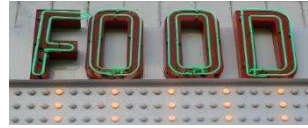


5 Ways COVID-19 Could Have Hurt Your Relationship With Food — And How to Deal With It

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Summarized on the 7/5/2021 Meatless Monday Call.



Has COVID-19 hurt your relationship with food? I would like to review 5 ways to deal with it.

If your relationship with food has *strained* since COVID-19, you are not alone.

While it's OK and normal to **stress eat** or **track your intake** to **safely lose weight** from time to time, it's also important to pay attention to potentially worrisome changes in your eating habits like **overeating** or **cutting too many calories**.

A study done by Melissa Simone, PhD, at the University of Minnesota Medical School and Project EAT showed about 6 in 10 people said they struggled with **unhealthy efforts to control their weight**, while another 1 in 10 reported **binge-eating**. Poor stress management, symptoms of depression, and financial difficulties were all significant risk factors for these outcomes, notes Dr. Simone.

As COVID-19 vaccines have rolled out and cases have begun to fall, life's gone back to some new "normal." But if troubling habits or feelings are lingering, you can get back on track.

Here are five ways your relationship to food may have changed for the worse and how to recover:

1. Ever find yourself at the bottom of a chip bag with a full belly but little memory of eating? "**Mindless eating** is a double whammy." What to do? "Commit to writing down every single bite you eat ... even if only for a few days," Use a food journal or app like **MyFitnessPal**.
2. In general, many of us are simply eating more than before, thanks to pandemic-related stressors and being stuck at home. But "a healthy relationship with food requires the ability to recognize hunger and satiety," The fix: Again, consider logging your intake for a while, try mindful eating practices like **using your five senses**, and make a list of things to do each day to avoid grazing out of boredom. When you relearn to listen to hunger pangs and fullness cues, you can enjoy snacks and meals without overeating.
3. While it is OK to eat a little less if you're moving less, stress can also lead to a loss of appetite and fewer calories in. Sound familiar? Make sure you're getting the energy you need by creating a **healthy eating schedule** of small, frequent meals and snacks. To run well, your body needs at least 1,000 calories per day from nutrient-rich whole grains, fruits and vegetables, lean proteins like chicken and turkey, and healthy fats such as fish, olive oil, nuts and seeds.
4. It's absolutely normal and human to reach for comfort food when you're stressed out. But when eating is the *only* coping mechanism you have, the harm from excess calories and foods high in sugar, fat and salt can outweigh the benefits.

“It does take determination to generate a list of **alternative activities you can do** to provide a boost in mood, **distract yourself from stress**, or take a break from unpleasant situations or activities.

Guess what? Doing an alternative activity other than eating when stressed works with consistency.

5. With disrupted routines, fewer distractions, and a surge in **chatter around COVID-induced weight gain**, it's no wonder some people are veering into disordered eating territory. If you suspect this is happening, the first step is to reach out for help as you would for any other healthcare issue.

THE BOTTOM LINE

COVID-19 has had a huge impact on our lives, but there are ways to cope with shifts in the way you feel about your eating habits, weight, and body. Small lifestyle changes can help you stop over- or under-eating, find healthy ways to manage stress, and get the nutrition you need. For help, do not hesitate to lean on God first, loved ones and/or contact a healthcare professional such as a primary care physician or registered dietitian.

Pledge to make progress every day while you work on mini fitness and nutrition goals, like moving more steps or learning to track what you eat.

Remember once a week cut the meat. Go Meatless on Monday and Move More every day. God bless you. Bye!