

Emotions and Eating.

Why do we eat? The answer to that question would be a lot simpler if we were all like that one character, on that space ship, in that 1960's TV show, with those pointed ears. People from his planet only recognized practical, rational reasoning. So his answer would be something like "We eat in order to supply our bodies with the sustaining materials and energy sources necessary to continue forth with our existence."

You and I however, are humans, from the planet earth, thank you very much. And our reasons for eating go beyond the practical. And yes, very often beyond the rational. Because we have these things called emotions, which also must be fed.

Now in balance, emotional input in our eating habits is a wonderful thing. It's why we enjoy variety in what we eat. It's why we savor each bite and say "MMM". It's why we invite our other four senses - sight, smell, touch, and in the case of crunchy food, hearing - to play along with taste. It's no shame to say it... we love to eat.

But emotions can be tricky to manage, as we know. And combining our emotions with what and how we eat can work against us if we're not careful. We might find ourselves eating to forget problems, relieve boredom, ease depression, feel safe, happy, rewarded. In other words, we might develop a habit of eating to achieve emotional fulfillment. And when we do, things like nourishment and healthiness are too quickly demoted to back-burner status.

Many people who have overcome obesity through weight loss surgery and a healthy follow-up program, admit to having had this problem in the past. And they'll be the first to tell you that if they can successfully overcome it, so can you. Let's tap into some of their proven techniques.

One way to help overcome the habit of emotional eating is to take a page from our pointy-eared friend mentioned earlier, and reason rationally on it. (For all his strangeness, we have to admit he did appear to maintain a healthy weight). First of all, we can all agree that eating poorly ("This ice cream ...") in response to a situation or problem (...will help me forget that I had a bad day.") does not change the situation or problem. In fact, it compounds the problem, because now, on top of an already bad day, an unhealthy food choice is made.

This cycle will repeat itself regardless of the individual situation that leads to unhealthy emotional eating. Keep telling yourself that. It's the pure rational truth.

©2010 Forest Health Services, LLC

Barix and the Barix Clinics logo are registered trademarks of Forest Health Services, LLC. All other trademarks or registered trademarks are the property of their respective owners. All rights reserved. Unauthorized duplication or modification is prohibited.

Barix Clinics: 800-282-0066

When you get your next urge to eat something that's not planned as a snack or meal, analyze the facts. Make note of what you think triggered it (See Emotional eating Trigger chart at end of this article). On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely hungry, and 10 being extremely full, where were you when you had the impulse? Be honest with yourself, because if you land on anything over 4, you're about to eat for the wrong reason. So don't.

By the way, at this point you might find you're feeling pretty good about yourself and you haven't used a single bite of food to get there. And it gets better.

We learn that an important part of the recovery process after weight loss surgery, is coming up with more active ways to "nourish" yourself emotionally without using food.

Find constructive ways to distract yourself till the urge goes away. 10-15 minutes at the most should do the trick. Run an errand, make a phone call, take a shower, or work up a good sweat walking (*Then* take a shower).

Keep thinking about ways to change the situation that led to the urge in the first place. And what you intend to do (instead of eat) if the situation presents itself again.

And here's a personal bonus with all this: When you practice all these things, you are learning as you go. So you'll get smarter *and* healthier!

Here's a list of more ideas that have worked well for others:

- Reward yourself with non-food treats. Bubble baths work good here.
- Exercise. It actually converts stressful brain chemistry into the good kind.
- Talk it out with someone. Maybe even the person you want to use food to forget.
- Label the feeling in this sentence: "Why should I harm my health just because I'm feeling (Anger, sadness, joy, etc.)?"
- Learn some stress reduction techniques.
- Develop better spiritual health.
- Get your proper rest and relaxation.
- Continue to learn what's healthy for eat and what isn't. You'll find a lot of help in this area throughout the Barix website.

©2010 Forest Health Services, LLC

Barix and the Barix Clinics logo are registered trademarks of Forest Health Services, LLC. All other trademarks or registered trademarks are the property of their respective owners. All rights reserved. Unauthorized duplication or modification is prohibited.

Barix Clinics: 800-282-0066

And remember this article isn't telling you to eat without emotional involvement. (That wouldn't work here on earth anyway). With a little planning, six small healthy meals throughout the day sprinkled with yummy nutritious snacks can keep your senses very satisfied indeed. Make it eventful, with candles, fine china, the works. Celebrate something at every meal, even if it's always your own good health.

Emotional eating trigger log

Situation/Emotional Trigger	Food Desired	Hunger Level	Strategy for Distraction	Effectiveness

©2010 Forest Health Services, LLC
Barix and the Barix Clinics logo are registered trademarks of Forest Health Services, LLC. All other trademarks or registered trademarks are the property of their respective owners. All rights reserved. Unauthorized duplication or modification is prohibited.

Barix Clinics: 800-282-0066