

How to Overcome Emotional and Binge Eating

Tips & Tricks

To overcome emotional eating, it is important to understand more about it, so let's break down & define:

- Overeating (eating past satiety)
- Emotional Eating
- Binge Eating

A Note on "Normal" Eating...

It is completely normal to eat past physical fullness and eat emotionally **occasionally**. Food is part of culture, part of celebration, and part of social events. Eating past fullness and emotionally eating become a problem when they start to interfere with your day to day life and when you start to feel "out of control" around food.

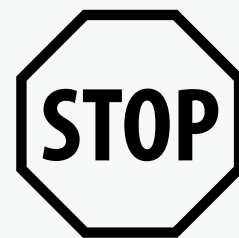
Emotional Eating

Emotional eating is eating due to the discomfort of an emotion. When we feel an emotion that is uncomfortable or that we do not want to deal with, we instead turn to food as a coping skill.

Some common emotions that prompt emotional eating:



Hunger
Anger
Loneliness
Tiredness
Stress



This can be remembered using the acronym **HALTS!**

Tips for Emotional Eating

If you believe you engage in emotional eating as a coping skill, it is important to break this **habit** and replace it with alternative beneficial **copings skills**. When you have the urge to reach for food and you think it may be for reasons other than physical hunger, STOP and refer to **HALTS** and ask yourself if you are hungry, angry, lonely, tired, or stressed. If you are hungry, make yourself a well-balanced meal you enjoy that includes a protein source. If you are reaching for food for reasons other than hunger, try implementing a new coping skill that takes you away from the kitchen! Have these coping strategies **preplanned** so you dont have to decide on them in the moment.

Different Coping Strategies

By implementing a new coping strategy, you are reinforcing a new habit that serves your well-being.

When you are angry try...

- doing 20 burpees
- singing along to a song
- cleaning your house or organizing a room



When you are lonely try...

- calling a friend
- taking a warm shower/bath
- going for a walk
- journaling



When you are tired try...

- having a nap
- making yourself a coffee/tea
- taking a 10 minute work break



Tips for Emotional Eating Cont.

When you are stressed try...

- doing 5 minutes of deep breathing
- a 2 minute meditation
- counting backwards from 100
- making a list of things of things that you find stressful and organizing into "can control" and "can't control". Focus on what you **CAN** control!



When you are feeling uncomfortable emotions...

Make space for the emotion and sit in them. It is important to recognize what the **ROOT** cause of your emotional eating is. You may start to recognize patterns of behaviour, for example: "I emotionally eat when I am stressed at work". Over time, through implementing the other coping strategies described above, you will reinforce these **positive** behaviours! It is very important that you have some go-to coping skills, so pick some favorites from the list above so you are **ready** if the urge to emotionally eat comes on!

Am I hungry or do I just want to eat?

Sometimes we eat emotionally when we are bored, when food is convenient, and when it simply tastes good. If you feel like you might "just want to eat" assess if it is real hunger or boredom/convenience.

Physical Hunger:

- Comes on gradually
- is felt in your stomach
- Is broad in what looks appealing
- is satisfied when your body has had enough

