



衛生署  
Department of Health

# Bridge

This Newsletter aims to promote communication between students and the Student Health Service of the Department of Health

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## Editorial

Student Health Service of the Department of Health celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in November 2015. Starting from this issue, "Bridge" has a new layout for continued improvement.

The topic of this issue is "Emotional Eating". Under the stressful situation, some people may opt to overeat to relieve their stress. However, this may lead to some health problems. Clinical Psychologist of our service will discuss how to overcome emotional eating and provide some tips on healthy eating.



Director of Health and Consultant Community Medicine presented prizes to our staff who have served Student Health Service since establishment.

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# How To Overcome Emotional Eating

Clinical Psychologist,  
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## ☆ The Story Of Anthony ☆

Facing the demands of school work and competitions in sports and extracurricular activities, Anthony feels pressure from his desire for perfection in everything he does. He turns to food for comfort, stress relief and as a reward. Even though he is not hungry, his inner voice keeps urging him "I want to eat, I want to eat..."

Anthony resists to weigh himself now because he knows that his weight has been increasing. He understands that this is the result of stress-driven overeating and feels guilty about it after overeating. However, the more he suppresses, the more he has the impulse to eat. As a result, he overeats.

## Eat To Beat Stress, Why Not?



**Use eating to boost your mood during stressful moments may lead to the following problems:**

- (1) Overeating causes overweight and obesity which may increase the risk of developing chronic diseases and negative body image.
- (2) People in negative mood tend to choose food for immediate satisfaction, rather than for nutrition and health benefits.
- (3) Eating can only shield oneself from uncomfortable feelings like stress and boredom but cannot help solve the root causes of stress and negative mood. In addition, the shame and guilt after overeating often lead to further emotional eating resulting in vicious cycles.







# How To Overcome Emotional Eating?

## How to overcome the urge to eat that make you eat unnecessarily

### 1. Be prepared:

Create a list of activities that you may do to distract yourself from mindless eating. Write them on cue card and carry it with you in your wallet. Glance at the cue card in times of need.

### 2. Choose healthy snacks:

Choose healthy snacks to substitute unhealthy ones.

### 3. Be mindful:

When you are feeling the impulse to eat, pause and use the following three steps to delay the eating:

#### • Pause:

Use relaxation skills to calm yourself down, e.g. taking deep breaths and drinking water. You may also image that you are brushing teeth with mint flavored toothpaste. Focus on the clean and fresh feeling in your mouth.

#### • Look:

Take a look at the food that you want to eat, and its nutrient label (if any) may lead to healthier decisions. Ask yourself, "Is this a healthy food?"

#### • Self-inquire:

♥ Body need: **"Am I hungry now?"**

♥ Current mood: **"How am I feeling right now?", "Am I stressed out?"**

♥ Purpose of eating: **"Am I to eat to relieve hungry or for mood?"**

♥ Consequences of eating: **"Will I feel guilty after eating?"**

### 4. Regular meals:

Regular meals: Eat at regular times throughout the day for breakfast, lunch and dinner to produce the satisfaction that food brings about.

### 5. Keep food out of sight:

One way to avoid overeating or eating unhealthy foods is not to have them around you. Move them away so that they are less visible and accessible.

### 6. Avoid temptations:

Avoid going to food court when you are hungry.

### 7. Control the food portion:

Divide large package of food into small portions and store them separately to avoid overeating.

### 8. Bottom line:

Limit yourself to only four small mouthfuls of food high in fat and sugar. This will cause less burden on health and body weight.

### 9. Buy only what you need:

If you want to eat hamburger, buy the hamburger only but not the combo to reduce excessive intake of fat and sugar from soft drinks and fries. Savor the first few bites and say to yourself, "I have eaten what I want to eat, I am satisfied now."





## Tips For Stress Management



- Keep record of your thoughts and feelings before eating to help recognize those factors that contribute to your emotional eating. Modify the negative thinking that provoke stressful feelings. For example, "I need to be a perfect person otherwise no one will like me."
- Develop your coping skills (for example, time management skills and problem-solving skills) to better deal with difficulties in daily life.
- Learn relaxation techniques (for example, deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation) to decrease the effects of stress on your mind and body.
- Do physical exercise on regular basis can help reduce your risk of developing mood problems and may help you sleep better.
- Develop supportive relationships with family members, teachers and peers can improve your emotion and physical well-being. Do not hesitate to seek help from professionals like school social worker, doctors and psychologists when you find it difficult to manage stressful feelings or negative thoughts.

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## Bridge Blog



### My Views on "Emotional Eating" :

- To provide emotional comfort
- Have a strong urge to eat immediately
- Hoping to eat certain particular food
- To eat something even though not in hunger

