

# Episode: Emotional Eating



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HEALTHY EATING FOR BUSY WOMEN PODCAST  
WITH KAT RENTAS

# Episode: Emotional Eating

Hello, friends. I hope you're having an absolutely wonderful week so far. The holiday season is approaching, and it's looking a little different in 2020. Just a little bit. We've had a lot going on this year to say the least. On top of the holidays we also are dealing with a pandemic, the U.S. election, and we're focused on making our plans for next year. So, it's been a lot. And I encourage you to have so much compassion and understanding for yourself during this season. You're best is good enough. And things might not be the most ideal this year. Adjustments may need to be made. But that's okay. Focus on finding little pockets of peace in the everyday moments as we navigate the holidays under our current circumstances in the world.

But anyways. I'm so happy you're here with me today. Because I'm going to talk about a topic that is highly, highly requested. For good reason. And that topic is emotional eating. To be honest, I think this is the topic I get most passionate about when it comes to my work, just because it's so heavily misunderstood. I find that the most suffering with food tends to come from emotional eating patterns. One hundred percent. Because there's so much heaviness associated with it. There's shame, regret, blame – all of the emotions associated with it that we just don't want to be experiencing. And this is because people tend to make their emotional eating patterns mean something extremely negative about themselves. Like, it just shouldn't be happening. And that something is wrong with them every time they emotionally eat. And my goal in this episode, and every episode, is to give you clarity. But I especially mean that here when we're referring to emotional eating. Because the reason why emotional eating feels so heavy to you, is because you don't know why it's happening. And when you don't know why it's happening you will feel totally out of control with your emotional eating. And your eating habits in general.

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So, when we refer to emotional eating, we refer to the practice of consuming excess amounts of food in response to one's negative emotion. Very simple, right? And here's what this may look like to you. I'm going to give you a very general example. Let's say you finish your workday feeling drained, burnt out, and stressed. All you can think about is escaping the uncomfortness of your day job. You want to relax and unwind. And maybe you consider eating unhealthy foods or eating an excess amount of food because you believe "I deserve this right now. I had a long day". So you get home and you start to relax into your comfort bubble. Maybe you turn on some Netflix. And you decide you've had a long day so you're going to reward yourself by eating foods you love. And from here, you start to eat ravenously. As in, it doesn't take you very long to finish your meal. And in that moment you actually feel better. You feel safe. You don't feel as stressed. And you feel that sense of comfort. Now, here's what usually happens from here. Some time will pass. Maybe 10 minutes. Maybe an hour. And that negative emotion that you were experiencing, so maybe that's stress, will come back even stronger than before. The comfort from the food has worn off and you're left with the stress that you were already feeling. On top of that, you're now experiencing regret for the food choices you just made. So, at this point, you will feel awful. You're feeling pretty crappy about yourself. So, you decide okay. This stops now. Next time will be different. I won't eat so much. And you manage to convince yourself that this is true. But then, you go to work the next day. Or maybe it's a week later. And the same response occurs. You end up experiencing the negative emotion and responding by eating excess amounts of food. And, if you're anything like I was, you'll always be convincing yourself that "you deserve it just this once". But it ends up being a cycle that continues indefinitely. Where you continue to react to those negative emotions by overeating.

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Now, for the record, I want to mention that there's nothing inherently wrong with this narrative. I'm not here to make anyone feel shame. I'm not here to say what you've been doing is wrong, and that so and so is the right way to eat. None of that. Your eating habits should never be classified as right or wrong. There's no moral attachment here. We just want to get really curious. The truth is, I have been the person in this story. And it's likely you have been as well. Maybe not exactly, but in some way or another. And I explained this narrative because I want you to realize that this is so, so normal. And if this is something you've experienced, you're not alone. Not in the slightest. This is a very common and natural way to respond to negative emotion. And, when you gain the awareness that this is what you're doing, you put yourself in a position to change it. So, no beating yourself up here. Have compassion for yourself, always if this is something you've found yourself struggling with.

