

Making food less important in your life

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(HealthDay)—Does it seem as though the second you try to cut back on calories all you can think about is food?

It's even harder to minimize the role of food in your life if you're using tasty treats to manage emotions, according to a Finnish study published in the journal *Eating Behaviors*.

People who lose weight and keep it off make [lifestyle changes](#) despite all the temptations around them. The key is practicing a technique called cognitive restraint. Think of it as mind over matter—being mindful of limiting calories and avoiding distractions like watching TV during meals.

Successful dieters are also flexible in their approach so that they don't always feel deprived. Make good choices, but avoid severe restrictions that can lead to over-indulging.

Emotional eating—eating when you're unhappy or stressed—is the biggest stumbling block to [weight control](#). So try other ways to manage your emotions, like taking a walk or a soothing soak or steamy shower. Remind yourself that a piece of cake might taste good as you eat it, but it can't make the issues that are upsetting you go away. Try sitting down with pen and paper to plot out a plan that will directly address and resolve them.

To de-emphasize the importance of food in your life in happy moments, reward your achievements with flowers or other non-edible treats, not chocolate. Go to a sporting event or a concert instead of a restaurant when socializing with friends. Plan your day around exercise or even running errands rather than meals.

If you can't retrain your brain to stop thinking about food 24/7, consider learning mindfulness from a therapist who can show you how to redirect your focus. Mindfulness also works for issues like anxiety, which could be linked to your appetite, and sessions can teach you to change the way you think about [food](#).

More information: The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more on [breaking the bonds of emotional eating](#).

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