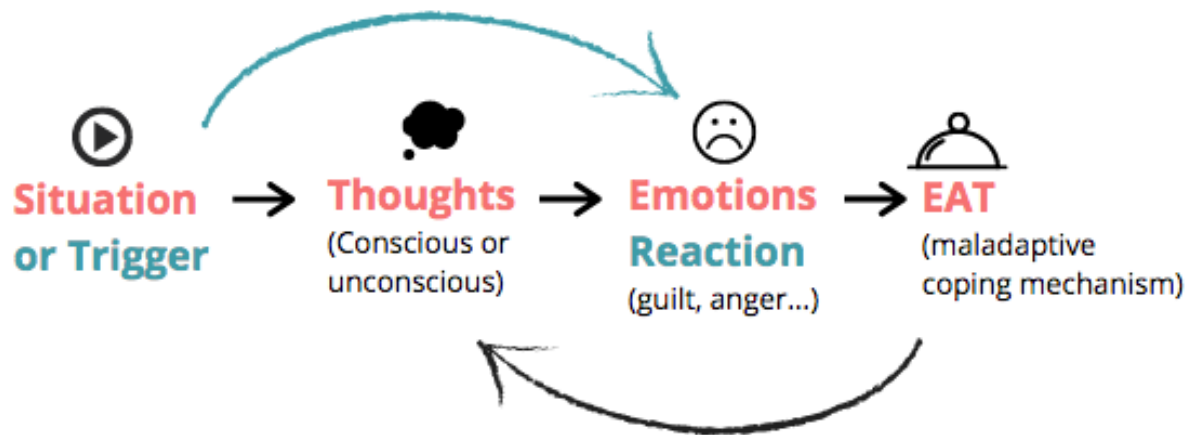


UNDERSTANDING YOUR EMOTIONS



Up until now, we've focused on how to address each step in the above cycle in order to break the cycle of emotional overeating.

- **STEP 1:** Identify your unhelpful **habits** and **cues and triggers** that initiate the cycle of overeating and either change your response to the cue or avoid them entirely.
- **STEP 2:** Become **aware of the thoughts** you are thinking that either a) encourage you to make unhelpful choices and continue engaging in problematic eating habits or b) that make you feel badly, thereby causing you to want to eat to self-soothe those feelings.
- **STEP 3: BECOME AWARE OF YOUR EMOTIONS AND IMPROVE YOUR RESPONSE TO THEM, WHILE REDUCING EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS!**

AWARENESS OF YOUR EMOTIONS

The physical body has its own intelligence that reacts to a thought by producing chemicals (oxytocin, serotonin, etc.) which create an emotional experience in your body.

Sometimes the brain and body automatically respond to a cue and produce these chemicals before the conscious mind has registered a problem. We call this "being triggered".

Becoming AWARE of how emotions FEEL in your body and the PHYSICAL SENSATIONS present is the first step in learning how to respond more effectively.

Refer to [Feelings Underlying Eating Issues](#) & [Meditation_Mindfulness of Emotions](#).

WHY THE EMOTIONAL DISCONNECT

Remember, the theory of emotional eating states that if you grew up in an **invalidating environment** where a) your emotions were invalidated (i.e. “don’t cry”, “be strong”, “be happy”, etc.) or b) you did not receive adequate soothing or comfort for your emotions (i.e. parents were not attentive or able to meet your needs) then you likely looked to external ways to sooth yourself such as with food. This results in eating becoming the default coping mechanism your brain relies on as an adult.

It is likely that as a youngster you learned to shut down the emotional aspect of your being, thinking it was appropriate to forget, ignore or bury your emotions. It’s also likely that you’ve heard prevalent messages in society about women expressing emotions that has further contributed to you burrying them, such as:

- Women who express **anger** are **bitches**.
- Women who are sensitive and express **sadness** are **dramatic**.

The reality is that many of us have not learned how to recognize and respond to our emotions. This requires a relearning and development of emotional intelligence and a willingness to **become comfortable feeling uncomfortable**.

