

## Ways to Manage Emotional Eating

Some people tend to eat more when they are stressed, bored, sad or even happy. Emotional eating can distract you from what you are feeling and food is used to mask your true needs. Food gives us pleasure – that is part of the joy of eating. It is normal for food to comfort us. Let food be one way that you can comfort yourself without it being your default solution for dealing with strong emotions. Take a moment to identify what you are feeling and the thoughts that are going through your mind. Breathe and center yourself. After that, and if you wish to do so, you can still choose to eat what you want. Do your best to eat in a way that is focused, deliberate, calm and without judgement.

**Here are several options of what you can do when you are driven towards food by emotions:**

- Identify the triggers. Write them down in a journal.
- Understand the course of cravings: 5-10 minutes and subside naturally.
- Achieve relaxation by deep breathing, visualizing a peaceful scene, progressive muscle relaxation (tensing and relaxing each set of muscles for 10 seconds).
- Delay your decision and then re-assess. Know that you can, at any time, decide to eat the food that you want.
- Rate the urge on your life discomfort scale (list of 10 stressful life events).
- Change your mental focus right now e.g. gaze at an object, recall your friends' birthdays (e-mail or call them if necessary).
- Distance yourself from the food while knowing that the food will be there if you choose to have it later on.
- Call someone who supports your goals.
- Call the Cravings Hotline: 905-546-3606, press 6.
- Engage in an alternative activity. You compose the list.
- Be mindful of the food by:
  - Allowing yourself to become aware of the positive and nurturing opportunities that are available through food, and by respecting your own inner wisdom
  - Choosing to eat food that is both pleasing to you and nourishing to your body by using all your senses to explore, savour and taste.
  - Learning to be aware of physical hunger and fullness cues to guide your decision to begin eating and to stop.
  - Recognizing responses to food (likes, neutral or dislikes) without judgement.