VS

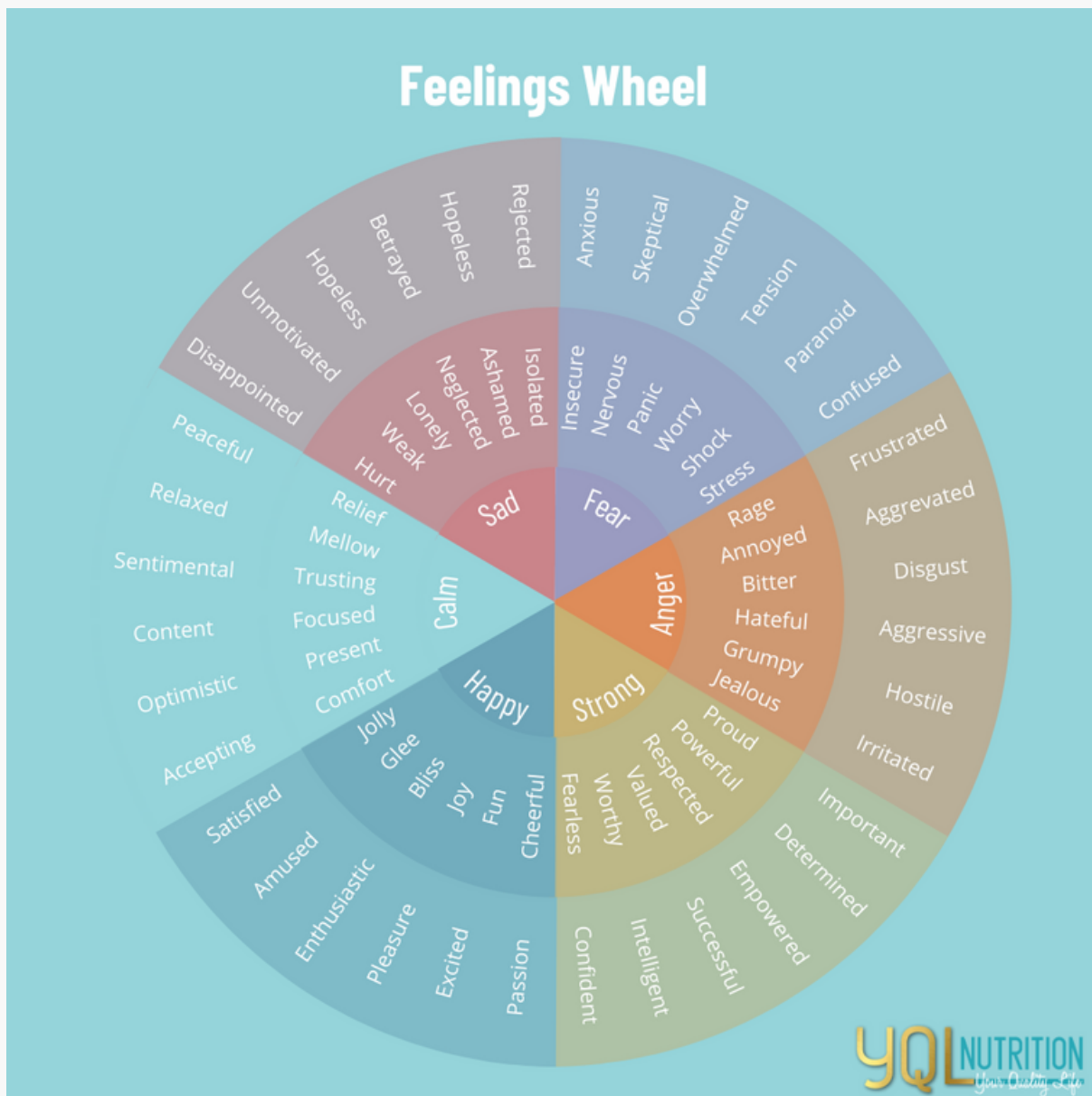
Emotional Hunger:

- Comes on suddenly
- in your mind
- is often specific (ie a craving)
- is satisfied when you achieve mental relief

Tips for Emotional Eating

Identifying the emotion

Sometimes your emotions might feel too big or broad or challenging to identify. When you are having trouble identifying how you are feeling, it is hard to determine the most appropriate coping mechanism. You can use this feelings wheel to help narrow the emotion your feeling to better find a coping mechanism that is appropriate at the time and help you avoid emotional eating.



Binge Eating vs. Overeating

It is very important to differentiate between Binge eating and overeating. If you believe you are experiencing binge eating, we recommend that you work with a mental health professional to support your recovery.

Binge Eating

Binge-eating disorder is a serious eating disorder in which you frequently consume unusually large amounts of food and feel unable to stop eating.

Symptoms of Binge Eating Disorder (BED):

- Eating unusually large amounts of food in a specific amount of time, such as over a two-hour period.
- Having episodes of binge eating 1x/week for 3 months
- Feeling that your eating behavior is out of control
- Eating even when you're full or not hungry
- Eating rapidly during binge episodes
- Eating until you're uncomfortably full
- Frequently eating alone or in secret
- Feeling depressed, disgusted, ashamed, guilty or upset about your eating
- Frequently dieting, possibly without weight loss

Overeating

Over-eating is eating past what is physically comfortable or past your physical fullness signals. We ALL do this occasionally however, the difference is that this is a CHOICE. People who overeat do not experience the same "out of body" sensation or "loss of control" that is associated with binge eating disorder.

