

When Food is Your BFF

Ask yourself this simple question: “Why do I eat?” Your answer may have been, “To survive, duh!” The truth is, we eat for so many other reasons. Think about it. Have you ever eaten because you were bored? What about when you were sad, lonely, tired, overwhelmed, or stressed? During happy times or celebrations? We’ve all eaten for these reasons (and more), but when you find yourself using food to cope with uncomfortable feelings, emotional eating can turn into overeating and an unhealthy eating pattern.

Here are some tips to achieve a healthier relationship with food:

1. Practice mindful eating.

Mindfulness involves being aware and recognizing what you’re feeling in the present moment without *judgement*. Before approaching food, try the “apple test.” Ask yourself, “Am I hungry enough to eat an apple?” If the answer is no, there’s a chance that you aren’t physically hungry and your emotions may be influencing your desire to eat. You can also practice mindfulness while eating by savoring each bite, eating slowly, eliminating distractions (computer, phone, TV), and pausing halfway through a meal to assess your hunger/fullness levels.

2. Avoid restricting.

When we put unnecessary restrictions on ourselves (i.e. “no carbs” or skipping meals) we are more likely to overeat. It’s best to follow a regular meal/snack pattern and to approach foods with an open mind to avoid the restrict/overeat/repent/repeat cycle.

3. Find different ways to cope.

Instead of focusing on how you’re feeling (sad, lonely, rejected, inadequate) and coping with food, focus on what you need (support, love, distraction, company, encouragement). Try going for a walk, writing in a journal, meditating, reading, listening to music, watching a movie or favorite TV show. Calling or texting a friend or family member can help, too. If this is a constant challenge, get support at UA Campus Health’s Counseling & Psych Services. Call (520) 621-3334 for details.

4. Know your triggers.

If you tend to overeat when you have specific foods on hand like chips, candy, ice cream, etc., avoid buying these foods. If you tend to emotionally eat in a specific area of your dorm/apartment/house, leave that environment when feeling frustrated, under pressure, stressed, or bored.



CAMPUS HEALTH

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Food and nutrition services (including healthy eating, cooking skills, weight management, digestive problems, hormonal and cardiovascular diseases, and eating disorders) are offered year-round at Campus Health. Call (520) 621-6483 to make an appointment.