

Help! I'm Bingeing! How Can I Stop!

By Bob Wilson

I have a PhD in “bingeing!” I have binged thousands of times. The insights and suggestions below have helped me gradually transform my relationship with food. At first, I overate 4 – 5 times/week, then it went down to 2 – 3 times/ week, and finally every other week, and then—miraculously, less and less often. Today, I almost NEVER overeat. It is due to my learning about my patterns and myself. The PRACTICE of these ideas leads to peace and healing. Ah.

- 1. Ask yourself, what can you learn from the experience?** What triggered the binge? Tune inside. Evaluate. Writing in a journal is a powerful tool that can help you find answers.
 - ✓ When a *food idea* comes into your mind, remember that it is just an idea. Ask yourself WHY do you want that particular item?
 - ✓ Are you hungry, tired, depressed, anxious, or bored? Do you feel stressed out or emotionally overwhelmed, or some other difficult emotion? Force of habit?
 - ✓ Do you need some time for fun, relaxation and connection with others? Is your schedule too full—do you need a break?
 - ✓ Will food solve your problems or make them worse? What do you really need?
 - ✓ Were you too: **P-HALT**? Too: **P**=Pressured, **H**=Hungry, **A**=Angry, **L**=Lonely, **T**=Tired?
 - ✓ What were you saying to yourself (your self talk)? How does your self talk effect your food choices? I have found that when my self-talk is mean and self-condemning it frequently triggers a binge for me.
 - ✓ How were you influenced by people, foods, places and things? What was going on?
 - ✓ What can you do differently next time so you don't binge again?
 - ✓ What resources (program and outside support) could you call upon to help you out?I encourage you to congratulate yourself for having the courage to pause and reflect. As you practice this skill, you will understand your patterns (lifestyle and emotional) and then you can make more skillful choices next time.
- 2. Food will NOT solve any problem—except HUNGER!** If you are hungry, then eat something. It is not wrong to be hungry! Eat something that won't make you ultimately unhappy with yourself. When you choose whole, healthful foods, you are caring for yourself. Respect and honor yourself. Choose foods that will properly nourish and maintain your body.
- 3. Do you want to eat a certain food?** Well, imagine getting a piece of it. Now imagine yourself eating it—how good it looks, how wonderful it tastes, the texture, the smell, how good it feels. This process may take one or two minutes. Well, this is how long the *pleasure* would have lasted that would have been associated with eating that particular food item.
 - ✓ If you DID eat the food to anesthetize yourself from experiencing a difficult emotion or situation, did that situation or emotion permanently go away?
 - ✓ Notice that you now have TWO problems. The initial situation, guilt, and discouragement about your overeating.
- 4. Do NOT have your particular binge foods in the house.** Normally, when the idea of going on a binge strikes, it lasts for only a few minutes. If you don't have the food item in the house, you will have to go to the store for it. Quite often, I find I am just too lazy to go to the store and the idea passes. These ideas of bingeing frequently occur before bedtime, when I may be undressed or just too tired to pull-off a trip to the store. But, if I had the food in the refrigerator or cupboards—all I would have to do is to walk over and get it and...EAT!

5. If you DO have the food in the house (because other family members insist they NEED cookies, candy, pie, ice cream, potato chips, dip, and sugar pop) don't lie to yourself and say, "I can handle just having one little bite." Ha, Ha! Be honest. If you can't handle it, then admit it. Don't take the *first* compulsive bite.
6. If you do binge (over do it), then *forget* it! You can't *undo* what you did. Quit mentally kicking yourself. Forgive yourself and forget it. Pick yourself up and begin anew. If you have *really* forgiven yourself, then you have forgotten about it. If you're still thinking about it, then you haven't really forgiven yourself. FORGET the "if I hadn't" syndrome. "If I hadn't eaten that...I would be 'X' number of pounds lighter."
7. Give yourself *credit* for what you do. Notice what is *right with you*, not always what is *wrong* with you. Example: You may have had eight days of making healthful food choices and then one evening you blew it. Immediately, that is all you can think about. *Notice* that you DID have eight days of healthful meals. Accept the fact that you DID have forty minutes of insanity. Be grateful that the insanity (relapse) lasted only forty minutes!
8. Don't try to make up for a binge by NOT eating the next several meals. *Continue* on your normal food plan as if you had been eating normally. You ARE just continuing with your plan. Many times, if you try to "make up" for a binge (to reduce caloric intake), you will become so hungry that when you start eating again, you will overeat. After a binge, notice when you start to feel *hunger pangs* and just continue with your regular meal plan.
9. Be prepared! Have a wide variety of foods in the house that are on your meal plan. "Treat" yourself. Buy first-rate fruits and vegetables, good quality breads, delicious beans and other low fat protein and dairy sources. Spend the money that you would have spent on *binge foods*, on food items, which will maintain your mental and physical health.
10. If you work, then take food items that are on your plan to munch on when you get hungry. Then you are not left at the mercy of your business cafeteria or snack food machines. YOU ARE WORTH the few minutes that it requires to assemble the food items, put them in a sack and take them with you. You WILL be greatly rewarded for your effort.
11. **Love yourself as you are, where you are.** NOT just when you have made *perfect* food choices, when you are slim, when you get all of the housework done, when you don't get angry, etc., etc. I encourage you to LOVE YOU, even if you *do have faults*. It occurred to me that: If I had a friend that treated me *like I treat me*, I wouldn't want to be around that friend! Forgive yourself. Love yourself as you are and as you are NOT.

ASK: Am I eating to fix painful emotions or situations?

