

The Spiritual, Emotional and Physical Reasons You Eat Compulsively

Compulsive overeating, binge eating disorder and emotional eating are defined by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) as, "characterized by recurrent binge-eating episodes during which a person feels a loss of control over his or her eating."

When you get down to the core of the issue, compulsive eating is about trying to fill a deep spiritual need with food, which is an impossible task. Every human being, whether they believe in God, have any kind of religious tradition or sense of spiritual connection with a power greater than themselves, has an inherent spiritual hunger within themselves to know, love and connect with God. Matthew 4:4 says, "But He answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"

People were created to live in loving communities, and each of us has a strong emotional desire to be loved, appreciated and respected among family, friends and peers. Everyone needs to be heard, understood and acknowledged by the people we care about. When we do not get that positive feedback it can leave a gaping void in our lives that seems very easy to fill temporarily with food.

There can also be a physical component to compulsive eating. Food manufacturers create foods using specific chemicals and preservatives that make you addicted physically, not unlike a drug addict, to certain foods. Some people crave crunchy, salty, savory foods, while others can't get enough of soft or creamy, sugary-sweet foods. Either way, food has a way of altering our body chemistry and soothing jangled nerves when

you are stressed or sad, and there is not a more comforting feeling than a nice, full stomach when you are feeling lonely and neglected.

As Christians, we must remember to offer our bodies and our lives as living sacrifices to God. Our lives are to be a testimony to the faith that we have in God to supply all of our needs. If we look to food to comfort us, be our friend, make us feel happy when we are sad and entertain us when we are bored, then we are holding food up as a false god, which is idolatry. The Bible reminds us, "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God, and that you are not your own? You were bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

We all have a void in our lives. Sometimes that void can come about because of past sexual abuse, and we long to feel the genuine embrace of someone who loves us for who we are. That void can be caused by the loss of a loved one, and we wonder how we will continue to live and breathe without that person in our lives. You might be struggling with feelings of betrayal or even the shame of poverty and insurmountable debt. Jesus said, "I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Rather than looking to a physical substance to fill a spiritual need, learn to work your faith and trust that, "he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6b). {eoa}

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