

If You Eat Your
Feelings, You'll
Just Burp Them
Up Later



Six Questions
to Help You Stop
Emotional Eating
Barbara Spanjers



Cake Is Magical *Wellness*

About Emotional Eating

You have probably heard the advice to view food purely as fuel. Although food does provide fuel for your body, it is also immensely pleasurable. Eating **should** bring pleasure. If food was not so damn good, our ancestors wouldn't have worked very hard to get it when times were tough.

Emotional eating is quite different than eating for physical hunger. If you are an emotional eater, it is likely that you eat beyond the point of feeling full.

And although you are way more likely to choose this



than this (& who wouldn't, unless you're a cat?)



you probably won't enjoy the food you chose for comfort, anyway. You may even beat yourself up about it.

Emotional eating can happen in relation to any feeling, even positive ones. In fact, research indicates that people are more likely to overeat when they feel positive rather than negative. It doesn't quite fit the image of having a pity party while gorging on Girl Scout Cookies, does it?



Whether your main emotional eating triggers are positive or negative, being able to pause and reflect on what you're experiencing is powerful. And surprisingly, some of what feels like emotional eating might be due to something else.

If you often feel like food is your Frenemy, the following 6 questions can help you tackle emotional eating.

1. Am I Physically Hungry?

First things first: What might seem like emotional eating might not be. No matter what any diet or weight loss plan tells you about when, what, or how much to eat, your body will do everything it can to get enough nourishment. You can only control things so much before there's pushback from your body.

As a result, if you don't eat enough, your body might make you feel **extra** hungry. For French fries. And ice cream. Maybe at the same time. Even food you don't normally like might be appetizing.

Why wouldn't you be able to tell the difference between physical and emotional hunger? Because chronic dieters can actually lose their sense of hunger and fullness.

Think of a scale from 1-10. 10 is stuffed and nauseous; 1 is fainting; 5 is neutral. Use that as a guide to stay in the middle areas and away from the extremes with regards to eating.



2. Did the Hunger Build Gradually or Start Suddenly?



There may be times that you are engrossed in what you are doing, only to realize that you are super-hungry.

Those experiences aside, physical hunger tends to come on more gradually than the emotional desire to eat. So if you are suddenly aware of wanting to eat, especially if you have a specific food in mind, it may be emotional.

3. Was My Last Meal Satisfying?



Learning to identify when you feel hungry and full is a great start. Going a step further, it is important to eat food that makes you feel satisfied. No amount of kale will make you feel satisfied if you are hungry for peanut butter. When you eat food that isn't satisfying, you will keep scrounging around your kitchen for more - even if your stomach is technically full. (See how this would seem a lot like emotional eating, but it isn't really?)

Getting enough sleep is also crucial. When you don't sleep enough, stress hormones are released in your body. After a bad night's sleep, you will be hungrier, and less able to feel satisfied no matter what you eat.

4. Can I Wait to Eat?



Emotional hunger can feel really intense and immediate.

When you feel hungry, do a quick check-in and ask yourself if you can wait to eat.

Reassure yourself that if you really want or need to eat, you can. You're just checking in.

If you are at the far end of the hunger scale - like you have a headache or feel faint - then your physical hunger might need quick attention.

But if it seems like what you are feeling is not due to physical hunger, then go on to Question #5.

5. What Am I Really Feeling?

If you find yourself going to food automatically, you might not be sure what you are feeling. Sometimes it can be surprisingly hard to identify your emotions.

Start with your body. Emotions like anxiety or fear might be felt as a tight chest, or an upset stomach. Anger could be a tight jaw, or you might be flushed.

Maybe you can identify the emotion but you don't want to feel it. This might even go back to how your family dealt with emotions when you were a kid.

Emotions are really just information about what's going on for you. They are not permanent, and they help you make decisions for your life.



6. What Do My Feelings Mean & What Should I Do about Them?

You've done the work to recognize when you eat for emotional reasons, and you can identify the underlying emotions. Woot! Now what's next?

When you emotionally eat (especially connected to feelings like sadness or fear), it's important that you address the underlying reasons directly. It's okay if this step takes a while to do, but if you avoid the underlying causes long-term, you'll stay in the same place.

In other words, if you eat your feelings, you will just burp them up later. And that feels worse, because now you have your own self-judgment on top of everything.



Even if you do sometimes eat for emotional reasons, don't sweat it. Just use the experience to figure out what was going on for you when it happened. Make a plan, ask for support if you need it, and find alternative things to do.

Things to Do Instead of Eat

Here are a few things you can do when you feel like you're going to engage in emotional eating.

Everyone eats for emotional reasons sometimes, so don't expect that you will **never** do it. When it happens, just acknowledge it without judgment and explore what was going on for you. If there are patterns (like whenever you have work deadlines), then you can address that directly. Here are some alternate activity suggestions as you work on this:

1. Call a friend.
2. Go for a walk.
3. Read a book.
4. Do a craft.
5. Take a deep breath.
6. Write in your journal.
7. Make a list of things you're grateful for.
8. Play with your pet.
9. Listen to music.
10. Plan your next vacation or fun outing.
11. Take a nap.
12. Go for a drive.
13. Do a crossword puzzle.
14. Write a letter to the person in question (& rip it up later).
15. Stretch.
16. Work in your garden.
17. Play an instrument or sing.
18. Write a poem.
19. Go for a drive or a bike ride.
20. Make a voodoo doll of your ex. (Just checking if you're really reading this.)

