

Why You Need to Stop Eating Your Emotions

Trying to get rid of unwanted emotions is like trying to get rid of the gnat that keeps buzzing around your head. The more you focus on trying to get rid of it, the more it keeps bugging you.

The same is true of those pesky emotions that try to overtake us. We don't know what to do with them, so we swat at them with something to get rid of them, if only temporarily.

What we want to do with the gnat is kill it or at least make it go bother someone else. What we want to do with our emotions is make them go away as well.

My way of dealing with difficult feelings was always to eat them away. And let me tell you, emotions taste really good at first, but when the high crashes, the shame and remorse kick in and trigger another onset of emotional angst. Then emotions taste really crummy.

It's a habit loop that is really difficult to break. It's one that I got caught in more times than I care to admit.

When I was gaining weight, feeling as though there were no end to my desire for sugar and comfort foods, I felt the problem was that I just loved food more than anyone else. If I thought anyone cared, I would have yelled, "Help; I can't stop eating."

I didn't read things about emotional eating because I didn't think I ate out of an emotional need. Unknowingly, I had adopted a lifestyle of overeating in order to manage my emotions. So of course I wasn't sad and depressed, sitting in a corner eating bonbons. I just ate all the time to keep from being a raving lunatic.

I had this habit loop honed to such a science that it just felt like who I was. In a way, that was true. I refused to be sad, overwhelmed, depressed, angry, stressed, ashamed, afraid or lonely. All those emotions had foods to go with them.

Overwhelmed and stressed? Bake Grandma's oatmeal cookies. Sad or depressed? Fix a comfort food supper of country-fried steak, fried potatoes, gravy and hot rolls. Angry or lonely? Go through fast food. Afraid or ashamed? Eat a bag of my favorite caramels and hide in my bedroom.

I wanted the emotions to settle down and behave themselves. Problem is, they were still there. I just happened to bury them a little deeper.

The other reason I didn't think I was responding to emotions was because it was always a trigger of some kind that I was actually responding to.

Triggers are tricky. They are rather illusive and only appear at random times. For instance, there was one day at work when I got first place in a national competition for writing. I was on top of the world because I hadn't even applied! One of my supervisors had submitted the article for me.

Now this should be a time of rejoicing, right? Instead the head of my department got second place and barely spoke to me the rest of the day. It was not me being paranoid. My supervisor who submitted for me even noticed.

She said, "Don't worry. It's just that she's always wanted a first place for writing from that organization. Just lie low and don't make a big deal of it."

I should have been happy for myself and I was, but it was overshadowed by the anger my boss was expressing towards me. All of a sudden, I felt ashamed because I had won. Instead of talking to someone about it or journaling, I went back to my cubicle and found the bag of caramels I had stashed there and

ate the entire bag.

One reason this upset me so much is because I always got good grades growing up, but my mother would tell me I didn't deserve those grades. This feeling followed me even into my big-girl jobs and kept me from really accepting any honors I got.

These are the feelings that trigger the habit loop that causes us to find some way to make the emotions go away. So we eat, and they do go away. We get a high, and we feel good or at least feel as though we can manage life. Then we begin to come to our senses and start to realize what we just did. This causes us to feel shame, remorse, even anger at ourselves for giving it yet one more time.

Then we can do one of two things: We can realize what we've done and begin to recognize the triggers, put good habits in place to help us deal with the emotions and stop the habit loop, or we can eat those negative feelings away again as soon as we can to keep those feelings at bay. The second choice triggers the habit loop again.

We feel inept when we once again choose the second choice. But the truth is, we have a secret weapon to get through these issues. We have a Savior who understands that in our humanity we are weak.

That's the whole reason Jesus came and lived as a human among us. He identifies with our weaknesses. He does. He knows how it feels to be tempted and yet say no. His very first recorded temptation was to turn stones into bread, and He was surely hungry after fasting for 40 days.

"He understands humanity, for as a Man, our magnificent King-Priest was tempted in every way just as we are, and conquered sin. So now we come freely and boldly to where love is enthroned, to receive mercy's kiss and discover the grace we urgently need to strengthen us in our time of weakness" (Heb.

4:15-16 TPT). {eoa}

Teresa Shields Parker is the author of seven books, all available on Amazon. Her latest book, *Sweet Hunger: Developing an Appetite for God*, is available now, and *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds* is the No. 1 Christian weight-loss memoir. She is also a writing and weight-loss coach, blogger, speaker, wife and mother. Visit her online at [to find her books, coaching programs and gifts](#).

This article originally appeared at .