

Eight Traits of Emotional Hunger

Emotional and physical hunger can feel identical, unless you've learned to identify their distinguishing characteristics. The next time you feel voraciously hungry, look for these signals that your appetite may be based on emotions rather than true physical need. This awareness may head off an emotional overeating episode.

Emotional Hunger	Physical Hunger
<p>1. Is sudden: One minute you aren't thinking about food, the next you are starving. Your hunger goes from 0-60 in a short period of time.</p>	<p>1. Is gradual: Your stomach rumbles. An hour later, it growls. Physical hunger gives steadily progressive clues that it's time to eat.</p>
<p>2. Is for a specific food: You feel a need for a particular food like chocolate, pasta or a cheeseburger. No substitute will do!</p>	<p>2. Is open to different foods: You you may have food preferences, but you are open to alternative choices.</p>
<p>3. Is 'above the neck': A craving begins in the mouth and mind. Your mouth wants to taste that pizza or chocolate doughnut and your mind can't stop thinking about it.</p>	<p>3. Is in the stomach: Physical hunger is recognized by stomach sensations - gnawing, rumbling, emptiness and even pain in your stomach.</p>
<p>4. Is urgent: An urging to eat NOW, to instantly ease emotional pain with food.</p>	<p>4. Is patient: You prefer to eat soon, but it doesn't command you to eat instantly.</p>
<p>5. Is paired with an upsetting emotion: Your boss yelled at you, your child is in trouble at school. Your spouse is in a bad mood. Hunger occurs with an upsetting situation.</p>	<p>5. Occurs out of physical need: Hunger occurs 4-5 hours since your last meal. You may experience light-headedness or low energy if you are overly hungry.</p>
<p>6. Involves automatic or absent-minded eating: Eating feels as if someone else is scooping up the ice cream and putting it in your mouth, or you may not even notice that you've eaten half the bag of cookies.</p>	<p>6. Involves deliberate choices and awareness of eating: You plan what you are going to eat, are aware of it on your fork, in your mouth and in your stomach. You consciously choose to eat some or all of your food.</p>
<p>7. Doesn't notice or stop eating in response to fullness: Stems from a desire to cover up painful feelings by eating 2nd or 3rd helpings to deaden the pain, even though stomach may ache from over-fullness.</p>	<p>7. Stops when full: Stems from a desire to fuel and nourish the body. As soon as that intention is fulfilled, the person stops eating.</p>
<p>8. Feels guilty about eating: eats to feel better and ends up berating themselves for eating cookies, cakes, or burgers. Promises atonements: "I'll start my diet tomorrow."</p>	<p>8. Realizes eating is necessary: There is no guilt or shame, simply recognition that eating, like breathing oxygen, is a necessary behavior.</p>

