



EATING 101

RU DINING HEALTHY?

A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE RU HEALTHY DINING TEAM

A Joint Program Between Rutgers Dining Services and the Institute of Food, Nutrition, and Health

Food for Thought...And Feelings

Do you find yourself reaching for food when feeling anxious, stressed, lonely, or bored? If so, then try to recognize that eating for emotional reasons is a common coping mechanism. It is natural to eat in response to stress, or when celebrating an “A” on a paper you have been working on for weeks. However, if stress eating or choosing unhealthy foods becomes frequent, then you may be an emotional eater. Recognizing this pattern is the first step to a healthier relationship with food. It is not about judgment but about understanding what your body and mind may need in those moments.

What is emotional eating?

Emotional eating is the practice of consuming foods in response to feelings rather than hunger. Some examples include eating when you feel out of control, avoiding a tough decision by hanging out with a tub of ice cream, or mindless snacking on comfort foods when bored. Emotional eating can lead to the consumption of excess calories, often with limited nutritional value. This eating pattern may offer temporary comfort or stress relief, but it does not help navigate the core problem.

Some ways to reduce emotional eating:

- *Eat when physically hungry.* Are you actually hungry, or are you just tempted by the smell of fries, your roommate’s takeout, or that vending machine glow? Practice identifying physical from emotional hunger and eating regularly when physically hungry. Remember that the dining halls are open from 7am till 9pm to fit your schedule: Be sure to visit <http://food.rutgers.edu> to check your nearby dining hall’s hours of operation!
- *Participate in activities that you enjoy.* Try exploring activities such as exercise, yoga, calling a friend, or blasting your favorite playlist into your headphones. Enjoyable activities can help fulfill emotions such as anxiety, loneliness, and boredom, leaving you less likely to turn to food.
- *Take the time to savor your food.* Eat in a calm, relaxing environment, eat mindfully without distractions, and give yourself ample time to enjoy the meal.
- *Plan and portion your snacks.* To avoid mindless munching, put a portion of your food on a plate instead of eating straight from the bag or box.
- *Celebrate small wins!* Be easy on yourself and remember, change takes time, especially when old habits have taken root. What matters most is putting in the effort.



Don't let stress season your meals



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References: *Struggling with emotional eating?* Available at: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/diet-and-weight-loss/struggling-with-emotional-eating> Accessed on: September 12, 2025. *Emotional Eating and How to Stop It* Available at: <https://www.helpguide.org/wellness/weight-loss/emotional-eating> Accessed on: September 12, 2025.