My Own List of Alternatives to Emotional Eating

Not a bath-taking kind of person? Don't have a pet to play with? No worries - create your own personal list here.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

About Barb Spanjers



I'm not too proud to say that as a teenager I used to do crazy diets. (I'm talking about you, Banana-Hot Dog - Grapefruit Diet.) I'd wrap my hips and thighs in Saran Wrap to lose inches. This would be my ticket to a great life.

Mostly, I just got bad headaches and stomach pain.

It sounds kind of pathetic. Or resourceful – because wrapping you up in Saran Wrap is basically what a lot of expensive spa treatments do. This I know because I worked in the spa industry for over a decade, wrapping people up in plastic.

In the spa world, I was unnerved by how many adult women had the same idea that losing inches would magically make life fantastic. They were so unhappy with their bodies, and that made me sad. So I trained to be a psychotherapist, with an interest in eating issues.

What I am most passionate about is helping normal, everyday women stop freaking out about food and their bodies.

Imagine what you will accomplish in your life when you free up the psychic space taken by worry about eating and weight.

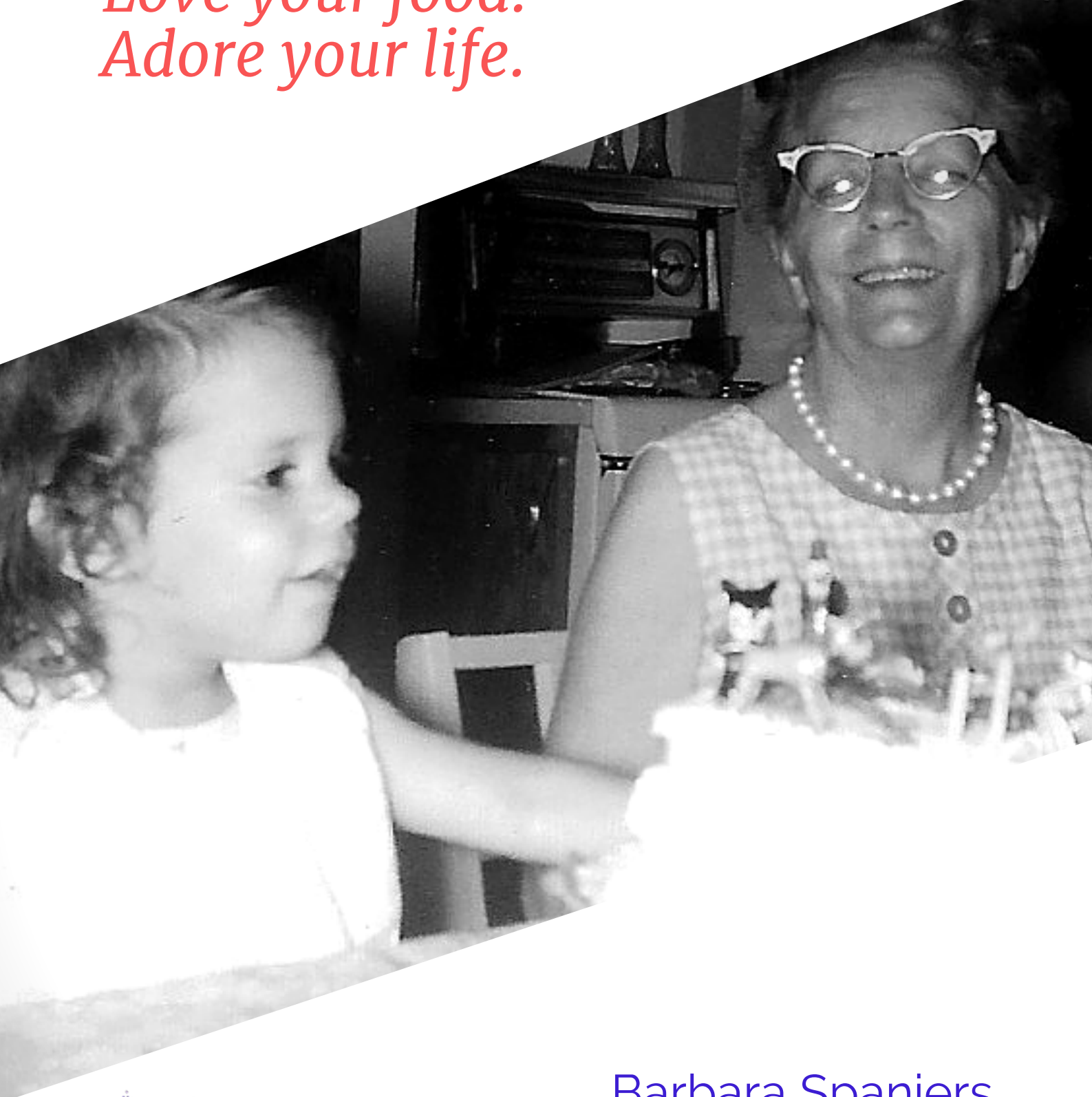
Visit my website to schedule your complimentary **Stop Waiting on the Weight Breakthrough Call**.

Plus, join my **Facebook group** for support & to ditch your diet mindset.

Warmly,

Barb

*Respect your body.
Love your food.
Adore your life.*



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