

The Late Afternoon Binge

You've been running all day. You get the kids off to school, race to work, get a few errands done and if you have time, try to knock off a few more things on your to-do list. Now it's about three o'clock. You've just made it home in time for the school bus, start to think about your children's afternoon activities, responsibilities and what you can whip up for dinner. You're tired, frustrated and all you can think about is what you're about to eat the minute you get your hands on some food.

Sounds familiar? It's a common scenario with a predictable outcome. The children race in, backpacks flying everywhere, the dog starts barking, everyone winds up in the kitchen and what happens? As your children eat everything in sight out of hunger, you eat twice as much possibly out of fatigue, anxiety or as a means of self-soothing yourself after a stressful day. After the last bite or handful goes down, the familiar feeling of discomfort, disgust and guilt takes over.

Why do you do this and why is the outcome so predictable? Unfortunately, it has become a habit that you have incorporated into your routine. You may have found mindless munching to be the quickest, easiest method to boost your energy. Maybe you are "stuffing" your feelings as a way to keep them at bay. Finally, you may never have considered that your body is "hungry" for some nurturing self care.

Every reason for the binge offers valuable clues as to what it is we really need. The least it shows us is the need to pre plan for the inevitable. More often, the binge is trying to fill a greater need for something we feel is missing from our lives. Whatever the reason, it leaves us feeling empty, uncomfortable and out of control. So what do you do?

First of all, berating yourself for binging only encourages another binge. Remember, it is a self-soothing technique you have employed to help yourself feel better. Imagine a hurt child who's trying to tell you why she's hurt. Typically, telling you her story is the first step to feeling better. Once she feels heard she feels as if a weight has been lifted. She feels understood, validated, loved and can happily move on after a few minutes of explaining her feelings and receiving a supportive hug from someone who cares. Now imagine that same child but instead of listening to her "crisis", you forbid her from explaining her pain or feeling her emotions and you choose to feed her instead. How does she feel?

- She's frustrated with the feeling of being squelched.
- She's unlikely to feel better because she's still dealing with emotions that haven't been adequately felt and dealt with.
- She's never had an opportunity to resolve the conflict which caused the pain so the painful feelings remain.

- She feels hopeless that this feeling will ever change.

This is what we do to ourselves when we binge. We squelch that hurt child and fail to uncover the unmet need. The need remains unmet, we remain unhappy, unfulfilled and overweight. This cycle of binge, feel bad, binge again is a cycle leading to nowhere but bigger clothes and less self esteem. So what can you do?

The first step is to acknowledge what it is that you are doing. You may not even be aware of this pattern but have begun to notice a change in weight. Next you must believe this is something you can change. You have the power to change the way you think, feel and behave. Once you believe that, you can work towards changing whatever behavior no longer suits you. The next step is to pre plan. Having healthy, crunchy alternatives is a substitution for the behavior that will at least prevent further weight gain until you determine what it is that you really need. Next, ask the question “what do I really need right now?” Maybe it’s more sleep, better relationships, more down time, confidence or respect. The key is in the three R’s: **Recognize** what it is that you are doing, **realize** it is your body’s way of signaling a need for greater self care and **respect** the message your body is trying to tell you.

Once you recognize that you are bingeing to fill a void, squelch an emotion or prevent a painful feeling from erupting, you’re on the right road to recovery. Now it’s time to listen to that hurt little girl with an ear willing to listen and a heart filled with compassion. By discovering what you truly need, you’ll begin to nourish yourself with the “food” you’ve been so desperately searching for.

Debi Silber, MS, RD, WHC is a Registered Dietitian, Certified Personal Trainer, Whole Health Coach and the President of Lifestyle Fitness, Inc. For nearly 20 years, Debi’s worked exclusively with moms to encourage them to become fit, healthy and happy through gradual, lifestyle change. Debi’s also known as “The Mojo Coach” because she inspires and empowers overweight, overwhelmed and unfit moms to “get their mojo back!” For more information on the Lifestyle Fitness Program, please visit <http://www.lifestylefitnessinc.com> . To join Debi on a free, live teleseminar, please visit <http://www.askthemojocoach.com> .