Over eating can become a problem if it is used to cope with emotions (emotional eating) or if it interferes with physical health (for example obesity)

Questions to ask yourself if you eat past fullness...

Is this actually a problem?

Again, everyone eats past fullness **occasionally**. When it begins to become a problem is if it is interfering with your day to day life, your goals, or your health (both mental and physical). If you can say "yes" to any of these things, then it is a potential **problem** that is worth addressing and focusing on!



Am I eating at true maintenance calories?



If someone is struggling with **reoccurring** episodes of emotional overeating, or potentially binge eating disorder, this person needs to spend time at maintenance calories healing their relationship with food **FIRST**. We cannot focus on relationship with food when someone is in a deficit- during a deficit our bodies are actively trying to send us signals to eat more! Instead, we need to **practice** being in tune with hunger and fullness cues by spending time at maintenance. We recommend intuitively eating and healing relationship with food during this time and developing strong coping skills first.



Am I stuck in a scarcity mindset?

People who overeat may have a **scarcity** mindset around food, including the belief that food will not be available to them after "x" amount of time. This can sometimes come out in the **"last supper mentality"**. For example, before beginning a fat loss phase you over-eat the night before because "you will never be able to have these foods again". If you are having thoughts like this, reach out to your coach! This is why we support having **ALL** foods in your diet. Remember, there are **no off limit** foods! You truly can eat whatever you want in the amount you want. We simply suggest eating what feels **best** to you both physically and psychologically both short-term and **long-term**!



Do I honour my hunger?

If you are hungry, then make yourself a whole food **balanced** meal! When dealing with emotional eating and overeating, we need to work on building **trust** with our bodies and showing our bodies that when we are hungry we honour this hunger with a **nourishing** meal! Unsure of how to create a nourishing meal? Refer to our build a meal guidelines!

Our Recommendations

Our recommendations will be tailored based on the **unique** circumstances and history of every client, but here are some **GENERAL** takeaways:

Emotional Eating

- Practice HALTS
- Sit in your emotions and try to identify the root issue/emotion
 - begin identifying physical hunger and emotional hunger
- practice compassion and grace as you work to overcome this, it does take time!
- if emotional eating occurs frequently, we recommend spending time at maintenance calories FIRST prior to beginning a fat loss phase

Binge Eating

- Do a self assessment to see if you think you might have BED by reviewing the symptoms above
- reach out to a mental health expert to work support you in recovery
 - eat at maintenance calories and practice intuitive eating
 - honour hunger and fullness (through intuitive eating)
- Build satisfying meals and eat at a regular eating schedule (every 3-4 hours)
 - Reflect on mindset around food (ie scarcity mindset)
 - practice compassion. Recovery takes time!

Over Eating

- Identify if over eating is a problem in your life
- assess why you are overeating by reflecting on the questions above
 - assess whether it is BED or emotional eating
- utilize appropriate recommendations based on self-assessment (ie HALTS or speaking with a professional)

Additional Resources

Emotional Eating

- Mayo Clinic: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/weight-loss/in-depth/weight-loss/art-20047342>
- Cleveland Clinic: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/5-strategies-to-help-you-stop-emotional-eating/>
- Emotional eating module: <http://obesitycanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/5AsT-Learning-Module-Emotional-Eating.pdf>

Binge Eating

- Center for Clinical Interventions. Modules to help with disordered eating: <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Disordered-Eating>
- National Eating disorders collaboration: <https://nedc.com.au/eating-disorders/eating-disorders-explained/types/binge-eating-disorder/>
- US department of health services information on BED: <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/binge-eating-disorder/definition-facts>

Over Eating

- Over eating vs. binge eating disorder: <https://www.eatingdisorderhope.com/information/binge-eating-disorder/binge-eating-disorder-vs-basic-overeating-what-is-the-difference>
- Harvard School of public health: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/2015/01/13/3-strategies-to-prevent-overeating/>
- YQL Nutrition- Our whole foods blog! <https://yqlnutrition.com/our-whole-foods-approach/>