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Eating Smart™: The Power of Simple Changes
Ten Ways to Control Stress Eating

Do you stress eat?

A few small changes to make you more mindful of your eating patterns will help you fight this difficult battle. And, you can get 80% of the benefit with 20% of the effort if you are clever about how you do it. Start with the changes that are easiest for you.

1. **Eat breakfast everyday.** Breakfast helps you feel more balanced and satisfied throughout the day, and this prevents binge or stress eating later.

2. **Establish an eating schedule and stick with it −** not just during the week, but also on weekends. After breakfast, eat a meal or snack every 3-5 hours. If you allow too much time in between meals, your defenses will be down and you will eat more of the "wrong" foods. Secondly, it is important to establish a cut-off time at night to stop eating. This should be 2 or 3 hours before your bedtime. And, thirdly, do not save up your calories for an event. Stick to your schedule no matter what.

3. **Get adequate sleep.** You might think that if you sleep less, you are burning more calories. On the contrary, studies show that lack of sleep not only encourages your body to hold onto stored fat. In addition, it makes you feel more hungry.

4. **Fix your plate with the right amount of food for one meal.** If you are eating at home, don't graze or eat small spoon or forkfuls out of a container. If you are in a restaurant, ask to have half of your food held aside to take home. If you still feel hungry after finishing your plate, wait 20 more minutes before going for seconds. (Remember it takes this long for your stomach to send a signal to your brain that you are full.)

5. **Make a ritual out of eating and eliminate distractions.** Eat slowly and savor every bite. Focus on what you are eating and how it makes you feel. If you eat breakfast or lunch at your desk, carve out at least 15-20 minutes and do not take phone calls or answer e-mails while you eat. At dinner, set the table, light a candle, drink your water from a wine glass, and play some relaxing music. And, please, do not eat in front of the television. Studies show that people who eat while watching television or doing other things eat more because they are eating mindlessly.

6. **Journal.** Write down everything you eat and drink − everything. Also try rating your hunger level when you eat. Before you put something in your mouth, think about whether you are really hungry or just in the habit of eating because it's there.

7. **Drink plenty of water throughout the day and especially before meals.** Water fills you up and makes everything work better in your body, including your metabolism.

8. **Eat more vegetables.** Try having vegetables at every meal or snack, especially lunch and dinner. At dinner, begin or end your meal with a salad. As an appetizer, try grilled or sautéed vegetables or vegetable soup in a clear broth.

9. **Eat more soup.** Soup is a high volume food that leaves you feeling full on fewer calories. Check labels for the usual suspects − look for low fat, sodium, and sugar with more fiber and protein.

10. **Identify the events or times during the day or night that trigger you to eat more than you should and develop a coping strategy.** Practice deep breathing, take a walk, go to the gym, take up knitting, take an aromatherapy bubble bath, go for a manicure, see a film, buy a good book, etc. Reward yourself by doing something that is not food-related.