



Monthly Newsletter December 2010

What Is The Single Most Common Obstacle In Weight Loss?

Do you know what is the single, most common obstacle that I hear from my clients, when they are trying to lose weight? Confusion? Occasionally. Temptation? Sometimes. Emotional eating? YOU GOT IT!

What is emotional eating anyway? The definition from mecinenet.com is: *“Emotional eating is the practice of consuming large quantities of food -- usually “comfort” or junk foods -- in response to feelings instead of hunger. Experts estimate that 75% of overeating is caused by emotions.”*

You can read all the books in the world about healthy eating, have the best exercise routine and the best intentions to follow your most recent, snazzy diet, but if you don't take control over your emotional eating, it is nearly impossible to lose the weight and most importantly to keep it off.

Almost all diets out there focus on what to eat and what not to. However, equally as important is to understand when and how you eat, when do you stop eating as well as why are you eating in the first place.

Learning to manage your feelings in general and your emotional attachment to food and your weight effectively, is an essential piece for permanent weight loss and healthy lifestyle. Do you:

- Use food to feel better, to avoid feeling worse or to feel nothing at all?
- Use food to distract your self from a stressful situation or to reward yourself on your birthday, a celebration, a promotion or a new job?
- Use food and eating when you feel disappointed, lonely or helpless about a situation?
- Wonder what your cravings of bread, pasta, ice cream, chips or chocolate represent? and
- Wonder if you should become a healthy eater before you lose the weight or after? (this sounds intuitive but so many times I hear women tell me *“I will do this crazy diet now to lose the weight quickly and then I will sign up for your services to learn how to maintain the weight loss and get healthy”*... Ha! Talk about self-sabotage!)



These are some of the many indications that underlie the destructive habit of emotional eating. You might relate and answered yes to these questions above, but don't be alarmed if you are not sure how to answer...

Many women don't even realize that so much of their eating behavior and habits are driven by internal discomfort. From infancy based on our experiences, we learn while being fed to correlate food, eating and being held with being loved, cared for, safety, pleasure and comfort. Yet for other infants, that were left hungry for longer periods of time or who were fed under more hostile conditions, they might associate food and eating with punishment and extreme distress or discomfort.

Furthermore, your eating habits also serve as a subconscious way you have learned to deal with your feelings. From a young age, the way we learn to deal with our feelings is taught by our parents, caregivers and teachers. So as a young girl, if you were scolded for crying or being fussy, you were told that "big girls don't cry", or that "you shouldn't feel that way" and to "not be a baby", or maybe you were ignored when you were disappointed and hurt, then you gradually learned to ignore, avoid your feelings of discomfort and even associate them with rejection, not being loved or being helpless. Similarly, if you grew up with parents that constantly argued, you might have grown to avoid any conflict, tension, anger, and disappointment at all costs.

Your individual background is unique to you and underlies your behavior to food. By reading this you might start seeing some patterns that have shaped your relationship between your feelings and eating, but also keep in mind, that sometimes we have no idea that what we learned in our childhood is unhealthy, nor do we take the time to associate our eating habits with our feelings until we have more time to reflect on them and become aware of them. In the meantime, we learn to deal with our feelings and emotions the best way we can and yes food seems to be the "quick fix".

Food also has the power to impact us on a level deeper than just our physical well-being. Think for a moment of a food from your past... one that makes you feel great after you eat it, for no specific reason. Maybe it is macaroni and cheese, slow-simmered tomato sauce, ice cream cones or potato pancakes. Eating food like this (every now and then) can be incredibly healing, even though your rational brain might not consider it highly nutritious.

What we eat can reconnect us to precious memories, like childhood playtimes, first dates, holidays, our grandmother's cooking or our country of ancestry. Our bodies remember foods from the past on an emotional and cellular level. Eating this food connects us to our roots and has nurturing effects that go far beyond the food's biochemical make-up.

So its natural that many of us comfort ourselves with food, as our bodies were designed to react to food and seek pleasure, relief and comfort in response to the way we feel, or the way we want to avoid feeling. Food offers us that distraction and diversion away of what you are feeling inside *towards* what's going on, on the outside.



However, what is not normal is to use food as your *primary* way of meeting these needs, or to *continuously* push away uncomfortable feelings and thoughts. Furthermore, the perception we hold about our eating habits and the degree to which we do it, differentiates normal from dysfunctional eaters.

Learning to recognize your feelings, accepting them and managing them, will help you understand and experience better what your body and your heart need and desire.

Contrary, if you consistently binge, when you are stressed, upset or anxious or when you starve yourself when you feel disappointed, helpless or ashamed, you will continue to struggle with your weight and most probably your health forever.

Besides the emotional attachment we have to food, also know that your food cravings themselves can have a physiological underlying cause. Food cravings in general can indicate a possible biochemical imbalance and cravings to specific foods such as sugar, gluten or dairy products (which tend to be the most common culprits), often indicate a sensitivity or allergy to those particular foods.

So next time, before you get depressed about not having the willpower, restraint or self-discipline to stick to your diet, (because you always seem to get seduced by your favorite junk food or fall of the wagon), please try to have some compassion for yourself and consider what might be going on deep inside and underneath that “auto-pilot” reaction and habit to eating.

Please remember that while no one can blame you for obsessing on food while you got the “blues”, know that this type of consistent behavior will only compile more feelings of discomfort and will pull you further away from what you really need and want; healthy thoughts, feelings, relationships and body as well as reaching your life’s goals.

To your health,

Dina

PS. IF you are interested in learning more about:

- Overcoming Emotional Eating,
- The 7 most difficult feelings for Disordered Eaters
- Individual Assessments, Worksheets, tools and techniques to identifying the situation that trigger those feelings
- Managing your emotions.
- Understanding ALL the CAUSES that Drive your Cravings

Register now for an Intense, Information packed 2- series Workshop on “How You Feel Is What You Eat” at:

<http://www.anew-wellness.com/events.html>