


Free Guide

Compulsive Eating 101

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Identify the Trigger

Compulsive eating can feel overwhelming, especially when the urge to eat intensifies in the moment. With the right strategies and mindset, you can learn to manage these urges effectively, regain control and make healthier choices. This guide is designed to provide practical tips to help you navigate those challenging moments and make more supportive choices.

Step One Identify the Trigger

Identify if the urge is driven by physical hunger or emotional hunger. Are you physically hungry or are you feeling something?

Signs of Physical Hunger:

- Evolves slowly
- Physical cues e.g. grumbling stomach, difficulty concentrating
- Any food works
- Unrelated to emotions
- Eating satisfies hunger

Signs of Emotional Hunger:

- Occurs all of a sudden
- No physical cues (emotionally driven)
- Craving specific foods, often high in sugar or fat
- Triggered by emotional experience (e.g. stress, boredom, fear)
- Eating does not satisfy hunger.

If you are physically hungry, it is time to honour your hunger and have something to eat. If you recognise you are emotionally hungry take a look at the following 3 options.

Regulate the Body

Option One: Regulate the Body

As emotional hunger is driven by our emotional experience, we focus here on learning strategies to better support ourselves as our feelings arise.

It can be helpful to understand our feelings as energy that needs our attention in order to move through the body. If we don't attend to our feelings, they get stuck and will attempt to resurface another time. By ignoring our felt experience, we are simply delaying the inevitable.

If we are used to using food to numb or distract, some of our Parts can be fearful of feeling the feelings as it's unfamiliar. They fear that if we create space for our felt experience, our feelings will intensify and lead to overwhelm. In order to support these Parts we slow things down...

Pause. Breathe. Create Space.

Here are two simple breathing techniques and one tapping technique that supports nervous system regulation to increase safety inside the body and support our Parts to be able to begin to feel the feelings.

The Physiological Sigh

Take a deep inhale followed by a short second inhale, and then an extended slower exhalation. Repeat one or two more times.

The 5 Finger Breathing

Hold one hand out in front of you. With your other hand, trace the thumb and each finger, up as you breathe in, and down as you breathe out, then take a few deeper, slower breaths. Repeat as many times as you need to.

Connect to the Eating Part

Tapping

Take your right hand and place it gently around your upper left arm and your left hand gently around your upper right arm. Start tapping the upper arms alternating between left and right. Experiment with the speed and pressure to see what works best for you. Do this for as long as is needed.

Option Two: Connect to the Eating Part

Emotional hunger and the intense urge to eat triggers our Eating Part to intensify and take up all the space inside. It's often young and compulsive and steps into the driving seat with little idea of the consequences for other Parts inside.

You can help this Part by letting it know you are here too, validating its experience and offering reassurance. Here is a script to help you get started:

I hear you and I see you. I understand how important it is for you to eat right now. It makes so much sense that you believe food is the one thing that will help me in this moment. I hear you and I see you, you are not alone, I'm right here with you.

Together we are going to try something different. We are going to pause together so we can practice being with the feelings inside. I know this will be hard for you as you will want to eat instead. I'll be right here and we can do this together. I hear you, I see you, you are not alone, I'm right here with you.

Additional Support: You might want to suggest to the Part that together you do one of the regulation techniques shared above.

Seek out a Supportive Alternative

Option Three: Seek out a Supportive Alternative

Compulsive eating can activate reward centres in the brain and release dopamine, often referred to as the 'feel good' hormone. The urge to eat compulsively is often influenced by this desire for a dopamine 'hit'.

Having alternative activities (unrelated to food) that offer us a similar hit can be vital in supporting us to break the habitual pattern of compulsive eating.

Consider what activities bring you some level of joy or satisfaction and create a list so you can experiment with these alternatives when the urge to eat arises. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- Listening to your favourite songs
- Singing
- Dancing around the house
- Playing an instrument
- Taking a walk in nature
- Doing something creative
- Getting or giving a hug.

Experiment with these different options to see what feels most supportive and aligned for you.

Breaking the Pattern

Some of us may be able to break the habitual pattern of compulsive eating almost immediately, for others it takes more practice. If we do find ourselves returning to old patterns of compulsive eating, we can focus on these next steps below.

Dealing with Shame and Guilt

Dealing with Shame and Guilt

The first response that often surfaces following a compulsive eating episode is shame and guilt. We beat ourselves up for 'loosing control' or for our 'lack of will power' when compulsive eating is actually about a drive to meet need. We simply don't yet have a better strategy.

Compulsive eating is not the problem, it's the solution to the problem.

To combat the shame and guilt we so often feel, I encourage you to focus on getting curious and offering compassion. We cannot be critical and curious/compassionate at the same time. As soon as we start to move into either a place of curiosity or compassion, our shame and guilt begins to dissipate.

Curiosity

To support you in getting curious, I invite you to reflect on the following questions:

- What happened right before I ate?
- How was I feeling right before I ate?
- What did I like/dislike about that eating experience?
- What did I actually need in that moment?

Compassion

We can offer ourselves compassion by using kind words expressed in a gentle tone of voice:

I see you, I hear you, I'm right here. You are trying your best and I'm so proud of you for working on this. I've got you, I'm right here. We can get through this together.

Summary

Summary

Identifying the trigger is our first step in breaking the pattern of compulsive eating. If it's physical hunger, we can honour our body and nourish ourselves with food. If it's emotional hunger we can support ourselves by:

- Regulating our body and increasing safety inside
- Connecting to our Eating Part and offering connection, validation and reassurance
- Seek out a supportive alternative.

These are great strategies in the short term and can be a vital bridge to support us until we can do the deeper healing that needs to happen inside.

Celia ♥

"I'm here to help you finally **stop the food noise** and **eat normally** without overwhelm.

www.celiac Clark.online



Celia Clark, Food & Body Image Specialist (IFS Therapist)

Hey there, I'm Celia!

If you are tired of the unhelpful and harmful obsession with food, fat and dieting, that steals your time, energy and your life, I'm here to help.

No more dieting in an attempt to feel worthy. No more compulsive eating because your needs are unmet. No more hiding away because you feel shame about your body weight and shape.

If you are done with quick fix solutions, I'm here to show you a new way to connect to yourself so you can finally stop the food noise and eat normally without overwhelm.

I'm looking forward to supporting you...

Celia ♡

Next Steps

If you're struggling with compulsive eating, you already know it's about more than just the food.

Unfortunately many women make the mistake of assuming their problem is a lack of willpower and attempt to take more control.

Without a focus on CONNECTION first, you'll waste months trying to break the cycle; going without your favourite foods, eating tasteless low cal options, creating even more food rules and berating yourself for every indiscretion, only to find yourself right back where you started.

Healing your relationship with food is an inside job.

That's why I created Nourish, my 21 day course that shows you how to do the inner work. I'll share the tools you need so you can make peace with food a reality.

There is no shame in compulsive eating, you just haven't been taught the skills you need to manage what comes your way. I'm here to guide you step by step. The best time to start was yesterday, the next best time is today.

LEARN MORE



Let's stay in touch!

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