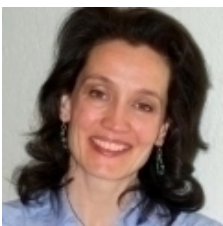


# Curbing overeating doesn't require radical changes

By Mandy Kendall

Looking back on the holiday weekend, eating seemed to be one common activity shared and enjoyed by most people. Food is an absolute necessity for survival, but can also be wrapped up in so many of our social habits. We are taught from an early age not to waste food and to eat everything on our plates. Food is used as a celebration and can become entwined into our perception of enjoyment. Emotional triggers can also cause us to reach for food, not to satisfy hunger but to fill a void or replace something that is missing in our lives.

Carole Carson, an AARP contributor, writes about Edward Abramson, a clinical psychologist and internationally recognized authority on emotional eating, weight control and eating disorders. Abramson has written five books on the issues surrounding eating and has authored 20 scientific studies.



Mandy  
Kendall

When Carson asked Abramson what percentage of our eating was a function of genuine hunger, Abramson stated that in general, people eat for one of three reasons: (1) physical hunger (for example, low blood sugar, gastric motility); (2) external cues (for example, the sight of others eating in television commercials); and (3) emotional arousal.

Experts estimate that we make more than 220 eating decisions each day and most eating seems to be prompted by external cues that are all around us.

So it seems we are vulnerable to much more than just the hunger pangs we feel when our body tells us it's time to eat. We may eat to relieve boredom, to fight fatigue or to distract us from a stressful situation. Feelings of obligation may cause us to eat a meal that has been prepared for us even though we might not be hungry. Sometimes food just tastes and smells so good we just can't stop ourselves, and simply eating with people who eat a lot can, consciously or unconsciously, trigger you to follow their example.

Finally, the food companies have spent many years, and a lot of money, manufacturing food that excites all the perception and arousal centers of our brains to make sure we want to keep on eating more and more of their food.

So here are some *Qwik-e* tips to help make sure that you are eating for the right reasons:

**Serve up a portion** – It is easy to overeat when reaching into a bag of something like chips or cookies, especially if you are distracted watching TV. Personally, if I have only two (OK maybe three) of my favorite cookies on a plate I am much more likely to savor each one rather than just keep scoffing them out of a bag until I'm full (which I can tell you will end up being way more than three).

**Serve up food on a smaller plate** – Studies have shown that the size of the dish food is served on has a huge impact on how full people claim they feel after they have eaten. Subjects claimed that a serving of food on a large plate was not as satisfying as the same size serving on a smaller plate. So maybe try using a salad plate as your entree plate.

**Check portion sizes** – Apparently 20 years ago a bagel was about 3 inches in diameter and contained about 140 calories.

Now bagel is twice the size and twice the calories. Check out this site for an eye opening look at what size portions the experts recommend we eat.

**Take your time** – If you give your body a chance to register the food that has entered your stomach, you might find you are actually full quite some time before you would normally stop eating. When I was young, and claimed I was still hungry when I had finished my plate full, my dear old mum used to say, “Just wait five minutes and see how you feel.” She was pretty much always right (as mums usually are) and I would feel much more satisfied and not need to go back for more.

**Savor each mouthful** – Concentrating on the task in hand is always a good idea, especially when eating. Taking a mouthful of food, putting down your cutlery, and savoring all the flavors and chewing until there is nothing left in your mouth will make sure that you don't rush through a meal and eat too much. It will also make you realize if you are eating food with a high nutritional content or not as poor quality food tends not to taste so good the longer you chew it.

**Eating out** – If the portions are huge try to make the decision to take half home with you before you start eating? That may stop you from being tempted to eat more than you intended. Maybe split an entrée with someone else or just have the appetizer version. Also when eating at a friend's house, explain that you are watching your portion sizes and ask them not to give you too much.

**Celebration food** – Try to have all kinds of food available during celebrations and get creative with healthy foods presented beautifully to distract from the habit of reaching for cakes to celebrate.

**A little help from your friends** – Some moral support from family and friends can help you spot those times when you might be making those unconscious, and undesirable, food

choices. Giving people you love and trust guidelines on what you are trying to achieve, along with permission to keep you accountable, can go along way to break some old habits. For example ask friends if you can meet on a walk rather than sitting in your favorite cafe surrounded with all your favorite 'snack' foods to tempt you, or give people permission to distract you if they see you going for the cookie jar for that snack fix.

Until next time.

*Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe. If you have any questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and wellbeing topic, please feel free to drop me an email at [healthconnective@gmail.com](mailto:healthconnective@gmail.com), visit us on Facebook, or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.*