reframe your thoughts	unplug from devices
play with your pet	try a therapy app	adjust your viewpoint	meditate

Learning and Letting Go

If you've ever eaten in a manner that felt out of control, you probably recognize the negative emotions that follow. However, these episodes can also be powerful learning experiences...if you are willing to reflect upon them.

Before: What was the trigger? Why was I vulnerable?

- Tired
- Hungry
- Stressed
- Busy
- Other?

Did I carry unrealistic expectations?

Did I get stuck in negative thinking or another thinking trap?

Did I have a need that I was unwilling or unable to meet?

After: What could I do different next time?

- Respect my vulnerability
- Set boundaries
- Shift my environment
- Eat consistently
- Eat mindfully
- Recognize taste fatigue
- Rest
- Other?