

# Emotional Eating

## **Food and feelings go together**

- We tend to link food with enjoyment, affection, and nurturing
- Food is usually part of emotion-filled events, either happy or unhappy ones
- Eating for comfort is a common behavior that comes from a deep connection within us
- Some people eat in response to emotions rather than hunger
- If you are overweight, ask yourself if emotional eating is an issue for you

## **Mind Skills can develop ways to cope without using food:**

- Cope better with the daily ups and downs of daily life
- Recognize and avoid black-and-white thinking (where things and actions are looked at as being good or bad, right or wrong)
- Avoid thinking that things should be perfect
- Use coping skills for self-control when dealing with food temptations
- Get the help you need for problem-solving

## **Mood and Weight**

- Food choices affect mood in positive or negative ways
- Learn how to eat healthier to improve your mood
- Hormones affect mood – Examples are cortisol (from adrenal glands) or estrogen (a female sex hormone)

## **Eating “triggers”**

- Recognize and avoid any “triggers” you have
- A trigger food can set off a “binge” of eating, no matter what your mood is – Examples include ice cream, cookies, nuts, potato chips
- Trigger foods are not the same as favorite foods, comfort foods, or cravings
- A trigger feeling is an emotion, good or bad, that leads to overeating - Any available food will do
- A trigger environment is a specific place or setting that leads to overeating - Like movie theaters, buffet restaurants, sporting events or social gatherings
- Eating triggers do happen – They are a sign to stop and think about how you can avoid them from happening in the future

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## **Understand the connection between emotions and eating, to help you succeed in maintaining a healthy weight**

Weight Watchers Research Department. (2009). Emotional eating, Mind skills for lasting weight loss, Mood and weight, and Eating triggers retrieved 3-3-10 from [www.weightwatchers.com](http://www.weightwatchers.com)

### **Mindful Eating**

People tend to eat mindlessly most of the time. When “chowing down,” we are usually thinking about other things and not really tasting the food.

We often respond to the sight of food with the impulse to devour it - whether or not we are actually hungry.

We miss the subtle feelings of fullness if we don't slow down to finish chewing and swallowing before we pick up the next bite

It takes 20 minutes for your body to signal its fullness. By eating fast, you are likely to overeat.

Try eating mindfully by savoring the sight, smell, texture, the color and light on the food, the connection to the outside world, the taste and feel of the food as you eat it slowly.

In mindfulness retreats, the meals are usually served in silence. They think about the food and the efforts that went into growing and preparing it.

You may feel satisfied without eating as much food as you have been eating. You can practice mindful eating when you eat alone or in silence.

Being mindful and aware of emotional eating can really help you make healthier habits. Call a friend when you feel like binging. If there is something upsetting you, figure out what to do and write it down (or do it). Take a walk or do some exercises. Take a bath or shower. Get busy doing something that takes your mind off your cravings. You can get past it if you resist for a few minutes. The urges will weaken and go away. You are more in control than you think!

Siegel, R. (2010). The mindfulness solution: Everyday practices for everyday problems, p. 261-264. New York: Guilford Press