

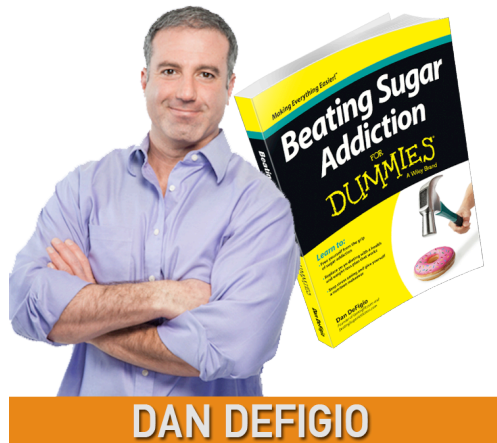
HOW TO STOP STRESS EATING

by Dan DeFigio



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by Dan DeFigio,
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In order to lose weight and keep it off long-term, you need to do more than just think about WHAT you eat. You also need to understand WHY you're eating. If you fall into the habit of gobbling junk food every time you feel stressed, you'll stay overweight, unhealthy, and out-of-control forever. This report will teach you simple ways to get off the roller coaster and regain control!

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Understanding Learned Behavior

From a very young age we're emotionally attached to food. As children we're often given treats, both to console us when we're upset, and to reward us for good behavior. This teaches us to use food (usually treats) to both console us and to reward us. There's an important distinction between deciding to eat some junk food on purpose, and eating it because "you deserve it" or because you're trying to make yourself feel better after a hard day:

The Proactive Eater will choose junk food and treats judiciously, and work them into the day's sensible, healthy eating plan. Which, as the name states, has been PLANNED!

The Stress Eater will grab whatever's handy with the (often subconscious) hope that the junk food will change how he or she feels at the time.

Most celebrations like Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Valentine's Day are food-focused, and birthdays are synonymous with birthday cake. Even the mere smell of certain foods, like cookies from grandma's oven, can create powerful emotional connections and desires that stick with us for a lifetime. Stress Eaters often eat junk food in an attempt to recreate pleasant memories.

Understanding Cravings

Whether you're aware of it or not, your brain is designed to react to food not only for nourishment, but also as comfort. Whenever your brain experiences pleasure – whether it's derived from drugs, a romantic encounter, or a satisfying meal – your brain releases a neurotransmitter called *dopamine*. You feel good whenever dopamine is activated. Couple that with carbohydrate's signal for the brain to produce *serotonin* – the hormone that makes you feel warm, calmed, and satisfied – and you have a hormone high that screams for a sugar fix! When you consistently use food to trigger these brain chemicals, it can have negative health consequences.

Another common cause of cravings is going too long in between meals. When your blood sugar drops, your brain will turn on the craving drives in a desperate attempt to get your blood sugar levels back up. It also turns on the fat storage systems to prepare for long periods of no food!

The Proactive Eater will have planned his or her eating for the day. There won't be long stretches without food, and there will be a smart combination of protein and vegetables for both excellent nutrition and to keep blood sugar levels stable. It's easy – Plan ahead, then follow the plan!

The Stress Eater doesn't bring healthy food to work. She leaves herself at the mercy of whatever's in the break room (usually junk food and coffee). Snacking on sugar causes a big spike of insulin, followed by a predictable crash a few hours later. Exhausted, she grabs some more junk food in a desperate attempt to perk herself up. The fact that she's stressed about her project “means” (falsely) that she is unable to think about food choices and must eat garbage. Whaaaat?

Do you know what you'll have for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks? If not, stop and write out a smart meal plan for the rest of the day right now! Do tomorrow's too, while you're at it.

What Are You Really Seeking?

Abstinence and willpower can't keep you away from stress eating forever. To successfully stop stress eating, you must change your relationship with food by uncovering what you actually need.

When you find yourself wanting to reach for junk food, stop and consider what your actual motivations are.

When you have an urge to grab something sweet, or to go back for seconds (or thirds), stop for a moment and answer these questions:

- ✓ Am I truly hungry?
- ✓ Am I tired?
- ✓ Am I thirsty?
- ✓ Am I bored?
- ✓ Am I lonely?
- ✓ Am I feeling bad about myself or about something else?
- ✓ Am I avoiding something or seeking a distraction?

Chances are that what you actually want is something besides food. After you identify the real issue, you can start to find ways to satisfy what you really need instead of medicating yourself with stress eating.

Cravings Can Be Just A Habit

People are creatures of habit. If you start to look for patterns in your cravings for food, you'll probably notice that when certain things happen, your brain turns on the craving center. Next time you have an unhealthy craving, look at the circumstances that preceded it. Here are some situations that commonly precede stress eating:

- ✓ When you don't sleep well
- ✓ When you feel overwhelmed at work
- ✓ When you feel unloved by your spouse
- ✓ When you feel out of control about a family situation
- ✓ When you haven't eaten for a several hours
- ✓ When you haven't had enough water
- ✓ After you've eaten too many carbs and not enough protein and fat
- ✓ When you're worried or anxious about something
- ✓ When you can't find anything interesting to think about or to create
- ✓ When you feel like you want to reward yourself

If you notice a consistent pattern of cravings after one or more of these situations, change or attend to the trigger instead of trying to willpower your way through a craving. It's much easier to stop stress eating when you fix the situations that trigger it in the first place!

Understand Your Stress

Stress is almost always fear of something. When you find yourself feeling stressed, try to get to the root of what you're actually afraid of.

Read the above paragraph again, it's the most important one in this whole report.

