



How to beat your eating triggers

Eating triggers are those frustrating things that happen just before you eat too much or eat foods you don't want to. There are four types of eating triggers – sensations, emotions, locations and relations. Here are some tips to keep your eating plan on track, by beating your eating triggers. Grab your pen out and tick the ones you'll try!

SENSATIONS

Eating triggers can be internal sensations like blood sugar levels or external stimuli like the aroma of food. Here are tips for both types:

PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

- ☐ Eat regularly and avoid skipping meals.
- ☐ Choose low-GI carbohydrates to level out blood sugars.
- ☐ Don't miss out on protein as this helps make you feel full.
- ☐ If you are female, be prepared for heightened sensitivity to triggers at certain times of the month.
- ☐ If you are physically unwell, treat this first.

PRESENCE OF FOOD

- ☐ Don't go by convenience stores on your way home.
- ☐ Keep snacks out of sight.
- ☐ Keep good quality fresh fruit in a bowl you can see.
- ☐ If you can, keep out of the kitchen until your meal is ready.
- ☐ Put leftovers in the fridge straight away, rather than be tempted for seconds.
- ☐ Place a sticker that reads, 'Eat Me!' on the front of containers of healthy leftovers.

EMOTIONS

Emotions and feelings like stress, anger or just 'feeling fat' can subconsciously trigger you to turn to food when you really need something else to satisfy an emotional need.

- ☐ When you feel your emotional trigger being pulled, visualise and verbalise (say it out loud) a stop sign... STOP!
- ☐ Go for a walk, phone a friend, take a bath, watch TV, clean the house or find another distraction.
- ☐ Drink a large glass of water and brush your teeth.
- ☐ If you do eat, choose something that will give you satisfaction and move on!
- ☐ Seek expert help if you honestly think your emotional triggers need some special attention.

LOCATIONS

The best way to deal with specific locations as eating triggers is to have a plan and stick to it. Try these ideas:

At the supermarket: Don't shop hungry! Eat something before you leave home.

At a hotel: Have the snacks in your room removed before you get there.

On a plane: Order a low-fat or low-calorie meal when you book your ticket.

At a business lunch: Start with a jug of water. Make salad a must-have menu item.

At a party: Move away from the food table and find someone interesting to talk to.

At work: Keep some healthy instant options like breakfast bars and fresh fruit handy for busy times.

Home alone: Have a healthy stock of foods available and pick one or two as the your trigger back-up foods. For example, low-fat vanilla custard on a banana, sprinkled with a little cinnamon sugar – yummo!

RELATIONS

Relationships with other people can provide a challenge for keeping your program on track. Ask yourself these questions:

Am I encouraged to eat by others when I don't want to eat?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do I eat to fit in?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do some people make me feel uncomfortable and food makes me feel better?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Here are three tips to build better food relations:

- ☐ Explain to your family that you are eating healthy foods and you would appreciate their support for your efforts.
- ☐ Alternatively, make up a little white lie to get out of eating at social events with family or friends. Say you are a subject in a university experiment and you've been given instructions not to eat.
- ☐ Address the non-food relationship factors that are impacting on your success. Better relationships and less stress and make it easier to stay on track.

So, which options did you tick?

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