



IS IT
EMOTIONAL EATING
OR
PHYSICAL HUNGER?



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WHAT IS EMOTIONAL EATING?



Emotional eating is when we turn to food not out of physical hunger, but to soothe or distract from feelings like stress, boredom, sadness, or anxiety. It often involves sudden cravings for specific comfort foods and can lead to eating in ways that feel out of control. While it may bring temporary relief, emotional eating doesn't resolve the underlying emotions, and may leave us feeling worse afterwards.

WHAT IS PHYSICAL HUNGER?



Physical hunger is your body's natural signal that it needs fuel. It builds gradually and is often accompanied by physical signs like a rumbling stomach, low energy, or difficulty concentrating. Unlike emotional cravings, physical hunger isn't focused on one specific food and is satisfied by a balanced meal or snack. Eating in response to physical hunger helps keep the body nourished and energised.



PAUSE AND CHECK IN

Before you eat, especially outside of regular meals, take a moment to connect with yourself. Emotional eating often happens automatically - this quick pause can help you respond with awareness rather than impulse. It's not about judgement, it's about curiosity and care.

Before reaching for food, ask yourself:
"What am I really feeling?"

This moment of awareness can make all the difference. If you're not physically hungry, your body may be asking for something other than food - like rest, connection, movement, or support. Take a breath. How else can you care for yourself right now?

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD OF EMOTIONAL EATING

If you're not physically hungry, try one of these caring alternatives:

- ☆ Take a short walk or stretch your body
- ☆ Read a few pages of a book or listen to a podcast
- ☆ Write down what you're feeling in a journal
- ☆ Call or message a friend
- ☆ Put on music that lifts your mood



TAKE THE QUIZ!



Circle A or B for each question.

1. Why do you usually eat between meals or snacks?

- A. To cope with feelings like boredom, stress, or loneliness.
- B. Because I notice physical signs of hunger.

2. What types of food do you often reach for when you snack?

- A. Specific comfort foods like chocolate, crisps, or convenient foods.
- B. A variety of foods, often healthier or balanced options.

3. How do you feel after eating?

- A. Often guilty, ashamed, or like I wasn't really hungry.
- B. Generally satisfied and nourished.

4. How often do your emotions influence your food choices?

- A. Frequently - My mood often drives what and when I eat.
- B. Occasionally - I tend to eat more based on routine or hunger.

5. Do you find yourself eating even when you're not physically hungry?

- A. Yes, especially during emotional or stressful times.
- B. Rarely - I usually eat in response to actual hunger cues.

Mostly A's?

Your eating patterns may be influenced by emotions. Emotional eating is a common response to stress, overwhelm, or even habit. You are not alone, and recognising this is a powerful first step.

Mostly B's?

You're more likely eating in response to physical hunger, which means you're in tune with your body's natural signals. Keep nurturing that awareness.

Remember

Emotional eating isn't "bad" - it's a message. Learning to tell the difference helps you respond with care and choice, not judgement.

Emotional eating is something many people struggle with, and you don't have to figure it out on your own.

Join our supportive community for tools, tips, and real connection.

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