

# Stress Bytes Newsletter

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**"WHEN STRESS BITES, BITE BACK!"**

THE NEWSLETTER OF ANNETTE VAILLANCOURT, PH.D.  
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## Emotional Eating 101

Food is fuel, not therapy. If you eat when you are not hungry, it is either habit or emotional eating.

Habit is eating by the hands of clock, not by the growl of the stomach. Emotional eating is using food to chase away boredom, anxiety, loneliness, anger, sadness or to celebrate some fortunate event.

Now that the New Year has begun and many of us are starting diets, be aware that your resolve can be waylaid by emotional eating that you are unaware of.

How can you tell if you are an emotional eater? The best way is to keep a food diary for a week. Record everything (yes, EVERYTHING) you eat, when and where you eat it, and what you were feeling before, during and after eating. Feelings can be boiled down to some version of "bad, sad, glad, mad, and scared." "Numb" is not a feeling. Numb is having an underlying feeling masked.

Once you have recorded your food and feelings for a week, look for patterns.

Do you tend to eat when you're feeling upset? What feeling most often accompanies your eating at the times when you are not hungry? Are you eating late in the evening out of boredom or loneliness? Do you rummage through the cupboards looking for something crunchy when you are mad?

Awareness is the first step toward change. The second step is to learn what to do with feelings instead of eating. When a client is upset, I'll ask them, "What does that feeling need?" Feelings need expression and release, not Hagen Daas or Frito Lay.

If you're sad, you need to cry. If you're mad, you need to vent safely and/or do something physical to spend the energy that comes with anger. If you're anxious, you need to feel safe and get reassurance that everything will be okay. If you're lonely, you need to reach out for human contact. Call a friend. If you're bored, you need to find an activity to do (besides eating). You can learn to attend to your feelings, express them

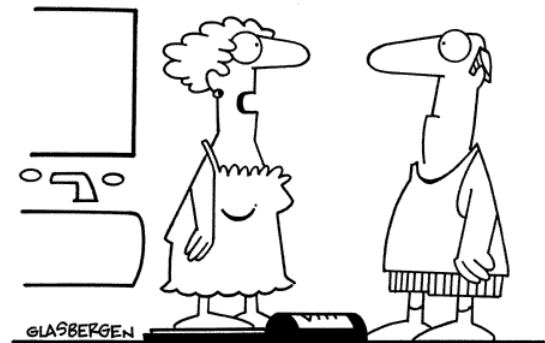
and satisfy their urgings without using food to suppress them.

Eat when you are hungry. Cry, complain, vent, pace, snort, growl, or reach out for others instead of relying on food to ease the sting of those feelings. If you know you are using food to tend to a feeling, try admitting it out loud. "I am eating now because I'm angry." Remember, feelings pass. Food ends up on the hips.

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**"Why does it take six weeks to lose five pounds, but only one day to gain it all back?"**

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## Empowering Ourselves Around Food

"I have no will power!" you say. "I can't resist chocolate during *that* time of the month." "I can't stick to a diet."

You are ABSOLUTELY RIGHT!

There really is no such thing as will power. Will power is just temporary resistance to something we want. Resistance is futile! When we rely on "will power" alone to manage ourselves around food we are *always* setting ourselves up for failure. Further, no one can stick to a diet forever, nor is there any need to continually restrict calorie intake unless you plan to disappear entirely! Diets are meant to be temporary.

Is this reason for despair? No. Is this a license to eat all you want? Absolutely not.

When you cast aside "will power" and diets once and for all, you are finally free to learn how to empower yourself around food.

You are free to build a healthy, empowered relationship with food. You are free to eat when you are hungry and stop when you are full. You are free to eat what you like, but not all that you want. You are free to find other ways to satisfy your cravings that may have nothing to do with food at all. You are free to feel and express the feelings you might be using food to mask. You are free to love your body and it's wants!

Step 1: Realize that your relationship with food is colored by many harmful beliefs and myths.

Step 2: Decide that you want a lifestyle change that will be permanent, healthy and increase your self-esteem and confidence.

Step 3: Begin to learn about your relationship with food and your body over the span of your lifetime. One way to start is to answer the following questions. Reflect on your life, delve deep. Don't just answer the first thing that comes to your mind. Developing a new relationship with food and your

body requires honesty!

