

Are you eating for the wrong reasons?

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(HealthDay)—You don't have to have an eating disorder, like binge eating, to have an overeating habit.

When stress, anxiety or even boredom—rather than hunger—cause you to eat (and eat and eat), you might be experiencing emotional eating, with food serving as a way of soothing yourself, according to the Cleveland Clinic.

The habit can become so ingrained that you're eating all the time. Even if it's just a bite here and there, all those calories can add up and prevent [weight loss](#).

Start by getting a handle on exactly how much you're eating. Each day, use a print or digital journal to write down everything you consume, including details like [portion size](#), time of day, and how you were feeling when you reached for the food. Then add up the day's calories. Being more conscious of your true intake will show you how far over the limit you're going, when, and even why.

One way to break an emotional eating habit is to reach for an activity that you do with your hands when the urge to eat strikes, like a [crossword puzzle](#) or knitting. Finding ways to manage your underlying stress and anxiety will help, too.

Don't try to go in the other direction by starving yourself. That could just boomerang into a binge.

Realize that you might need the help of a nutrition counselor if you really can't distinguish between true hunger and eating out of habit.

Another option is joining a support group like Overeaters Anonymous where other members share their tips for overcoming overeating.

More information: The Cleveland Clinic has helpful tips to help you break a pattern of [emotional eating](#).

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