

# Overcoming Emotional Eating

**How to Tackle Overeating  
Caused by Emotions, Stress  
and Cravings**

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# Overcoming Emotional Eating

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## Emotions and Eating

Emotions are useful for providing us with information about the situations we face, they prepare us to respond to the situation and influence how we behave.

For example, when seeing a close friend, we may feel 'excited' and 'happy' to see them, which leads us to give them a hug and a kiss. If we've had a bad day, however, we might feel 'stressed' and 'unhappy' and we might be a bit 'snappy' or 'argumentative' in this case.

People learn, sometimes subconsciously, that food can give comfort and they may often turn to food when they have emotional ups and downs.

Certain foods, such as those high in fat and sugar, when eaten stimulate the release of hormones in the brain which give a sense of well-being or happiness.

Eating these types of food when experiencing negative emotions can provide a sense of relief and feelings of comfort. This action of eating for comfort, reinforces the behavior of eating to feel better in response to uncomfortable emotions and feelings.

### Eating, it's Emotional.

Eating for emotional reasons is fairly common and it is estimated that 75% of overeating is caused by emotions. We learn, in some cases subconsciously, that food gives us comfort and therefore we often turn to food when we have emotional ups and downs.

When we eat for emotional reasons, soon the eating becomes a habit, and these eating habits stop us solving our emotional problems effectively. In effect we use food as a coping mechanism.

All kinds of emotions can result in overeating and the resulting weight gain just adds to the emotional distress and frustration. This becomes a bit of a vicious circle, and many people get stuck on merry-go-round of overeating, weight gain and dieting.

Emotional eating isn't just prompted by negative emotions and feelings. Positive feelings can also be a trigger for emotional eating such as falling in love, celebrating a success or big occasion, or after a really productive day in office.

As we grow up, we learn and are taught lots of different behaviors for everything in life. Eating is no exception. Early childhood experiences may shape our relationship with food and eating. It is common for children to be taught to finish everything on their plate and as adults it is very hard to leave something on your plate, even when you are full to bursting point. This sort of behavior or habit can be unlearned and reshaped, but it takes time and effort.

### "Comfort" Foods

We all have our own comfort foods. Interestingly, they may vary according to moods and gender. One study found that happy people seem to want to eat things like pizza, while unhappy people tend to prefer ice cream and cakes. Bored people crave salty, crunchy things, like potato snacks. Researchers also found that men seem to prefer hot, homemade comfort meals, like steaks and stews. Women tend to go for sweet foods such as chocolate and ice cream.

High-fat, high-sugar foods, like chocolate or biscuits, may activate certain chemicals in the brain that create a sense of well-being and fulfilment. This almost addictive quality may actually make you reach for these foods more often during emotional upset.

### Physical Hunger or Emotional Hunger?

We're all emotional eaters to some extent (who hasn't suddenly found room for dessert after feeling completely full?). But for some people, emotional eating can be a real problem, causing serious weight gain or cycles of bingeing and purging.

The trouble with emotional eating (apart from the health issues) is that once the pleasure of eating is gone, the feelings that cause it to remain. And you often may feel worse about eating the amount or type of food you did. That's why it helps to know the differences between physical hunger and emotional hunger.

Next time you reach for a snack, check in and see which type of hunger is driving it.

<b>Physical Hunger</b>	<b>Emotional Hunger</b>
Tends to come on gradually and can be postponed	Feels sudden and urgent
Can be satisfied with any number of foods	Causes very specific cravings (e.g., for Pizza, or Chocolate)
Once full, you're likely to stop eating	You tend to eat more than you would normally
Doesn't cause feelings of guilt	Can cause guilt afterwards

## Overcoming Emotional Eating

Emotional eating becomes a habit, and this stops people dealing with emotions in a more effective way. Essentially, food is used as a way of coping.

Many different emotions can result in overeating and the resulting weight gain just adds to the emotional distress and frustration. This can become a vicious circle, and people may get stuck on merry-go-round of overeating, weight gain and dieting.