1. What is my first recollection about how food was important when growing up?
2. When did I first feel dissatisfied with my body and/or weight? What prompted it?
3. When was the first time you went on a "diet"? What were the results? What do you recall feeling about yourself and your body, i.e. "my body was the enemy. I hated how I looked."
4. For whom do you most want to lose weight? Who would be happiest if you did? Who would be upset or threatened if you did?
5. What are your "comfort foods" and how did they become so?
6. What do you like most and least about your body?
7. Was food used as a reward for good behavior? What would you have preferred to have as a reward?
8. What myths did you learn about "good" and "bad" foods?

Step 4: Educate yourself or seek support from a professional to assist you with developing a healthy relationship with food.

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**"Access requires a password, a retina scan, fingerprint analysis, and a DNA sample. It's the best refrigerator I ever owned!"**

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FEEL FREE TO COPY AND FORWARD THIS NEWSLETTER IN ITS ENTIRETY TO ANYONE YOU KNOW WHO MAY BENEFIT FROM IT.

## Do You Have A Healthy Relationship With Food?

Take the following survey to see how you rate on your relationship with food.

- Yes  No 1. Can you eat when you are hungry and quit when you are satisfied?
- Yes  No 2. Do you stop eating because you *think* you should (as opposed to because your body is satisfied)?
- Yes  No 3. Do you make food choices based on foods you enjoy?
- Yes  No 4. Do you become physically uncomfortable (such as weak, tired, dizzy, a headache) when you under-eat or diet?
- Yes  No 5. Do you feel that your food selections are a combination of "healthy foods" and "pleasurable foods"?
- Yes  No 6. Do you *have* to eat in a certain pattern - *always* three meals a day or always at a certain time of the day?
- Yes  No 7. Do you trust that if you eat when you are hungry and stop when you are satisfied, you will *not get fat*?
- Yes  No 8. Do you feel guilty when you eat to the point that you are stuffed and uncomfortable?
- Yes  No 9. Can you balance the time you give to thoughts about food, weight and dieting with other important aspects of your life, such as relationships, work and self-developments?
- Yes  No 10. Do you watch what other people eat and use that to determine what and how much you will eat?
- Yes  No 11. Can you leave some cookies on the plate because you know you can have some again tomorrow?
- Yes  No 12. Do you usually pick foods based on their calorie content?

### Scoring

Add up all the "No" responses to the **odd-numbered** questions. Give one point for each "No" and put that number in the box to the left.

Add up all the "Yes" responses to the **even-numbered** questions. Give one point for each "Yes" and put that number in the box to the left.

**Total of both of the above numbers. Turn to Page 4 for Score Interpretation**

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*The Stress Doctor is IN!!!*

## Weight Loss Products



**"I FOUND AN APPETITE SUPPRESSANT THAT  
REALLY WORKS. IT'S CALLED FOOD!"**

ANNETTE VAILLANCOURT, Ph.D.

LICENSED CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

- 14 years experience gently helping individuals, couples and groups resolve personal problems, manage stress, and reach their full potential.
- Specializing in Women's Issues and Stress Management

Call (618) 549-5935 to set up an appointment

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

**80% OF PEOPLE WHO DEVELOP TYPE 2 (ADULT ONSET) DIABETES ARE OBESE AT DIAGNOSIS. EVEN MILD TO MODERATE WEIGHT LOSS (10-12 PERCENT) HAS BEEN SHOWN TO IMPROVE DIABETES CONTROL SIGNIFICANTLY.**

## Do You Have a Healthy Relationship with Food?

### Questionnaire Interpretation\*

This survey is designed to help you reflect on your relationship with food. "Normal" eating is flexible. It varies in response to emotion, daily activities, hunger and proximity to food.

**Scores between 0 and 3.** These scores generally indicate a healthy attitude toward food and eating.

**Scores between 4 and 8.** These scores suggest that cultural pressures about appearance and ideas about how much and what kinds of foods to eat may be negatively affecting self-acceptance and overall happiness. Exploring these issues may be helpful.

**Scores between 9 and 12.** These scores suggest serious issues with food, ranging from food obsession to an eating disorder. These issues could be interfering with daily life and may negatively affect overall health. Professional assistance is recommended to deal with thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to food and body image. Medical evaluation and intervention may also be needed to address health concerns.

**\*Note:** The "Healthy Relationship with Food" Inventory can only give results based on the limited number of questions asked in the inventory. It cannot account for the truthfulness of the answers, only for the self-reporting of each participant. The interpretations given are for informational and educational purposes only, and do not constitute or substitute for any psychological and medical evaluations performed by a qualified professional, nor for any psychological or medical treatment. If psychological or medical evaluation and treatment are indicated, immediately consult a qualified professional.