

# Avoid Emotional Eating



**E**motional eating happens when you use food to deal with strong emotions. It can cause you to gain weight and feel bad afterwards. Learning to control emotional eating will help you become healthier.

## Clues that you may be doing some emotional eating

Are you:

- ▶ Eating when you feel upset?
- ▶ Eating when you feel happy?
- ▶ Eating comfort foods like chips? Cookies? Chocolate? Ice cream? Pizza?
- ▶ Eating in secret? When no one else is around or awake? Or, eating foods that you don't keep track of in your Lifestyle Log?
- ▶ Using food as a reward?

## Ways to deal with emotional eating

- ▶ Pay attention to when and why you eat. What situations, feelings, and thoughts lead to emotional eating?
- ▶ Keep a record and look for patterns. Are there certain times of day when you are more likely to do it? Certain foods you eat?
- ▶ Reward yourself when you resist emotional eating.
- ▶ Get to know your feelings better. Identifying your feelings can help you respond to them in healthier ways.
- ▶ Resist negative thinking.
- ▶ Identify what is causing the upsetting feelings in the first place.
- ▶ Find other ways to deal with feelings. Try:
  - ▶ Listening to music or playing the drums
  - ▶ Taking a walk, exercising, or doing some relaxation exercises
  - ▶ Talking to your parents or calling a friend and asking for support
  - ▶ Putting your feelings on paper by writing in a journal or drawing

### Additional resources

- ▶ Managing Emotions the Healthy Way: LC 21
- ▶ Overcoming Negative Thoughts: LM 4
- ▶ Emotional Eating: LM 9

### Suggested activity

For two weeks keep track of any emotional eating you do. Write down what you eat, what time you eat, and what you were feeling. Look for patterns.

### My notes

1 Limit RED foods 2 Increase GREEN activity 3 Hold Family Meetings 4 Keep Track of Weight



# Avoid Emotional Eating



*Especially for the Family Support Person*

## How can I tell if he is doing emotional eating?

- ▶ Start by talking to him. Ask directly if feelings cause him to eat when he is not hungry.
- ▶ Ask about stressful situations. How did he feel? Did he feel like eating? Explain how normal this is.
- ▶ Stay alert. He may be doing some emotional eating and not realize it. Or he may be feeling bad about it and keeping it a secret. Check to see if he is:
  - ▶ Eating comfort foods
  - ▶ Eating in secret
  - ▶ Using food as a reward
  - ▶ Using food to deal with upsetting feelings
- ▶ Other clues include:
  - ▶ Eating too fast without taking time to enjoy it
  - ▶ Eating too much food—way more than normal
  - ▶ Appearing to be upset with himself after eating
  - ▶ Shutting down emotionally when something bad happens
  - ▶ Turning to food right after being upset

## What should I do if he has been doing some emotional eating?

- ▶ Encourage him to turn to people, and not to food, when he is upset.
- ▶ Use active listening when he talks. Repeat back the most important things he says.
- ▶ Remind him to keep a record of his eating habits, and look for patterns.
- ▶ Help him deal with the real problem—the problem causing the upsetting feelings in the first place. Problem-solve. Make a plan together.
- ▶ Help him to follow a healthy eating plan that includes 3 healthy meals and 2 snacks.
- ▶ Keep RED foods out of the house.
- ▶ Encourage him to get physical activity when he is upset.

### Additional resources

- ▶ Managing Emotions the Healthy Way: LC 21
- ▶ Overcoming Negative Thoughts: LM 4
- ▶ Emotional Eating: LM 9

### Suggested activity

Help him keep track of any emotional eating he does for two weeks. Ask what he ate and what he was feeling. Help him look for patterns and problem-solve.

### My notes

1 Limit RED foods 2 Increase GREEN activity 3 Hold Family Meetings 4 Keep Track of Weight