If we eat high fat and sugar foods when feeling good, the hormones in the brain reinforce and heighten these good feelings. In a similar way, this behavior can become a habit.

Identifying what emotional triggers are responsible for our overeating is the first step in unpicking the unhelpful eating habits. This is where we need to be honest with ourselves and really identify what is going on. We can then find alternative methods of dealing with these emotional situations rather than using food as a coping mechanism.

Once these emotional triggers are identified, having an alternative coping mechanism or distraction can help. Alternative activities like going for a walk, listening to music, writing an email or web blog or do any other pleasurable or necessary activity can help until the urge to eat passes.

Sometimes simply distracting yourself from eating and developing alternative habits is not enough to deal with the emotional distress that leads to overeating. Relaxation exercises, meditation or individual or group counselling are techniques that can address the underlying emotional problems which are causing overeating and teach provide more effective and healthier ways of dealing with emotional situations.

### What Causes Emotional Overeating Disorder?

Emotional overeating disorders can be difficult and devastating for those who suffer from them. What makes this happen? Why is it that some people, knowingly or unknowingly, turn to food for comfort? Here are some thoughts and ideas on those questions.

Emotional overeating disorder is a general term that refers to any of various eating habits where genuine hunger is not the motivational factor. It is more common among women than men, but men are not immune - especially young men in their teens and twenties. Those who suffer from this disorder associate food with emotional comfort and will turn to eating to escape negative feelings.

#### **Past Trauma**

For some with emotional overeating disorder, the problem stems from past traumatic events. Someone who suffered sexual abuse, for example, or some other kind of sexual trauma may overeat in response to feelings of anxiety and confusion. The result is a fatter body, which some sources suggest may cause the sufferer to feel "protected" from being attractive to the opposite sex. Subconsciously or consciously, the sufferer wants to be unattractive. Other examples of past trauma or unmet needs may cause a person to turn to emotional overeating.

#### **Poor Self-Image**

People who suffer from low self-esteem and a negative self-image may seek escape by overeating. In a way, emotional overeating is a physical expression of what the sufferer feels inside, and the resulting weight projects the same image of self-disrespect.

#### **Self-Medication**

Like alcoholics, those who struggle with emotional overeating may be unconsciously using food as a drug. Eating numbs or dulls the emotions that might be too hard to deal with otherwise.

#### **Depression**

Studies indicate a strong correlation between depression and emotional overeating. Ironically, sometimes as depression grows worse a sufferer loses weight; weight loss means the sufferer is not eating as much, and therefore not engaging in his or her coping mechanism.



# Overcoming Emotional Eating

## **Stress**

Prolonged, unrelieved stress can have a profound effect on the body. Stress stimulates the body to produce, among other chemicals, the hormone cortisol. Cortisol apparently has a hunger-stimulating effect, and as the stressful emotions increase along with the cortisol, a cycle of emotional eating can play out.

## **Individual Triggers**

There are triggers or causes of emotional overeating that are not necessarily in the categories above. Some examples might be:

- Boredom
- Oral need or a need to satisfy your mouth's need to do something
- Social pressure or embarrassment at eating in public, resulting in overeating in private
- Financial stress
- Relationship difficulties

### Could Your Weight Gain Be the Result of Emotional Eating?

On a piece of paper write down the earliest weight you can remember on the left-hand side.

Next, write down your current weight on the right-hand side.

Now think about the changes in your weight over time from your earliest weight memory to the present time and note them down in order between the two end weights.

Make a note of your age alongside these weights.

Next think about what was happening in your life at these times for example, doing exams, getting married, having children, changing jobs, being unwell etc.

What does this show you?

Is your weight linked to what was happening in your life at that time?

Does your weight go up or down with emotional times in your life?

