

## What Do You Need to Stop Your Emotional Eating?

Many people become detached from their emotions. We constantly distract ourselves to avoid life. We use many distractions, but food seems to be one of the most powerful. How many times have you found yourself in a stressful situation and start fantasizing about food? When we are feeling stressed or sad, food can temporarily improve our mood, but it doesn't last long. Have you ever heard someone say "I need a drink!" after a particularly stressful day? It begs the question.....do you really NEED a drink? Or, do you want a drink to numb the discomfort? We often use something to take the pain away, but it isn't really what we need. As an example, let's say I had a very difficult week. I am behind on a deadline, I'm covering for a co-worker who doesn't pull their weight and my boss just yelled at me. It would be very easy for me to drown my sorrows in cheesecake, but then, what? I would still be anxious, stressed and overwhelmed, and I would feel guilty, bloated and beat myself up for eating an entire cheesecake. After I beat myself up, I would probably find myself eating more to self-soothe. Instead of continuing this painful cycle of emotional eating, next time try this:

1. Any time you feel a negative emotion, take a step back to identify exactly what you are feeling. Often, we confuse thoughts with feelings. Feelings would include mad, sad, glad, guilty, shame, etc. "I feel like a failure" would actually be a thought.
2. Identify where this feeling might be coming from. Many of our negative experiences stem from history as much as the current issue. My boss yelling at me can trigger

feelings of rejection and shame stemming from a history of getting yelled at by my parents.

3. Explore what you need to do to address those emotions. Many of us have become so accustomed to avoiding emotions that we don't realize that going through them is usually much easier than the energy it takes to avoid them. There is a slogan, "This too shall pass." If you just acknowledge how you are feeling, it loses some of the power over you.

4. Identify something that would alleviate your pain that doesn't involve food or another unhelpful coping mechanism. Seek out ways to fulfill the need. If you are feeling rejected and abandoned, seek out comfort from a friend or loved one, journal, take a walk or take a bath. Do something nurturing for yourself.

While these steps may not take the negative emotions away, they will significantly reduce the impact on you. When you practice this consistently, you will be able to address your emotions effectively on a consistent basis. When stressors arise, they just won't have much of an impact. How would that feel? Visualize a life where you are in control of your emotional state. I can tell you, it is great!