

Tips to deal with eating triggers

Sensations

Your eating triggers can be internal sensations such as blood sugar levels or external stimuli like the aroma of food.

Here are tips for both types:

Physical sensations

- Eat regularly and avoid skipping meals.
- Choose low-GI carbohydrates to level out blood sugars.
- If you are female, be prepared for heightened sensitivity to triggers at certain times of the month.
- If you are physically unwell, treat this first.
- Ask your doctor about ways to tackle triggers if cravings seem out of control. Turn over to see if there is an emotional component you really need to address.

Presence of food

- Take a route home from work that doesn't go by convenience stores.
- Keep snacks out of sight.
- Keep good quality fresh fruit in a bowl you can see.
- If you can, keep out of the kitchen until your meal is ready.
- At dinnertime, empty the cooking pot that contains your potential second helping into a plastic container and put it in the fridge. This makes it a little inconvenient to go back for seconds.
- Keep healthy leftovers at the front of the shelf in the fridge where you can see them. Add a sticker – “Eat Me!”



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Emotions

Emotions and feelings like stress, anger, loneliness or just “feeling fat” can negatively influence your eating habits by subconsciously triggering you to turn to food when you really need something else to satisfy an emotional need.

When you feel your emotional trigger being pulled, visualise and verbalise (say it out loud) a stop sign... **STOP!** Then ask yourself these important questions:

- When did I last eat?
- Am I really hungry right now?
- Why am I hungry right now?
- If I eat, will I feel better afterwards?
- Would anything else besides food satisfy me?



Your answers, or simply the time delay for thought, may help your eating urge pass.

If you still feel you need to eat, try the following:

- Go for a walk, phone a friend, take a bath, watch TV, clean the house or find another distraction.
- Drink a large glass of water and brush your teeth.
- If you do eat, choose something that will give you 5-star satisfaction and move on!
- Check your Eating Journal to see what events have lead up to the trigger and how you can modify them.
- Seek expert help if you honestly think your emotional triggers need some special attention.

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Locations

The best way to deal with locations as eating triggers is to have a plan and stick to it. Try these ideas:

- Supermarket:** Don't shop hungry! Eat something before you leave home. If you forget, choose a healthy option to snack on as soon as you get there. Take a shopping list and stick to it, but don't take the kids!
- Hotel:** Have the snacks in your room removed before you get there and place a special dinner order.
- On a plane:** Order a low-fat or low-calorie meal when you book your ticket. Take a large bottle of water onboard with you.
- At a business lunch:** Start with a jug of water. Make salad a must-have menu item. Leave what you can't eat, rather than take a home doggy bag.
- At a party:** Move away from the food table and find someone interesting to talk to. Bring a plate of low-fat tasty snacks. No one will notice your ricotta cheese and sweet chilli sauce dip is actually low fat!
- At work:** Keep some healthy options handy for when things get busy. Small cans of baked beans, breakfast bars and fresh fruit will help keep you away from the vending machine.
- Home alone:** Have a healthy stock of foods available and pick one or two as the your trigger back-up foods. These are choices that are good enough to satisfy cravings for foods higher in fat or energy. For example, low fat vanilla custard on a banana, sprinkled with a little cinnamon sugar – yumbo!

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Relations

Relationships with other people can provide a challenge to keep your program on track.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Am I encouraged to eat by others when I don't want to eat?
- Do I eat to fit in?
- Do some people make me feel uncomfortable and food makes me feel better?
- Am I always the one who is providing food, when I could do with some help and wouldn't mind the occasional break from contact with food?



Here are three tips to build better food relations:

- Explain to your family that you are **SmartShaping** and you would appreciate their support for your efforts. Let them know how their innocent food offerings make it harder for you.
- Alternatively, make up a little white lie to get out of eating at social events with family or friends. Say you are a subject in a university experiment and you've been given instructions not to eat.
- Address the non-food relationship factors that are impacting on your success. Better relationships reduce stress and make it easier to stay on track.