EMOTIONAL EATING AND MINDSET

Feel good about what you eat and enjoy every bite!

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HI THERE!

WELCOME, MY FRIEND.

Let's face it, food can be a mess of confusion. It's bad enough that the internet has completely shamed us out of enjoying food by telling us about all the bad foods there are, but it seems there is a never-ending list of diets that tell you what you should be doing to lose weight, gain energy, feel amazing and on and on.

Top that off with stress, worry, and weight gain from simply being a woman in midlife, and there can be plenty of opportunity for emotional eating to ease the pain.

Read on to learn what emotional eating is, what it means for you, and how to gain control over why and how we eat.

Heather

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WHAT'S ON THE PAGES

Take time to read through the pages and consider the questions. As always, there is no judgment here, only a way to cultivate awareness.

- [ ] WHAT IS EMOTIONAL EATING?
- [ ] ASK YOURSELF ABOUT YOUR HUNGER
- [ ] WHAT TO EAT WHEN YOU ARE HUNGRY
- [ ] WHAT TO EAT IDEA WORKSHEET
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- [ ] HUNGER AND FULLNESS SCALE
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WHAT THE HECK IS EMOTIONAL EATING ANYWAY?

Why Do We Eat?

We eat for so many reasons. Some important reasons are:

- *We need food to sustain life*
- *We need food for our health (food as medicine)*
- *Certain foods can affect health conditions (like Diabetes)*

We also eat because:

- *We are celebrating a holiday*
- *We are gathering with friends and family*
- *We are having a bad day*
- *We are lonely*
- *We are sad*
- *We are afraid*
- *We need some comfort (hello comfort foods!)*
- *We are bored*
- *Food looks good, tastes good, or smells good*

Can you see the imbalance between these two lists?

We need food to live, there is nothing that can dispute that. Yet, the reasons we eat usually fall into the "live to eat" list. These are what I call emotional reasons. While there is absolutely nothing wrong with eating for all our "emotional" reasons, it is always a good idea to tip the scales in favor of eating to live rather than living to eat. How can you tell if you are eating emotionally or eating for physcial reasons? See the guide below.

How Hungry Are You?

Physical Hunger	Versus Emotional Hunger
Your Stomach Starts Growling	**You Feel No Physical Hunger Cues**
You're Thinking About Food Options	**Thinking About Specific Foods, Like Chocolate**
You Start to Feel Low Energy	**Eating Food Feels Like the Only Option**
Hunger Grows Slowly	**Little Time Has Passed Since You Last Ate**
Enough Time Has Passed Since Your Last Meal	**Food is Unsatisfying or Doesn't Solve Issues Like Sadness or Loneliness**
Food Feels Satisfying and Doesn’t Solve Issues	**You Eat Because It Looks Good, Tastes Good or Smells Good**

WHAT TO EAT

WHEN YOU ARE PHYSICALLY HUNGRY

IT'S ALL ABOUT BALANCE

We all need to eat.

Food has the power to heal. Considering that over 80% of all disease is affected by what we eat (or don't eat), it makes good sense to make our food count.

We can drop the old thinking of excluding whole food groups or drinking nothing but juice to "detox". Instead, let's use the word balance when thinking of food.

Balance on your plate, and your meals, with a combination of vegetables and fruits, whole grain, lean proteins from plants and animals, and the healthiest fats. Make your food taste great by adding herbs and spices.

Then, balance your day by having a nutritious filling breakfast, a protein-packed lunch, and a simple but delicious dinner. Give your body a chance to rest in between meals by limiting snacking in order to balance blood sugar.

How much should you eat and when? Tap into your intuition here. When you are getting just hungry, or when your mind starts to become distracted with hunger, eat. When you are just getting full, put down your fork. It takes your brain 20 minutes to recognize fullness.

Above all, when you recognize that you are physically hungry, be kind to yourself and eat.

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WHAT TO EAT

WHEN YOU ARE PHYSICALLY HUNGRY

PROTEIN IDEAS

- Salmon
- Tofu
- Eggs

OTHER IDEAS:

CARB IDEAS

- All Fruits and Veggies
- Whole Grains
- Beans and Legumes

OTHER IDEAS:

HEALTHY FAT IDEAS

- Olive Oil
- Avocadoes
- Tahini
- Fatty Fish

OTHER IDEAS:

WHAT TO DO

WHEN YOU ARE EMOTIONALLY HUNGRY

HOW DO YOU FEEL TODAY?

Emotional eating might feel complicated. But it doesn't have to be.

When we are babies, we eat simply because we are hungry, and, soon after, stop simply because we feel like we have had enough. As a young child, you may have grazed here and there, eaten a few bites, and gone back to play. Your body knew how much to eat and when to say enough.

And then the adults took over.

As you got older, you may have been able to see where food became tied to your feelings. You likely grew up with a lot of influential people, who let you know that food was a source of comfort or a cure for boredom or loneliness. Soon, what you chose to eat, or not eat, became tied to your self-worth and self-esteem. Suddenly you might have found yourself eating through the day because of your feelings, rather than simply being hungry.

Emotional eating can be a hard habit to break but it is not impossible. Mindfulness becomes keenly important. Learning to identify your hunger and fullness with each meal, and in between, is a good first step.

If you have been eating for emotional reasons, you may have gotten disconnected from what true, physical hunger is. Check out the hunger/fullness scale and try to up your awareness of hunger.

What can you do when you are full enough but still want to turn to food to soothe and comfort? Let's come up with some ideas below.

The Hunger/Fullness Scale

Staying in between a 3 and 6 is ideal. Anything above a 6 is more about emotional eating, below a 3 is a setup for overeating

1 RAVENOUS	***Too hungry to care what you eat. This is a high-risk time for overeating.***
2 STARVING	**You feel you must eat now!!**
3 HUNGRY	***Eating would be pleasurable but you can wait a bit longer. A GOOD TIME TO EAT***
4 HUNGER PANGS	**You're slightly hungry, your first real thoughts of food**
5 SATISFIED	***You're content and comfortable, you are neither hungry nor full***
6 FULL	**You can feel the food in your stomach. A GOOD TIME TO STOP EATING**
7 VERY FULL	***Your stomach feels stretched and you feel sleepy and sluggish***
8 UNCOMFORTABLE	**Your stomach is too full and you wish you hadn't eaten so much**
9 STUFFED	***Your clothes feel very tight and you are uncomfortable***
10 SICK	**You feel sick and/or are in pain**

ASK YOURSELF

PHYSICAL VERSUS EMOTIONAL EATING

Do you eat when physically hungry, emotionally hungry or a combination of both?

If you are physically hungry, what foods do you eat to nourish yourself with? List some foods that not only taste good but are also good for you here.

If you feel that you are emotionally "hungry" what can you do to distract or comfort yourself? Write a few ideas here.

JOYFUL EATING IS OUR BIRTHRIGHT

YOU DESERVE THE RIGHT TO EAT AND ENJOY REAL FOOD

INSTRUCTIONS: Imagine your perfect day of eating...how would you feel, what would you wear, who you be with and where would you be?

HEATHER'S STORY

I know this food journey well. As a recovered emotional eater, I know what it feels like to eat in reaction to a hard day, or worse. In my family, food was emotional comfort, a trip to the candy store, or a cookie for your tears. Although I had all the training - MS in Clinical Nutrition and culinary training in healthy supportive cooking, learning the tools of mindfulness and compassion in relationship to hunger was a game changer for me regarding my weight, health, and wellbeing. I learned how to truly enjoy real food and eat for all the right reasons.

Join me on this journey to love every bite!

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