### Starting to Identify Emotional Eating

Tick any of the following statements that are true:

- I eat when I feel bad - anxious, depressed, lonely, down, helpless, stressed, worried
- I eat when there is nothing to do, when I am bored.
- I eat when I feel stressed, overwhelmed, when I am too busy or rushing around
- I eat when I have had a bad day
- I eat when I can't be bothered with my weight management plan
- I eat when something goes wrong
- I eat when something happens in my relationship
- I eat comfort foods
- I feel out of control when eating or around food
- I eat when something big happens in my life
- I eat to relieve tension
- I eat when I feel good - happy, excited, joyful, content
- I eat when I am in love
- I eat to celebrate
- I eat as a reward
- I eat to relax
- When I eat for emotional reasons, I don't feel full or satisfied

Most people will have ticked at least one of these. Everybody experiences emotional eating to some extent.

If you feel you have ticked a lot and can identify that you eat for emotional reasons, then devising a plan to deal with emotional eating will help with your weight management goals.

### How Are Your Emotions Linked to Food?

#### Exercise

On a piece of paper write down the earliest weight you can remember on the left-hand side

Now, write down your current weight on the right-hand side.

Now think about the changes in your weight over time from your earliest weight memory to the present time and jot them down in order between these weights. Make a note of your age alongside these weights. Next think about what was happening in your life at these times for example, doing exams, getting married, changing jobs, being unwell etc.

What does this show you?

Is your weight linked to what was happening in your life at that time?

Does your weight go up or down with emotional times in your life?

## Overcoming Emotional Eating

### Exercise

#### Mealtime experiences

Cast your mind back to when you were growing up. Think about your early experiences around mealtimes and food. Think of a typical mealtime. What was it like? Who was there? What was talked about?

Who prepared the meal? What was their attitude to this task? How could you tell?

How important was the meal to your family life?

Was there an “important Person” at the meal? Who was it? What were their attitudes?

What were the dynamics during mealtime between participants?

What were your emotional experiences of mealtimes?  
What was typically said to you at mealtimes?

How do you think these experiences affect your eating today?

Are you able to see clearly a link between your current eating habits and these experiences?

Food has many meanings and associations; it is not just food. Food becomes something to make us feel better; it is loaded with memories and feelings.

**Thinking about ‘controlling’ what you eat leads to depriving ourselves and the more we do this the more we want to eat.**

Tackling the emotional side of eating is not easy, but by identifying these early emotions and feelings associated with food, you can change the way you think about your eating and in turn change the way you behave.

### Keeping A Food and Mood Diary to Tackle Emotional Eating

Now you have an idea that your eating maybe triggered by your emotional state, the next step is to start to understand what situations, emotions and feelings are triggers to your emotional eating.

Keeping a food diary will help you to see when, how much and what types of food you eat.

Add to this what was happening at the time, what you were thinking about, and how you felt physically and emotionally with help you to identify eating triggers.

Once you have an idea of the emotional triggers, you can analyze why and how you respond and then work on ways to manage your actions differently.

#### **Keep a food and mood diary for a week.**

Below is an example diary that you can use or adapt to record your food and moods.

Time of Day	What was happening?	What were you thinking?	How you felt physically	How you felt emotionally	What you ate & Drank Food and Drink
11am	Busy day in the office	Needed to get away from desk	Tired, unable to concentrate	Stressed, under pressure	4 biscuits, strong coffee with 1 sugar
8pm	Out with friends	Can't wait to enjoy myself, I deserve a treat	Fine	Excited, happy	2 large glasses of wine, handful of crisps, handful of peanuts, pizza & salad, chocolate brownie & ice cream

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### Understanding Your Emotions

Use your food and mood diary to identify any emotional triggers.

The following guide provides steps to help you analyze and then change your response to emotions that might trigger you to overeat.

#### Identify the situation

What is the situation that is causing you to eat?

#### What was your emotional response?

Describe your emotions and feelings

Use the table to help you describe how you felt.

