



EMOTIONAL EATING

EATING YOUR EMOTIONS

IT'S COMPLICATED

Our relationship with food is a complicated one and begins from the moment we are born. A baby who is given milk to soothe her hunger experiences far more than just a happy tummy. Physical touch, connection, warmth, and comfort are immediately associated with mealtime. We quickly learn that food means more than just survival. It's also nurturance, safety, pleasure, and love.

This pattern continues as we grow. Tears and bruises are often treated with milk and cookies. Grandparents may show their love and affection through special meals and treats. Some of our fondest memories of holidays, birthdays, and other celebrations are built around food. Eating is a core part of our culture, identity, and emotional expression.



HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM REALLY HUNGRY?

With so many connections around food, many people are not aware that the urge to eat may not be due to physical hunger, but rather emotional hunger. There are key differences that can help you recognize what you are experiencing.

Physical Hunger

- ✓ Comes on gradually
- ✓ Can wait
- ✓ Is open to options – many foods sound appealing
- ✓ Stops when you're full

Eating to satisfy physical hunger doesn't make you feel bad about yourself.



Emotional Hunger

- ✓ Comes on suddenly
- ✓ Needs to be satisfied instantly
- ✓ Craves specific comfort foods
- ✓ Isn't satisfied with a full stomach

Eating to satisfy emotional hunger triggers feelings of powerlessness, and shame.

It can be helpful to ask, "am I hungry enough to eat a vegetable or piece of fruit?" If the answer is no, there is a good chance you are experiencing emotional hunger.