Now, at this point, I want to make a very important distinction. And I feel like this is something that's not said enough. There is no such thing as an emotional eater. There's no such thing. You can be someone who emotionally eats, but it doesn't serve you in the slightest to label yourself or anyone else as an emotional eater. Because what happens when you do this, is you attach the act of emotional eating to your identity. Like that's who you are. And the reality is, it's just something you may do right now. If you go around with the belief that you are an emotional eater, then you will take action from that belief. Now, it's interesting because when I tell people this, there's a little pushback sometimes. But I really want to clarify what I mean by this. One example I can think of is when someone labels themselves as a "runner". I use this example because I label myself as a runner as well. But here's the thing. Technically there's no such thing as a runner. You can be someone who runs regularly. But labeling

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yourself as a runner is a choice. You're deciding to attach a label to your identity. And I happen to do this with running, because it serves me. It serves the image of myself I want to create. And I wholeheartedly want to believe that I am a runner. Because that belief brings me towards the action and results with running I want. Now, here's an opposite example. There are people who label themselves as an alcoholic, right? When really, these are just people who overdrink. And it really doesn't serve those people to attach the identity to themselves of being an alcoholic. Because what happens is these people will believe it's who they are. And it will create this heaviness and feeling of hopelessness. Now, this is a more extreme example. I'm not saying that anytime someone says they are a runner, or an alcoholic, you say "no stop that's not true". I just want to change your perspective around how we label ourselves. And in the case of emotional eating, I want you to intentionally decide to not call yourself an emotional eater. I want you to practice believing instead, "I am someone who emotionally eats". It's so much less heavy. The reality is we get to decide how to label ourselves. We always get to build our identities from the ground up. And in doing this, we make the rules. And we get to move forward from a cleaner place. What you do, or how you eat, is not who you are.

Now, let's talk about why as the humans we emotionally eat. It's very simple. We emotionally eat to resist, avoid, or react to a negative emotion. I'll say that again. To resist, avoid, or react to a negative emotion. This is why emotional eating occurs. And if you emotionally eat right now, it's not because you're incapable of eating healthy long-term or reaching your ideal weight. And it's not because there's anything quote unquote wrong with you. It's because you're unwilling to fully experience a negative emotion. That is it. And I want you to really listen to what I'm about to say here. You don't overeat because

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you feel negative emotion. You overeat because you're unwilling to feel negative emotion. This is life-changing to know. And here's why. Right now, you may think that you emotionally eat because there's a negative emotion there. And that the negative emotion is to blame. Thereby making you think you need to get rid of the negative emotion. But here's the truth. There's nothing wrong with the negative emotion. Negative emotion is useful and it's not actually harmful to you. But you emotionally eat because it feels uncomfortable. And you're not willing to feel it. And once again, if this is you, don't start blaming yourself. This is a no blame or shame zone. I just want you to be totally aware of why this is happening. And how you're not as out of control with your emotional eating as you may think. So, in a nutshell, negative emotions trigger emotional eating. Whether that's anxiety, frustration, anger, loneliness, shame – any negative emotion that feels uncomfortable in your body. And the emotional trigger compels you to use food as a way to escape an emotion that you're experiencing.

With all of this being said, here's where emotional eating can become a real struggle. It becomes a bigger problem when, as humans, we feel the need to numb our emotions daily. So, it's no secret that in the modern age, there's a lot to distract us from negative emotion. We have streaming services, social media, online shopping – so many things to take us away from the here and now. That can act as little dopamine hits so we don't have to experience what we're currently feeling. And for most of us, this has become a very common practice. What this does, when we're using all of these methods to distract ourselves, is it makes us less emotionally tough. As in, we begin losing our ability to fully experience negative emotions without reacting to them. And this behavior, now more than ever, translates into our eating habits. Our