Happy	Joyful	Cheerful
Calm	Excited	Exhilarated
Content	Hopeful	Euphoric
Love	Gratitude	Admiration
Curiosity	Interested	Desire
Pride	Self-confident	Sociable
Generous	Sympathetic	Admiration
Surprised	Amusement	Attraction
Sad	Irritated	Discouraged
Unhappy	Annoyed	Disappointed
Depressed	Frustrated	Guilty
Uneasy	Mad	Shame
Tense	Angry	Tired
Embarrassed	Enraged	Flat
Nervous	Jealous	Not bothered
Anxious	Sorrow	Hopeless
Frightened	Envy	Indifferent
Fearful	Greed	Disgusted
Alarmed		Revulsion

## Overcoming Emotional Eating

### What were you thinking about?

What thoughts occurred just before to the situation occurred?

What do you believe your thoughts were?

Here are some examples to help you:

Sally: I felt **angry** and **sad** because I thought **my friend cancelled a night out, they don't want to spend time with me.**

Dave: I felt **frustrated** and **embarrassed** because I thought **I had made a mistake and done a bad job at work today.**

### What did you do?

How did you behave?

Here are some examples to help you:

Sally: I went home and **ate** a large packet of crisps and some biscuits.

Dave: I **didn't go** to the gym, instead I **drank** a bottle of wine and **ate** a bar of chocolate.

### Are the thoughts accurate?

What evidence do you have that support your thoughts?

What evidence do you have that your thoughts are **not** accurate?

Are your thoughts balanced?

Sally: My friend has cancelled before, but she always rearranges, she is very busy at the moment. We had a good time last time.

Dave: My boss was angry with me, but I corrected the mistake quickly. The rest of my work is fine. I don't often make mistakes. Other people make more mistakes than me.

If you do have evidence that your thoughts are accurate and balanced, then you might have a real problem that needs to be solved.



## Overcoming Emotional Eating

### Thinking things through

What new thoughts might be better?

How might your emotions change?

How do you think you would behave this time?

Here are some examples to help you:

Sally: My friend cancelled because she said she had a work commitment. We can re-arrange another time to meet up. I feel happy and will look forward to when we do meet.

Dave: I made a mistake, which I have corrected. Everyone makes mistakes from time to time; it's how you deal with them that's important. I feel hopeful I can deal with this situation better next time.

**Analyzing your thoughts, emotions and consequent behavior can help you to change your thought processes which lead to negative emotions and behavior.**

### Alternatives to Emotional Eating

To help you manage emotional eating, you may need to find alternatives to food that will provide emotional fulfilment.

#### Feeling bored

Write down a list of activities you enjoy doing or some that you might want to start doing. When you feel bored, use this list to inspire you to do something else.

#### Feeling anxious, nervous or tired

Learn some relaxation techniques and practice these. Plan to do some exercise or take a brisk walk. Take a relaxing bath.

#### Feeling depressed or lonely

Call someone who you enjoy speaking to. Look at photos or think about a past pleasant occasion. Play with a pet.

### Stress and Overeating

Some people eat more (especially high fat and high sugar foods) during times of stress, while others report a decrease or no change. People who report themselves to be stress-driven eaters or drinkers have a higher BMI and eat more sugar, salt, fat and drink more alcohol. People who report feeling stressed also do less physical activity. Stress may also cause a lack of sleep, which in turn can lead to an increase in appetite. The stress hormone, cortisol triggers cravings for salty, sweet, and high-fat foods.

#### **What is 'stress'?**

When faced with the appearance of a large, angry-looking, wild animal we tend to experience the emotions of fear and anxiety. These emotions get our body ready to respond to this potentially life-threatening situation, we either need to run away very quickly or find a way to stop the animal from attacking. Before we decide how to behave, our emotions cause an increase in our heart rate and the supply of fuel in our blood ready for the physical action about to take place. At this point we behave either by running away or fighting.

