

What Causes Us To Eat?

Other than the obvious physical necessity, we eat for a number of different reasons. Mostly because tradition calls for it. For example, a trip to the movies would not be complete until we had popcorn, or Thanksgiving would not be Thanksgiving without Turkey. We feel emotionally deprived if we do not have a big meal at Christmas. Food provides a social connection, comfort and enjoyment along with being necessary for energy. However so many of the foods we eat do not meet our physical needs, but only our emotional needs. Therefore sometimes it is necessary to examine our emotional connections to food to help us change the way we eat.

How emotions affect my eating?

- Eating because of emotions teaches us to ignore hunger queues
- Emotional eating can lead to eating more, less, or nothing at all
- Stress often causes these emotions, which differ from person to person

Controlling food is a means of control when we can't control the stressor

Why is this important?

- Stress affects us mentally as well as physically
- Blood glucose levels can be altered by stress
- Using food to react to stress can lead to poor diabetes management and disease prevention.

What can we do?

- Understand what events or problems cause you stress
 - Identify the emotions that cause you to choose the lifestyle that you are living
 - Work to manage stress
 - Remember that you are an individual; everything may not work for you
1. **What's your stressor** – Discover what it is that stresses you and then leads you to changing your eating habits. You can accomplish this by maintaining a food diary with an additional column for your feelings when you eat. Simply include how you are feeling whenever you eat and then evaluate what it was that made you feel this way.

2. **Healthy Snacking** – If you really do want to snack, create healthy snacks with higher protein and lower carbohydrate to help control your blood sugar and calm you down. Always have some of these snacks ready and in an easy place for you to grab.
3. **Listen to music** – This is a simple technique that generally does not require you to go buy something new. Pick a music type that is soothing to you and take a little time to sit down and just listen. If you can't sit down, play it in the background.
4. **Physical Activity** – Physical activity has been shown to function as a great means to relieve stress. Whether you like going for a walk or something a little more intense, be active instead of focusing on your stressor or food. Remember if you do something a little more intense, don't disregard your blood sugar. Taking a walk is also a good time to talk and catch up with your family.
5. **Deep Breathing** – Breathing exercises are practiced by many eastern disciplines. Yoga, martial arts, and other eastern medicines focus upon this as part of the life process. This usually involves sitting in a calm, personal area. The best thing is to research this yourself as many practices will be similar but not necessarily the same.
6. **Think positive** – Take time out to forget what is troubling you. Instead sit in a quiet place and focus on what brings you joy. If you can't think of anything, have a small picture of someplace that would be calming for you and put yourself there.
7. **Reinvent your tradition** – Think outside of the box. Christmas will still be Christmas without all of the pies, candies and cookies. Start a new family tradition of good health. Incorporate more physical activity into your family events and go easy on the less healthy foods. I can't think of a better way to honor the season.

These are only a few things that you can do. It's important to find what works best for you and your family. Don't be afraid to be the champion for your family's health. It is worth it.