



Why Emotional Eating is Bad for You

Why is emotional eating bad – Why does it lead to overeating?

The problem with emotional eating is that it often results in overeating and a further reduction in self-esteem.

This is especially problematic for people who have been on a restrictive diet, because it can result in a feeling of failure and binge eating. Considering research has shown that at any one time over 1/3 of the population is on a diet, you can see that emotional eating makes it very difficult to stick to a restrictive diet.

The other problem is that coping with negative emotions, such as stress, through eating masks the underlying problem (e.g. stress) and doesn't give you an opportunity to deal with the issue and feel better. Further, your self-image may become more negative as you overeat and gain weight.

The foods we tend to eat

Whilst eating 'emotionally', people tend to be attracted to energy dense, high fat/sugar foods to get that 'sugar fix', or 'instant high'. This is why you tend to experience those chocolate cravings when you feel sad. Over time you are likely to have learned to associate these foods with an instant (albeit short lived) improvement in your mood. It's this instant 'hit' which becomes entrenched in your memory bank and leads you back to eating these foods when those negative emotions strike again.

Different moods may also result in craving a variety of foods. For instance, if you're feeling tired and sad, you may look for something that instantly increases your energy to make you feel happy (like chocolate). Sometimes you may even crave carbohydrate rich foods when you're depressed because you're not ready to shift your mood (just yet!).

However, if you're feeling anxious/stressed, you're likely to crave high carbohydrate foods (such as pasta and rice) as these foods tend to sooth highly charged emotions. So depending on what mood you're in, you might crave chocolate, chips, pastries and so on – to alter your mood state. Of course there are other (healthy) foods that assist in 1) regulating your moods and 2) managing your moods, to lower the probability of giant mood swings occurring in the first place.