Stress describes the feelings that people experience when the life demands more of them than they are able to give, when their ability to cope is reduced or not sufficient. People can often feel overwhelmed and under pressure during these times.

Everyone is affected by stress and it is a completely normal reaction that we all experience from time to time when faced with situations that we feel are too much for us.

Sources of stress include life experiences, work, relationships, money, traumas, or everyday hassles. They can also be created within us; this is often the most common cause of stress. The thoughts and feelings which might cause stress include unrealistic expectations, uncertainties, low self-esteem and feeling something bad is going to happen.

The workplace is also a key factor in stress. Many people are found to be suffering from work-related stress.

Stress can be experienced in many different ways ranging from physical symptoms such as sweating or racing heart to changes in behavior and mood. These can be experienced to different degrees.

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People respond to 'stress' in different ways. Some people may eat or drink more or take different foods and drinks to what they would choose at other times.

### Do You Eat or Drink Because Of Stress?

#### **I should... I want...**

'Shoulds' - these are demands on your time - 'I should exercise more'; 'I should go to work'.

'Wants' - these are fulfilling, enjoyable activities - 'I want to go to the cinema'; 'I want to have fun'.

If your life is full of 'shoulds' or 'demands' you may experience constant stress, this generates negative emotions and feelings and can create a desire for pleasure. This in turn leads to a high-risk situation where you may rationalize an indulgence such as overeating as 'justified'.

"I'm so busy at work, I deserve to eat this chocolate bar"

"I'm should do some exercise, but I too tired tonight and my favorite program is on TV"

Not having other non-food pleasurable activities may lead you to view eating or drinking as the only means of escape to obtain pleasure or avoid emotional distress.

#### **Exercise**

List the 'shoulds' in your life - the demands on your time and what you think you 'should be doing' Now list the 'wants' (The activities you like doing and want to do more of, but not related to food or alcohol).

Do you think there is a balance between 'shoulds' and 'wants'?

Think about your eating habits, do you think you eat to balance out the 'shoulds' in your life? What alternative pleasurable activities that you can do instead of eating or drinking?

### Identifying and Managing Stress

Identifying what makes you feel stressed, and the physical, psychological and behavioral symptoms associated with these stressful events is the first step in helping to manage your stress.

There are many suggested methods of dealing with stress, including using relaxation, breathing exercises and improving sleeping patterns.

Some people find practicing positive thinking and taking steps to distract themselves from thinking negative thoughts can help reduce some of the symptoms of stress.

Practicing skills such as being assertive and prioritizing activities can also be useful.

Therapy can also be an option to help reduce stress and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), counselling, hypnotherapy and neuro-linguistic processing (NLP) have all been used to treat stress.

### Dealing with Stress Eating

Recognizing when you are experiencing stress and learning to respond to stress in a planned way rather than automatically can help you to manage stress more successfully.

Use the list of signs to identify if you are experiencing stress.

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## Signs of Stress

### Thoughts & Feelings (Psychological)

Don't know where to start  
Can't make decisions  
Procrastinating  
Unable to concentrate  
Lack of interest  
Can't finish things  
Can't cope / out of control  
Loss of creativity

Low self esteem  
Loss of confidence  
Overloaded, overwhelmed  
Anxious, worried, fearful, depressed  
Guilty, angry, negative  
Alone, frustrated, confused  
Crying at small problems  
Being irritable

### Physical

Tense muscles  
Increased heart rate  
Headaches  
Stomach problems  
Trouble sleeping  
Always tired  
High blood pressure  
Change in appetite  
Decreased sex drive /libido

Nail biting  
Teeth grinding  
Sweating  
Dry mouth  
Vomiting  
Changing in breathing  
Nausea  
Indigestion, heart burn

### Behaviors

Overeating  
Increased alcohol intake  
Increased caffeine intake  
If you smoke, smoking more  
Neglecting appearance  
Avoiding situations

Withdrawal  
Substance abuse  
Lack of communicating  
Putting off jobs  
Giving excuses

## **Are you experience the symptoms of stress?**

On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your level of stress right now.

