Curb Emotional Eating and Regain Control

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Let's face it. Most of us have the urge to eat things we know we shouldn't. And when we're feeling emotional, the urge can be even stronger. Emotional eating is damaging to your self-esteem and your health. It can even get expensive.

Gaining control over yourself and minimizing your emotional eating can be challenging, but important. There are far healthier ways to deal with emotional discomfort.

Minimize emotional eating with these strategies:

1. **Get unhealthy food out of the house.** You don't often hear of someone emotionally eating too much salad, broccoli, or steamed salmon. Give yourself a fighting chance and minimize the opportunity to eat emotionally.

2. **Focus on hunger.** Before you eat, **ask yourself if you're hungry.** Show yourself that you often want to eat even when your body doesn't want any food. Keep telling yourself that you're the type of person that only eats when you're hungry. In time, you'll grow to believe it.

3. **Identify your triggers.** Notice when you're most likely to eat without any discretion. Is it at night? After a conversation with your ex? Financial pressure? Loneliness? Identify your triggers and avoid them or find another way to deal with those times that doesn't involve food. Retrain yourself to respond in a new way.

4. **Focus on being more present.** It's hard to feel stressed or out of sorts when

your mind is focused on the present. **We can only drive ourselves crazy when we focus on the past or the future.** It's when we're fantasizing that we get upset. Keep your attention on what you're doing.

5. **Pause.** When you get the urge to eat poorly, stop yourself and just sit for a minute. Notice how the urge feels. Where do you feel it? How would you describe it? Sit with it and observe it. Do this for at least 10 minutes. Keep telling yourself that you only eat when you're hungry. The urge may go away on its own.

6. **Relax.** When you want to eat, but you know you shouldn't, try to relax your neck and shoulders. Take a deep breath. Visualize something that you find relaxing. Listen to relaxing music. Do whatever is convenient and soothing. Your urge to eat will be greatly diminished.

7. **Celebrate progress.** Each time you successfully avoid eating emotionally, congratulate yourself. **It gets easier each time you're successful.** Keep the progress going. For some people, it takes surprisingly few successes to make a permanent change.

8. **Learn to work through discomfort in other parts of your life.** Emotional eating is just an ineffective way of dealing with discomfort. Enhance your ability to deal with unpleasant feelings by experiencing them more often and dealing with them appropriately.

   • Watch movies or read books that make you uncomfortable and learn to relax through the discomfort.

   • Keep going when you feel like quitting. For example, maybe you've decided to clean the kitchen, but you're only halfway done and want to quit. Relax, and keep going.

- Avoid giving in to the first signs of discomfort.

9. **Eat mindfully.** Eat slowly and notice how your food tastes and feels. Remove all distractions. Avoid eating while watching TV, talking with friends, or playing on your phone. When you're eating, all you should be doing is eating.

- This is a powerful tactic. **You'll find that many junk foods aren't enjoyable when you eat them slowly and mindfully.**

Emotional eating is a common health challenge. Not only do people overeat, but they eat poorly. **Years of emotional eating can lead to obesity and other health issues.** Make yourself a priority and curb your tendency to eat emotionally.