



Employee Enhancement Newsletter

Helpful Resources from your Employee Assistance Program

February 2013

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Don't Swallow Your Emotions

Do you ever find yourself in the middle of a bag of chips and wonder how you got there? Does a clash with a coworker mean a knee-jerk trip to the candy dish in reception? Are you so determined to be perfect that each fall from the pedestal sends you straight to the kitchen?

The details may differ, but the result is the same: Eating tied to our emotions creates a “feel-bad” pattern that’s tough to break, puts on weight, and makes us feel worse.

Food is easy to get, it’s always there, and it’s a quick fix. The downside is that emotional eating triggers guilt because it usually involves too much quantity, bad food choices, and a feeling of a lack of control.

In an age when far too many adults weigh too much—putting them at risk for a slew of health problems—it’s wise to disconnect your uncomfortable feelings from emotional eating. Step one is to identify the triggers that get you in trouble. That helps you manage them instead of trying to munch them away.

Anger

Anger is one emotion that is felt so strongly in the gut it actually can be misinterpreted as hunger. Your mate forgets an important date or a coworker takes credit for your work. The next thing you know, you’re hungry.

How do you know it’s anger and not hunger? Before you take a bite, look inside yourself, pin down what you’re feeling, and decide not to swallow that snack. It’s a skill you must develop. Food can modulate your emotions; it can numb you. But you must learn to self-soothe without doing yourself harm.

Anxiety

If the only thing you can come up with when you’re stressed out is to eat, that’s a problem. Having a favorite food as a treat is fine, but if it’s habitual, you need to find new ways of nurturing yourself.

It’s normal to sometimes want to soothe yourself by eating a bowl of pasta or ice cream, but you cross over the line if it’s the only way you can think of for making yourself feel better.

Boredom

Emotional eating is eating to make ourselves feel better. Feelings such as boredom can lead us to seek quick gratification from high-fat, high-sugar, and high-calorie foods. When people eat for emotional reasons, they don’t tend to go for fruit and veggies. Instead, they use comfort foods that provide instant nurturing.

Emotions can’t be resolved until we find out what’s eating us. Do you need to change jobs? Do you need a new hobby? Emotional eating is a domino effect. What you need to tease out is the cause-and-effect relationship that gets you in front of the TV armed with cookies.

Chat Reminder

Healthy Relationships

Connect with Deer Oaks and a counselor for live confidential chats.

When:

February 20, 2013

Session Times (CST):

- 12:15 PM to 12:45 PM
- 6:00 PM to 6:30 PM



Don't Swallow Your Emotions

Continued...



Loneliness

People can use food as a substitute for relationships. Advertising further encourages negative food behaviors. In truth, it is not excess food that leads to a more satisfying and fulfilling life--it's relationships and taking care of yourself.

If overeating feels like a problem, ask these questions: Are you spending enough time with friends? Who can you share your day with? Are you doing something for yourself on a weekly basis that's just about you? A lot of ads market food as a replacement for all else. Eating cannot fill an emotional void.

Sadness

We all feel sad at times, just as we all feel other emotions. Emotions don't have to be harmful, but the behaviors resulting from the emotions can be. Setting yourself up for emotional overload can be the first step to overeating. For example, if you focus on what others need to the detriment of your own well-being, you can set yourself up for an emotional flood that includes sadness or depression.

People pleasers may overeat because they're very critical of themselves, they want approval, and everyone else's well-being is more important than their own. If you don't give yourself your due, overeating becomes a way of self-nurturing gone amok.

A recipe for coping

All of us sometimes eat for emotional reasons. Problems arise when it gets to be a habit or interferes with life. These coping skills from our experts can help you separate emotions from food.

- Set up a food and eating journal, even for a few days. Get a small, spiral-bound notebook and write down what you eat, when you eat, and how you feel at that time. Look for ties between what you feel and what you eat. The more you know about why you're suddenly full and guilty, the more you'll be able to stop it.
- Make a list of healthy activities to use when emotions get you down. Call a friend who listens well, write down your most personal thoughts, read an escape novel, take a walk. We all need a personal bag of tricks when emotions become uncomfortable.
- Do something just for yourself each week. The more positive you feel about yourself and your life, the more you'll be able to tolerate difficult events. Burnout can lead to a binge.
- Be aware of your own negative self-talk. Write down what you say to yourself. Condemning yourself all the time can be a recipe for overeating.
- If you feel ready to grab and eat, delay for 20 minutes. Ask yourself what you're feeling and what healthy response you can make to manage it. Remember the new response won't seem easy for quite some time.
- If you can't shut down your eating reflex, change the menu. Choose foods that need a lot of chewing or reach for gum. Chewing can release tension. Or seek out low-calorie foods like carrots.
- Don't stand and eat. Put food on a plate and make the act of eating more concrete. This will give you time to think rationally and bypass that dazed question, "How did I get here?"

<http://www.rmhonline.com/Main/HealthLibrary/616.aspx>

Good Mood Foods



*Science reveals
the power of a
handshake.*

New research is confirming an old adage about the power of a handshake: strangers do form a better impression of those who extend their hand in greeting.

A firm, friendly handshake has long been recommended in the business world as a way to make a good first impression, and the greeting is thought to date to ancient times as a way of showing a stranger you had no weapons.

Now, a paper published in the Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience confirms that a handshake before social interaction enhances the positive impact of the encounter.

Health-e headlines™

An EAP Reminder

Life Can Be Hectic. The EAP Can Help You Find Your Balance.

Deer Oaks, your EAP, is always available to you and your household members.

If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline.

Counselors are available 24/7 to provide you with immediate care.