HOW FEELINGS FROM THE PAST CAN AFFECT YOU IN THE PRESENT

“Our bodies recall what our minds have forgotten; Our visceral reaction tells us our truth”

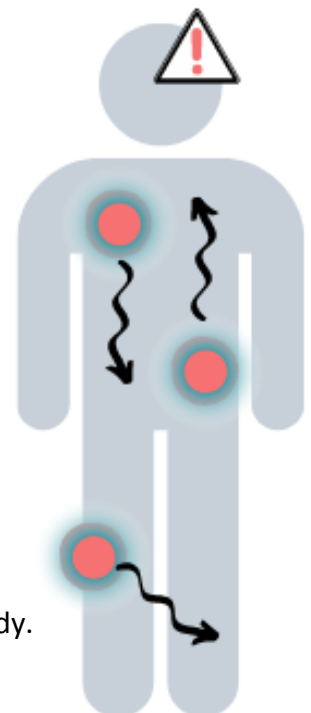
BURIED OR REPRESSED EMOTIONS FROM THE PAST DO NOT GO AWAY IF IGNORED!!!

They can constantly affect you and your health in the present moment, and perpetuate or intensify the pattern of emotional eating.

Here’s how:

1. Trapped Emotions

Much of our suffering is due to negative emotional energies that have become ‘trapped’ within us. Emotions are *energy in motion*; they are meant to flow through us. If you repress an emotion, then this ball of energy can become lodged somewhere in the body. This can cause you to feel an *exaggerated emotional response*.



2. Memories & Emotional Wounds

Your subconscious brain records every experience you've had in your life, from the moment of birth, storing every aspect of the experience as a memory. Your memories are images and energy patterns, believed to be stored in your cells, that contain the sensory (sights, sounds, smells, etc.), emotional (how you felt) and cognitive (the beliefs and conclusions you made) aspects of that incident.

Some of these memories are conscious, but the majority are unconscious. Experiences in the present moment that are similar to the past memory can result in the emotions of that memory becoming **REACTIVATED**. When this happens, the amygdala automatically kicks in activating a fear or stress response, flooding your body with the same emotions of the past.

This is designed to be a **PROTECTIVE SYSTEM**. Your brain is hardwired for survival and pleasure; it wants to keep you safe and feeling good so it is hypersensitive to things in the past that felt dangerous, threatened your well-being or caused you pain. Unfortunately, this system overrides the logical mind and can cause you to overreact to things that are not actually a threat.

STRATEGIES TO HEAL YOUR EMOTIONAL WOUNDS & RELEASE TRAPPED EMOTIONS

"Healing begins with the repair of emotional injuries"

When memories send you back in time, flooding you with emotion, the brain is on high alert to protect you from danger. To correct this, you need to train the brain and body to recognize these memories are not dangerous and that you are safe in this moment.

Any time you have a food craving, urge to eat, or are overeating this is an indication there is an internal emotion that you need to stop and address.

If you want to FEED YOUR FEELINGS, pause and ask yourself: "If I want to eat this to feel good, then what in this moment DOESN'T FEEL GOOD?"

STEP 1: Cultivate **MINDFULNESS of EMOTIONS to generate awareness of what feelings are underlying your eating behavior.**

It's likely your brain often is automatically signaling for you to eat in response to an uncomfortable emotion without your conscious brain being aware of it.

1. **PAUSE** and **ASK** yourself the key question: ***"If I am wanting to eat to feel good, then what in this moment doesn't feel good?"***
2. Sit, close your eyes and practice **Mindfulness of Emotions**.
 - a. What physical sensations do you feel in your body and where?
 - b. How would you describe these sensations?
 - c. If these sensations were an emotion, what emotion is it?
3. **STATE** out loud or in your head what you are feeling, such as, ***"I am noticing I am feeling ___(emotion)___."***
4. See what happens if you just sit, **OBSERVING** the emotion and continuing to breath, without trying to fix or change the emotion. Researchers suggest it takes 90 seconds to fully process and release an emotion (if we don't repress it).
5. Tune in and see if there is any way this feeling wants to be **EXPRESSED**, such as crying, yelling, moving, journaling, punching, sharing with someone, etc.

To stay with a feeling becomes a comfort, because it is an assurance that we will not abandon ourselves

STEP 2: Use **EMOTIONAL FREEDOM TECHNIQUES (EFT) in the moment to effectively process and clear the emotion and underlying wounds.**

By tapping on the painful memory you're giving your brain new instructions telling it the memory is no longer threatening and you can feel safe when remembering it.

- Use the **Tapping Audio_Emotional Wounds** to help you fully clear the emotion underlying your desire to eat.
- Allow yourself to feel the emotion fully while you tap on it. See the image, remember what happened, hear what the person said, etc. Continue tapping on these aspects of the memory until you can recall it without experiencing a physical reaction or charge (it feels neutral).