

# PUT A DAMPER ON EMOTIONAL EATING

Welcome to this second module of the course, where you'll discover proven strategies to help you cope with eating triggers, learn self-control techniques, and create a mindset to maintain a healthy weight moving forward into the future. The first trigger is a big one: emotional eating.

If you're an emotional eater, you're not alone. **Food is the most common means of dealing with negative feelings.** While the occasional bowl of ice cream won't cause any harm, many people take it too far. Unhealthy foods can cause a myriad of health issues when consumed in large quantities.

Negative eating also takes a toll on your self-esteem. Feeling out of control isn't empowering. You can regain that sense of control by eliminating emotional eating from your life.

## **TRY THESE TECHNIQUES TO CONTROL EMOTIONAL EATING:**

1. **Develop pleasures other than food.** Emotional eating is challenging to give up because it's so pleasurable. Food can make us feel much better, at least in the short-term. Scientists consider food as addicting as narcotics.
  - **The most effective way to give up a pleasurable habit is to find a substitute.** Determine a way you can soothe yourself without eating. You might listen to music, exercise, get a massage, take a bubble bath, or chat with a friend.
2. **Slow down.** If you have to eat, slow down. Focus on the taste and texture of each bite. You'll eat less and feel better about yourself afterwards.
3. **Learn your trigger points.** It might be coming home after a long, hard day. Or maybe you turn to food when you're bored or lonely. Recognize the

situations that bring food into the picture. Develop a strategy for staying ahead of your urges. Carry healthy snacks so you're always prepared.

4. **Learn to accept feeling uncomfortable.** Rather than trying to make yourself feel better, examine your discomfort. What does it feel like? Where is it located? **If you can look at it dispassionately, it will begin to wane.**
  - Keep in mind that emotions are a collection of chemicals that result in physical sensations. We then label a particular set of body sensations as anxiety, fear, loneliness, and so on.
  
5. **Be more aware.** Sometimes, especially when we're feeling emotional, it's easy to plop down in front of the television and devour a bag of chips before we even realize what's going on. If you're going to eat, then do nothing but eat. **Be mindful while you're eating and you'll eat less.**
  - Ask yourself, "Why am I eating this? Am I actually hungry?"
  
6. **Love your body. If you dislike your body, you're more likely to mistreat it by overeating.** It's almost impossible to make changes that affect

your body in a positive way if you hate your body in the first place.

- Think of all the amazing things your body can do. Your body is unique and awesome! Find a way to love it.

7. **Fill up on healthy food.** If you eat a healthy diet, it's difficult to eat enough to gain weight. Keep yourself comfortably full with healthy foods. If your stomach is full, eating is a less appetizing idea, even when you're dealing with emotions.
8. **Get sufficient sleep.** When we get tired, our mood suffers. Eating is also a response to a lack of energy. Willpower also suffers when we feel fatigued. Go to bed earlier.

Eating is an effective, but unhealthy, way to make ourselves feel better in the moment. **Stopping the cycle of emotional eating requires finding another way to deal with discomfort.** Emotional eating is a learned behavior. You can also learn to deal with life differently. Love yourself and make a commitment to gain control of your behavior.

In the next lesson, you'll discover how to cope with environmental triggers that cause you to eat more.

# HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TODAY:

- Do you use food to deal with negative feelings?
- What situation or feeling is your most common emotional trigger?
- Think of an activity that you enjoy other than eating.
- Make a plan to substitute this activity for eating the next time your trigger occurs.
- How will you remind yourself to follow through with your plan?