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unwillingness to feel anything negative, triggers us to use food to cover up the negative emotion. And this is exactly why emotional eating has been more of a problem now more than ever. Our capacity to feel negative emotion is at an all time low. And what this really is, is emotional numbing at a high level. And I want you to become aware of when you feel the need to numb your emotions daily. Notice when you start scrolling social media, procrastinating your work, or overeating. Ask yourself what emotion is compelling me to take these actions? And here's the thing. The more uncomfortable the feeling, the greater desire we have to numb that feeling with food. But this will never serve you. Because you're never getting rid of an emotion when you emotionally eat. You're simply delaying it's response. And this is so important. When you cover up a negative emotion with food, you're setting the emotion up to come back stronger than before. Everytime you suppress the emotion you're increasing its strength over time. Meaning, you will need to eat more in the future to suppress that emotion as it becomes stronger. So, I always like to compare this to holding a beach ball underwater. The further and further down you push that beach ball, the stronger it's going to come shooting out of the surface. And you can't hold that beach ball down forever. At some point it will have to come popping back up. I know it's kind of a silly example, but it really does apply.

Now, let's talk about what happens from here. Now that you have an awareness of why you're emotionally eating and where it comes from, let's talk about what needs to happen for you to end emotional eating. And like everything else, it's very simple. When you make a decision to end emotional eating, you will be left with all of the emotions you were unwilling to experience. And this is the damn truth. There are no sexy hacks to eliminating emotional eating from your life. There's no special diet. There's no expert that can do this for you. To end

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emotional eating, you need to be willing to be left with all of the negative emotions that you were unwilling to experience. And what will happen, is from this place of vulnerability, you can get truthful about the current state of your life. You can observe what negative emotions are there for you. You can determine what thoughts you're thinking about the cause of those emotions. And you can evaluate your life from a clean place to determine what changes you want to make.

And the big question that you will have to answer is this. How are you going to experience negative emotion without relying on food? What will that look like for you? And I want you to think about this for yourself. But there's really only one key way to do this. And that's to commit to feeling any negative emotion full without covering it up.. I want you to see your body as a playground where you're willing to let any emotion come and play. And I'll be real with you. This is not easy. When you've been suppressing negative emotion for some time, it's going to feel pretty awful. And that's okay. Your brain will want to convince you that it's dying. Remember your brain always seeks pleasure and avoids pain. But you can teach your brain that negative emotion can't actually hurt you. And the only way that you do this, is by committing to fully feeling your negative emotion even when it feels uncomfortable. The best recommendation I have for you is to commit to sitting in silence whenever a negative emotion comes up. Just take a moment to be with it without reacting to it. For me, this means I'm sitting on the couch with a hot cup of tea. And I'm just observing what's there. I get really curious with the emotion. And I observe how it feels, what temperature it is, what location of my body it's in – all of the things. When you do this, over time, your emotions won't feel as heavy. Because you will have conditioned your body to experience them fully. And even though feeling your



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feelings can be hard, just know that when you allow yourself to feel emotions, your body naturally responds in healthy ways. Your stress response will actually go down over time. Because you're no longer suppressing that emotion. And this leads to benefits like increased metabolism, weight loss, and other results that you're probably looking for.

And the goal with ending emotional eating is never to get rid of your negative emotion. I want to make that very, very clear. That's never the goal. Because it's not possible. As humans we have negative emotions in life. It's part of the deal. And it will always be a part of the human experience. The goal with ending emotional eating is to not let your feelings affect your daily eating habits. Which is why learning to manage our negative emotions is what we should really be focusing on. So, have compassion for yourself always, always. What I'm teaching you here is not taught to most of us. I struggled with emotional eating for years. And I say this with so much honesty. If someone taught me what I'm teaching you in this episode, it would have saved me so much suffering. So much self-punishment. And so much shame. My goal for you is to always have awareness around why you're eating the way you do. So you stop making it mean something negative about yourself. So, with emotional eating, get really curious about it. Notice your own emotional eating trends. And start identifying the emotions that most compel you to emotionally eat. Notice how you may be avoiding those emotions a bit with food. And decide on a way you're going to commit to experiencing those emotions fully. Feeling your feelings is always the answer here. Alright, I truly hope this provided you clarity in terms of emotional eating. I hope this gave you some peace of mind. And I can't wait to see what you do from here. Alright, my lovely friend. I'll talk to you next week.