

Are You an Emotional Eater?

Many people turn to food to cope with emotions or for comfort. It's possible to have patterns of emotional eating and not be aware of them. Here are some signs that are likely indicators of emotional eating. You might be an emotional eater if:

1. The hunger comes on suddenly and the need to eat feels urgent. Physiological hunger comes on slowly and it's okay to delay eating.
2. You keep eating even if you aren't hungry anymore or the "hunger" doesn't go away although you are physically full.
3. You eat to the point of physical discomfort.
4. You don't know whether you were hungry or not when you ate.
5. After you eat you realize you aren't aware of how much you ate or how it tasted.
6. You have feelings of shame, guilt, or embarrassment after eating.
7. You eat because you are bored, tired, lonely, or excited.
8. Hunger accompanies an unpleasant emotion—anger, hurt, fear, anxiety. Emotional eating begins in your mind—thinking about food—not in your stomach.
9. You crave a specific food and won't feel content until you have that. If you are eating for physical hunger, any food will fill you up.
10. You keep eating (or grazing, or nibbling) because you just can't figure out what you are hungry for. Nothing seems to hit the spot (physical hunger goes away no matter what food you choose to fill up on).



Take Charge of Emotional Eating

Start with a winning game plan. Build a foundation for lasting results with these tried-and-true success tips.

1 Practice asking yourself why you are eating or why you are feeling hungry instead of focusing solely on what to eat. This helps you identify the root cause of your overeating.

2 Create a clear picture of what “peace with food” means for you. Visualize yourself at your best and the role you want food and eating to play in your life.

3 Use curiosity to target what you're really craving. Before you eat, ask yourself what triggered your hunger and what you are feeling. Feeling hungry doesn't necessarily mean you need food. You may need something else like a break, stress-relief, reassurance, or even sleep.

4 Substitute curiosity for self-blame and perfectionism when you get off track. There is a lot of important information available when things don't go well. Examine why you overate and what you can learn from any missteps. This helps you be successful in the future.

5 Develop a bigger vocabulary to describe your emotions. Getting better at identifying your feelings helps you learn how to respond to them instead of overeating.

6 Record what's on your mind. Write a paragraph or two about how you are feeling every day. Journaling is a powerful way to download your brain and address your emotions directly instead of turning to food.