Thinking of another very stressful situation you have experienced; how does the current stress level compare?

Has your level of stress changed recently? If so, how?

How significant is the source of the stress?

Is it a major life event?

How important is the situation?

How difficult is it to deal with?

How are you managing your stress currently?

What do you do to cope with stress at the moment?

How do these ways of coping or managing help you?

Are your ways of coping unhelpful and stopping you achieving your goals?

What alternative ways of coping could you use instead?

## **Ideas to Manage Stress**

- Breathing exercises
- Relaxation techniques
- Exercise
- Massage
- Aromatherapy
- Yoga
- Meditation
- Music
- Counselling
- Practicing mindfulness

### Dealing with Unhelpful Thoughts, Feelings and Emotions

Unhelpful emotions that trigger overeating are generally caused by unhelpful thoughts and thought patterns. You can reduce unhelpful thinking by becoming more aware of your negative thoughts, your feelings and what you did.

Use the following exercise to examine your thoughts and the emotions they trigger:

**Step 1 - Identify the trigger event - an actual situation or something that happened.**

**Step 2 - Identify what the consequences were - how did you feel, what feelings did you experience? What did you do? What were your actions?**

**Step 3 - What thoughts did you have that link 1 and 2?**

What were you saying to yourself? Identify the most important thought or Key thought.

You may have other unhelpful thoughts but deal with them one at a time.

Rate this Key thought from 1 to 10 on how much you believe this thought, 1 (you don't believe it), 10 (you very strongly believe it).

Do you notice any of the unhelpful thinking patterns?

**Step 4 - Examine the evidence**

Examine what evidence you base your thoughts on and look at any positive aspects you have ignored.

Look at the facts and how realistic your thoughts are, putting things into perspective.

- What was your Key thought?
- What is the evidence for this thought?
- What is the evidence against this thought?

### **Step 5 - Challenging thoughts**

Challenging these key “negative” thoughts means you start to look closer at them and question whether they are true or not and whether you can think in a more balanced way.

Often our beliefs about something are opinions rather than actual “facts”. They should not be something that we just accept without question.

However, it may be hard to let go of these opinions as they may be firmly held beliefs. When you hold onto a belief very strongly, you will accept that it is true, so it is important to understand that a belief is not the same as fact.

- How might someone else view this situation?
- How else could I view this situation?

### **Step 6 - Develop helpful thinking**

After considering the evidence and challenging your thoughts, replace your Key thought with a balanced, helpful thought or thoughts.



**Example**

**Identify Triggering Event**

I didn't lose any weight this week

**Consequences**

Annoyed, shame, guilty

**Thoughts**

I didn't try hard enough this week  
I can't stick to my eating plan  
I'm useless

**Key Thought**

I'm useless

**Examine the Evidence**

My Key Thought:  
I'm useless

**Facts for my Key Thought:**

I didn't lose any weight  
I ate 3 biscuits yesterday  
I didn't exercise on Monday

**Facts against my Key Thought:**

I lost a pound the week before  
I have had my 5-a-day each day this week  
3 biscuits and 1 days exercise wouldn't make that much difference  
I usually eat a lot more biscuits

## **Challenging Questions to Ask Yourself**

### **How would someone else view this situation?**

You are following your plan most of the time, your weight doesn't always go down, it doesn't mean your useless

If I didn't feel this way, how might I view this situation?

I'm making progress, some aspects of my plan are going well.

### **What other ways are there to view this situation?**

Other aspects are going well, I'm exercising more and eating less biscuits.

What positive aspects about myself or this situation am I ignoring?

I'm enjoying eating more fruit and veg and different ways to cook them. I like my new exercise plan. I feel healthier. I'm not as tired.

### **Does it really help me to think this way?**

It's making want to give up thinking and feeling this way, it makes me feel down / low.

What alternative helpful thoughts could I have?

