

10 Ways to Know if You're a Food Addict

If you're going to break free from any addiction, you must first acknowledge that you are addicted. Otherwise, you will live in denial for years, always looking for superficial solutions that do not address the seriousness of the problem.

It's no different when it comes to food addictions. Our failure to recognize that we are addicts makes it very difficult for us to break free in a lasting way. That's why, when it comes to food, a disproportionately high percentage of us try to make lasting changes only to fail time and time again.

Recently, I was flying from home from California and was upgraded to first class just before we took off. Sitting in first class means almost unlimited snacks, a small plate of fresh nuts (roasted and salted), a small meal and a sumptuous dessert—all of which I refused because of the contents of the food.

I brought my own healthy snacks with me, and since I've been a living a new, super-healthy, wonderfully-blessed lifestyle for over 30 months—and thriving in every way as a result—I wasn't tempted in the least.

But I was reminded of something very important when it comes to the power of food addictions. During the meal, the flight attendant came by with a basket of rolls, including pretzel rolls, my all-time in-flight favorite, virtually pushing them right under my nose.

Then, after the meal, the same flight attendant came by with a really good-looking piece of chocolate cake for dessert—I was a confirmed chocoholic for years—smiling at me with a nod when I refused, as if to say, “Are you sure? This is delicious

cake!”

I thought to myself, “Dealing with food addictions is so much different than dealing with other addictions!”

After all, if you were a drug addict, as I was before the Lord saved me in 1971, did flight attendants or servers in restaurants come to you with all kinds of drugs, offering them to you free? But when it comes to food, it’s everywhere, plus, we need to eat to live.

That’s why food addictions can be so much harder to identify, let alone to break.

Here, then, are 10 ways that you can recognize that you’re a food addict.

1. The thought of giving up your favorite, unhealthy food(s) for an extended period of time (like a week or a month) is almost terrifying to you.
2. You have a negative emotional reaction when you go without your favorite unhealthy food(s).
3. If you don’t have your daily coffee or sweets or other habitual foods, you get headaches and even experience withdrawal symptoms.
4. You know that if you ate differently you’d be healthier and would likely live longer, but you’re not willing to change.
5. You’ve lost weight in the past (perhaps many times) only to gain it all back again.
6. You’re embarrassed about being overweight but find yourself unable to change your diet for any length of time.
7. You deceive others about your food choices, keeping a hidden stash of your favorite “forbidden” foods or eating them when no one is watching.

8. You make excuses for your bad eating habits in ways you would never do for other areas of your life that are undisciplined.

9. You have physical cravings for certain foods and you need to eat them to satisfy those cravings.

10. You live in denial concerning your bad eating habits, blaming others or minimizing your problems or claiming that God is fine with your unhealthy diet.

If any one of these 10 items applies to you, you're most likely a food addict. (Sorry, but that's the truth!)

In the past, I was probably 10 for 10. Now, by God's grace, I'm zero for 10.

The good news is if that I could change, going from 275 lbs. to 180 lbs. in less than 8 months—not through dieting, but through changing my relationship to food and completely altering what I ate—maintaining that same weight (within a few pounds) from that day on, anybody can change.

So, there's hope for you, no matter where you find yourself. God's grace really is sufficient!

But you must be honest with yourself and confess your struggles to the Lord. A great place to start is by telling your heavenly Father, "I confess to you that I'm a food addict, and I need your help."

My wife, Nancy, and I wrote *Breaking the Stronghold of Food: How We Conquered Food Addictions and Discovered a New Way of Living* to encourage you with our own stories and to give you practical, biblically-based guidelines for lasting change.

One reader wrote about our book, "This book is a shot of encouragement adrenaline to anyone who's been wrestling with poor eating habits!"

Another described the book as “Fresh hope for the chronic dieter,” explaining, “I had recognized that I have a food addiction and that for me it is a spiritual stronghold but have not known exactly how to deal with it. ... As Dr. Brown points out in the book, food addiction is harder to deal with than say, an alcohol or drug addiction that you can walk away from. We all still have to eat. I found the answers in this book and have put them into practice and though it has been a short time, I have been successful.”

And, she added, “I am about the same age as the Browns, and the fact that they have been successful at this stage of life has given me great hope. As a health care professional, I see every day the effects of poor diet on our culture.”

Yes, the destructive effects of our poor diets and food addictions are all around us, but if we acknowledge them before our Lord and seek out His empowering grace, taking serious steps to bring about change, we can enjoy the vibrant physical life our Creator intended for us.

I’m eternally grateful to Him for helping me, and Nancy and I are committed to seeing positive change come to you as well. We’re believing the Lord with you!

You too can break the stronghold of food, conquer your food addictions and discover a whole new way of living. {eoa}

Dr. Michael Brown () is the host of the nationally syndicated *Line of Fire* radio program. His latest book is *Breaking the Stronghold of Food*. Connect with him on Facebook or Twitter.