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Healthy Weight November 2019

Do you eat when you're not hungry?

Did you know that your mood can affect your eating habits and vice versa? If you want to avoid emotional eating that leads to weight gain, it is important to understand the delicate relationship between food and mood.

It is common to crave high-calorie, unhealthy foods when you are stressed or depressed. Your body doesn't understand the difference between the stress from an everyday situation and stress from fighting for your life, so you may find your body wanting to fuel up for fight-or-flight mode. Eating in response to stress can become a vicious cycle. Eating all that sugary junk only increases your anxiety which leads to more unhealthy food consumption. As this continues, your body adapts to the intake of fats and sugars leading to a downward spiral of bad eating habits. This can cause a variety of health issues, the major one being excess weight gain. Being overweight or obese increases your risk for chronic diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and some forms of cancer.

You're not trapped! There is always a way to break the cycle. While eating unhealthy foods can keep you feeling sad and anxious, eating healthy food can make you feel happier. When you feel happier, you are more likely to crave healthier foods. Eating healthy food is an important part of obtaining and maintaining a healthy weight.

A long-term, healthy diet can help to stabilize your mood, lose excess weight, and make it easier to say no to that cupcake after a difficult day.

If you notice that your relationship with food or your eating behaviors are drastically affecting your life or your health, this could be a sign of an eating disorder and it is important that you seek help from a medical provider.

Source: Heart.org, CDC.gov



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Unhealthy meals and snacking can lead to excess weight gain. Being mindful when you select, prepare, and eat your food can help stop mindless snacking and help you make better food choices. At meal/snack time, slow down, set the table, turn off all devices, and just focus on what you are eating. Leave this page in your dining area and follow the guide below each time you eat this month to form a new habit of mindful eating.

The goal is to completely immerse yourself in the experience of eating. Before you begin, turn off all electronic devices (TV, cellphone, tablet, etc.) and, if available, sit down at a dining table.

Step 1: Explore your mood

- Are you happy or sad?
- Are you hungry?
- Are you anxious?
- Are you bored?

Step 2: Ground yourself

- Feel the chair you're sitting on
- Feel the weight of your eating utensils
- Notice the bowl or plate you are eating from

Step 3: Explore your food using as many of your senses as possible, without tasting

- What color is the food?
- What textures does the food have?
- What does it smell like?

Step 4: Take your first bite, chew very slowly, and notice the experience of chewing and tasting

- What does the food feel like in your mouth?
- Does the flavor intensity change?

Step 5: Pay attention to your swallowing

- Can you feel the food going down your throat and into your stomach?

Step 6: Take another slow bite paying very close attention to the sensory experience of eating

As you continue to eat your meal, regularly pause to make conversation if you have company, or simply set down your silverware and take a few breaths before you continue eating. Also, pay close attention to your mood and how you are feeling throughout the experience. Noticing what mood you are in when you reach for a snack can help you catch triggers, and stopping to ask yourself if you're really hungry, can help prevent you from over-eating.