## **Helpful Thoughts**

Review the evidence for and against your key thought.

Think about the challenging questions.

### **Replace your key thought with balanced, helpful thoughts (write them down):**

I've done well to reduce my biscuit eating. I'm enjoying my 5-a-day. I like my new exercise plan. I feel healthier and I'm not as tired. What the scales say is not the be-all and end-all. I'm happy with my progress this week and I will continue next week.

### Cravings

#### What are cravings?

Food cravings are an intense desire for certain foods or drinks. These are often high fat, high sugar or salty foods or drinks. Once a 'craving' strikes, the image in our mind makes it difficult to focus on other tasks. Cravings and hunger are not the same and being able to tell the difference will help you to manage your weight. Food cravings are extremely common, particularly among women. This makes sticking to any sort of 'diet plan' incredibly difficult.

The following table explains the differences between the two:

Hunger	Craving
Gradual	Sudden, urgent
Satisfied with any food	Specific foods
Once full, likely to stop	Tend to eat more than needed
Not emotional	Often emotional, causes guilt, might have a "trigger"

#### Causes of Cravings

Cravings are complex and they are influenced by many different factors.

- Falling blood sugar
- Lack of nutrients
- Hormones
- Medications
- Sensory triggers - advertising, television
- Emotional factors - stress, anxiety, depression, boredom, celebration, "comfort foods"
- Habit - always having dessert
- Thinking about or imagining "naughty" or favorite foods
- Cultural - birthday cake, Christmas food
- Withdrawal symptoms (of high fat, high sugar foods, alcohol, caffeine)

### Managing Cravings

Becoming aware of the times when you have a craving, and the causes or triggers can help you manage the intense urges to eat.

Understanding your mood, what you were thinking about or what you were doing when you experienced a craving is key to identifying your triggers to eating. Writing this down will help you to work out what is causing your cravings.

Have you identified any triggers or situations that cause you to crave food? Think about what the trigger or situation might be.

When you have a craving, ask yourself “am I actually hungry?” Use the table to help you decide if you are hungry or experiencing a craving.

#### **Stop and Think**

When you experience a craving stop and think about what you are trying to achieve - do you really want what you are craving?

#### **Distraction**

Distracting yourself from thinking about food by doing something else may help. For example, listening to music, reading, talking to a friend, doing some exercise or reviewing your weight management goals.

For example, Simon has cravings that are triggered by TV advertising. He decides he can switch the TV over whilst the ad breaks are on and goes to make a drink. On another occasion he puts the TV on mute and talks to his partner about what they've just been watching.

#### **Some examples of distractions**

1. Try relaxation or meditation
2. Listen to some music
3. Take some exercise
4. Talk to someone supportive
5. Review your weight management goals
6. Do a household chore
7. Go for a drive
8. Play a video game

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### **Distracting Yourself**

- Select a distraction that you think might work for you or write your own in the space.
- How will you prepare to use this technique?
- How will you tell if this works?
- What will you do if your distraction does not work?
- Will you choose another distraction and try again?

### **Give Yourself Permission to Eat the Foods You Like**

Think about a time when you said to yourself “I will not eat something”. What was the outcome? Did you find that you could only think about that food you were trying not to eat? This is fairly common; our minds work in a way that makes us do the opposite. When we say to ourselves, ‘I will not eat chocolate’, chocolate is all we think about.

Allowing yourself to have the foods you like and not ‘banning’ or ‘denying’ yourself certain foods or drinks will help you to avoid creating the craving. This is also a balanced approach to eating.

### **Reminder Cards**

When you’re experiencing a craving, it can be hard to think rationally. Writing some instructions and reminders on cards can be useful. The idea is to convince yourself that you can cope with this situation.

Here’s a few examples:

- Things are going well at the moment right now; I don’t want to mess it up
- My craving will pass if I just give it some time
- I’m not helpless, what action can I take?