You'll probably have to go through several layers of "and that means ____" in order to get to the truth. For example, you may start with "I have way too much to do, I'm afraid I won't get everything done." And what does it mean if you don't get everything done? Your answer has to be what it means ABOUT YOU:

"If I don't get everything done, it means I'm a failure."

"If I don't get everything done, it means I'm a bad mom."

"If I don't get everything done, it means I'm unreliable and no one will like me."

See where this is going? Your fear seems like a fear of "not getting everything done," but it's really a fear of not being good enough or not being loved!

Next comes the reality check, so fasten your seat belt:

Up til now you've felt this fear, and then reacted by stuffing junk food into your mouth. Because clearly that will make you good enough or more loveable.

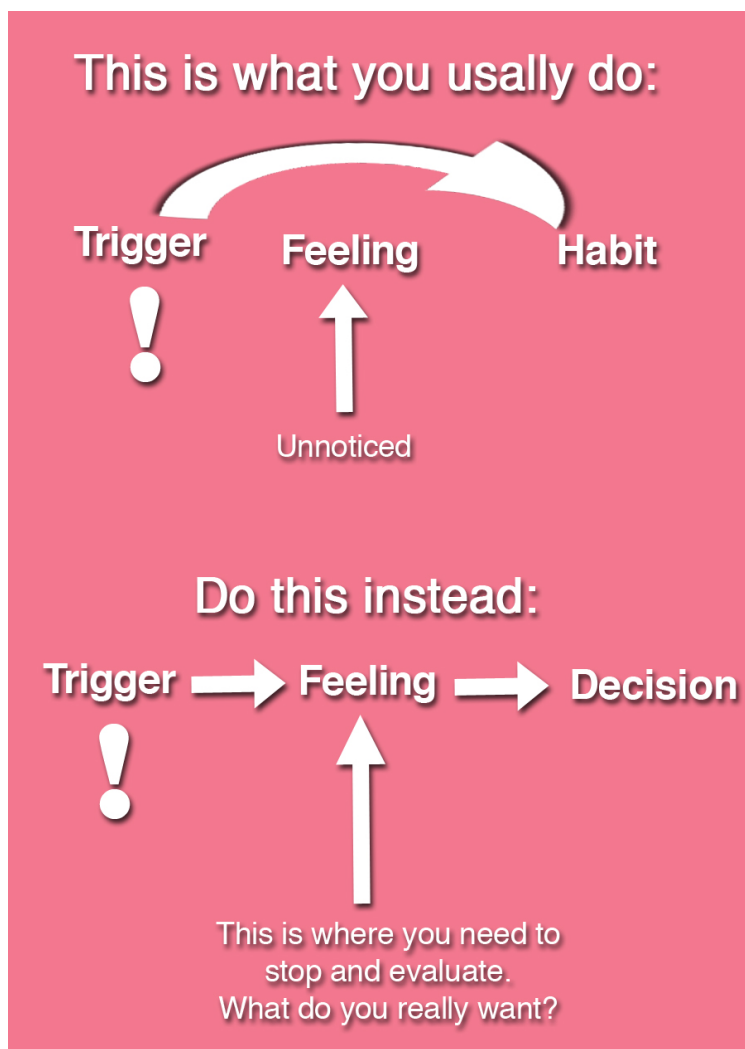
Stop the madness and these hurtful unconscious "conclusions"! Bad eating doesn't MEAN that you're anything – and it certainly won't MAKE you anything either.

Except make you overweight, exhausted, and unhappy. ☹

So next time you feel stressed:

1. Find the fear.
2. Reality-check yourself out of the false conclusion that junk food will somehow **MAKE** you something.
3. Decide what you really want instead. Empowerment? Reassurance? Connection? Attention?

The graphic below is a recap of one of the important concepts in my [Sugar Free Me](#) course:



All Or Nothing?

One bad choice doesn't ruin everything! Sometimes you will make a less-than-smart decision. That doesn't mean "Screw it, nothing else I eat matters for the rest of the day." How did you arrive at that conclusion?

Three easy steps to get back on track after falling off the wagon:

Because healthy eating is an ongoing series of small decisions, when you make a bad decision it's important to be able to get back to making smart ones right away. Follow these three easy steps and you'll be right back on the wagon after a bad meal or a bad snack -- or even after a bad week:

1. **State what you did without judging, exaggerating, or catastrophizing.** Just the facts here – something like “I ate a sweet roll for a snack,” or “I ate a bag of M&Ms.”
2. **State why you did it.** This one can be hard because you have to look past any story that you told yourself, and reveal the truth.

The excuse you use may be, “I didn't have time to eat something healthy.”

The real truth is, "I was hungry, and I didn't bring any good food with me, and I decided I would rather eat the sweet roll than stay hungry." The facts are that it takes just as much time to eat junk as it does to eat something healthy you brought.

3. **State what you intend to do next time.**

“Tomorrow I will bring a healthy snack to work.”

FYI, I wrote the forward to Mary Donovan's [Low Sugar Snacks](#) book. Take a peek – you won't believe the price on Amazon!

WORK WITH DAN!

If you need some help with motivation and accountability to keep your eating on track, drop me an email and let's talk!

I have several options to help you, from simple healthy meal plans to in-depth private coaching via zoom or telephone.

So stop struggling with endless diets! Drop me a note at dan.defigio@beatingsugaraddiction.com and we'll set a time to talk.



Talk to you soon!

Dan DeFigio

Books to help you: <http://Amazon.com/author/dandefigio>

Eat Less Sugar: <http://SugarFreeMe.online>

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