**DEER OAKS
EAP SERVICES**

Colder temps, darker and longer days, and the temptation to eat more and move less. Sound like your winter schedule?

Boost your mood with this advice from Highmark, a health care company.

- Focus on nutrient-rich foods. Eating “comfort foods” may help you relax and give you a mood boost, but it’s only temporary. Nutrient-rich foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein foods provide a consistent and long-lasting impact on your health, mood, energy, and alertness.
- Cut back on your fat intake. A high-fat diet can be a real brain and energy drainer. Just say “no” to deep-fried foods and look for foods that contain no more than 3 grams of fat per serving.
- Eat moderate portion sizes and avoid large meals. Have you ever wondered why you feel tired after eating a large meal? During periods of digestion, your blood supply is directed to the digestive tract and away from the brain, which makes you feel tired.
- Eat regular meals. Skipping meals can slow your metabolic rate, and the lower your metabolism, the lower your energy level. Plan regular meals and snacks to keep your metabolic rate and blood sugar levels normal to provide your brain the best means to function and handle stress.
- Remember balance, variety, and moderation. The best strategy for maintaining a good mood, high-energy level, and concentration is to consistently eat a wide variety of foods high in nutritional value.

Health-e headlines™



Seasonal Tips



- **Take a little trip:** You can often find great deals for winter getaways if you look in the right places. For instance, a trip to Florida from a budget airline offered in the darkest winter months can be quite affordable. Personally, I like to schedule a south-bound excursion at the beginning of March to give me something to look forward to most of the winter. Plus, I can return home to the emerging crocuses announcing the inevitable spring.
- **Embrace the season:** One of the best mood lifters is exercise. Find a winter sport or activity that you enjoy – like ice skating, cross country skiing, or even sledding – and you may even find yourself looking forward to snow and cold!
- **Hot baths:** Get in the habit of ending your day with a relaxing hot bath in the winter. Add some Epsom salts – which contain magnesium sulfate that is actually absorbed into your bloodstream through the skin – to promote relaxation of the muscles and reduce inflammation.
- **Spa day:** If you live in a cold place, where you have the heat on nearly constantly, the dry air can wreak havoc on your skin. A facial at a spa can be just the trick.
- **Fireplaces:** Fewer homes seem to have fireplaces these days, but if you're lucky enough to have one, put it to good use! Or find a friend with one and convince them to host a game night by the glow of the fire. Tell them you'll bring the chips and salsa!
- **Sunshine:** There is much evidence to suggest that lack of sunlight is to blame for the winter blues. When we don't get sun, our bodies don't make enough Vitamin D. Experts suggest 15 minutes of sun on your face and hands 3 times a week to keep your Vitamin D levels up. So on sunny days, why not bundle up and take a brisk walk during your lunch hour? Your serotonin level will thank you!
- **Fresh flowers:** Having a piece of spring in the house will do wonders to perk up your mood. Find an affordable source for fresh flowers – farmer's markets and discount grocers are great places to look. Make it a habit to replace them weekly. That small weekly splurge can go a long way to keeping the beauty of warmer months in front of your mind's eye.
- **Superbowl parties:** Even if you don't like football, the parties can be pretty epic. Particularly fun if a team you really care about is involved, a Superbowl party can be the highlight of your mid-winter season!

- Written by Deer Oaks Clinical Staff

Establish an Emergency Savings Account: Build Personal Financial Security



If you want to achieve financial security, consider an emergency fund your safety net. Generally, an emergency savings account is the first savings goal a family should have. While establishing an emergency fund can feel stressful or overwhelming, once you have an adequate amount tucked away in savings you will have peace of mind knowing your safety net is in place.

Why do you need an emergency fund?

An emergency fund is a savings cushion available to you in the case of a financial emergency. There are many situations where you may need to rely on your emergency fund, including job loss or other reduction of income, health emergencies, automobile repair, and home repairs. If any of these financial emergencies happen to you, an emergency fund can keep you from falling into debt.

Save three to six months worth of living expenses

To save for an emergency fund, you should know how much money you'll need. Most financial experts recommend that you save about three to six months worth of living expenses. If you have a job that is less stable, are self-employed, or feel that you may need to use your emergency fund sooner rather than later, consider saving a larger amount. As your income grows, add to the account so that you always have six months of living expenses set aside.

Choose the right savings account

Emergency funds should be saved in a low-risk, short-term account. While it may be tempting to put these funds in a high-yield financial vehicle, keeping your funds in a low-risk account will ensure that your money is easy to access in a financial emergency. However, don't keep the funds in your standard savings account or checking account. Not only will that make them too accessible, you'll also earn a low interest rate. Money market funds are great for emergency funds because they are low risk and earn a higher yield than a regular savings account.

Make your emergency fund your top priority

Once you have a goal, it's time to start saving. For many, saving for an emergency fund should be a top financial goal, even above retirement and college savings. Determine how much money you have to set aside each month, and if your money market account allows it, set up an automatic periodic investment monthly so that you won't forget to transfer the money to your emergency fund.

Once you have your emergency fund established, don't touch it except for true financial emergencies. Remember that this money isn't for vacations, large purchases, or other "wants". If you do need to use the emergency fund, start a new savings plan to replenish it as soon as you get back on your feet.



About Money Management International

Money Management International (MMI) is a nonprofit, full-service credit-counseling agency, providing confidential financial guidance, financial education, counseling and debt management assistance to consumers since 1958. MMI helps consumers trim their expenses, develop a spending plan and repay debts. Counseling is available by appointment in branch offices and 24/7 by telephone and Internet. Services are available in English or Spanish. To learn more, call 800.432.7310 or visit www.MoneyManagement.org.