### Urge Surfing

Urge surfing means learning to experience your cravings in a different way. Cravings will usually pass given time; this technique involves riding out your cravings until they go away.

Imagine that your craving is like a wave in an ocean - it will be small to start, it will slowly build and grow in size and then eventually subside and disappear.

Follow these steps:

1. Notice your breathing. Don't change it. Just let your breath flow normally.
2. Notice your thoughts. Don't judge them, just acknowledge them and focus your attention back on your breathing.
3. Observe how your craving affects your body. Notice how this change with each breath.
4. Trying to wish the craving will go away will make it grow. Replace these thoughts with an interest in what is happening and what you are experiencing, allowing the feelings to pass and subside, like the wave.
5. This can be a difficult technique to get to grips with and may some time and practice.

## Overcoming Emotional Eating

### Emotional Eating Summary

- Different emotional states and situations may affect food and calorie intake.
- Emotional eating is a conscious behavior to ease emotional distress, as well as an automatic reaction to unrecognized negative feelings.
- Stress and negative emotions have been shown to be important factors in triggering overeating as a form of coping in some overweight people.
- Emotional eating is fairly common, and it's estimated that 75% of overeating is caused by emotions.

### What's Next?

I hope you've found this guide useful. I'd recommend you print this eBook, if you haven't done so already, and work your way through each section one by one.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed at this point and feel there's a lot to think about.

Start off by deciding which part you want to start with first (it really doesn't matter ... what's important is that you start) and schedule in a 60-minute slot in your diary over the next couple of days.

Create a non-distraction zone; switch off your phone, close down your email and shut off social media. Focused time will serve you well.



## What is The F.A.T. Method?

The F.A.T. Method is an 8 week On-Line Weight Loss Program that combines everything you need to lose weight and keep it off. But there's one "secret" method that is the backbone of this method. And it's something that is often overlooked when it comes to weight loss. But it is SO POWERFUL! And extremely healthy.

The F.A.T. Method Program also includes a few other things that don't necessarily have to do specifically with weight loss but are just as important when it comes to losing weight and keeping it off.

Those other things are guidance and support.

The guidance comes from me. Throughout the 8 weeks you will get 8 Zoom modules. During these recorded Zoom calls I go over a specific topic as it relates to weight loss. Each Zoom call feeds (no pun intended) off of the previous one and in combination you are left with the ultimate lifestyle, or shall I say 'Method', to lose weight and keep it off.

Also, during the F.A.T. Method program you are put into a private Facebook group with all of the other people going through the program as well as F.A.T. Method Program graduates. The camaraderie and motivation you get is unparalleled. Many F.A.T. Method members have said this group alone is worth the price of the program. In fact, many people, after finishing the program, decide to stay in because of the group. It's that powerful.

In addition to the Zoom calls and the private Facebook group, you will also have access to our Wednesday night live Zoom calls where you get to ask any questions you have about YOUR situation. Whether it's your eating, your exercising, your mindset, etc. No question is off limits and you can ask as many as you want.

And you'll also get two separate 4 week workout programs, that can be done in your home with minimal equipment or at your gym. Included with each workout are videos and explanations of each exercise, how many sets, reps, etc.

Unlike a fad diet which only works for a short while, The F.A.T. Method is a way of life. You can see all of the testimonials on my web-site which is listed below.

## Overcoming Emotional Eating

When writing these testimonials, many people mention the weight they've lost, the inches they've lost, their clothes being much looser, the energy they have, etc.

But the best part is when they say things like how empowering the program is. How in control they feel. How liberating it is to not be consumed by food. Those are the things that are life changing.

Yes, burning fat and losing weight are great, but it's hard to beat someone saying they've never felt so in control of their life!

If you've liked what you heard and you're interested in learning even more about The F.A.T. Method, head on over to the web-site to learn more and to see when the next 8 week program is running. You could be my next testimonial! Check out The F.A.T. Method site at:

[www.theFATmethod.com](http://www.theFATmethod.com)