

YOUR GAMEPLAN TO LIVE

12 Ways to Stop Stress Eating

Reaching for food to calm down is an all-too-common coping mechanism, whether you're dealing with world events, a demanding job, juggling home responsibilities or other stressors. Thirty-eight percent of adults say they've overeaten or reached for unhealthy foods in the past month because of stress, and of those, half do so at least once a week, according to an American Psychological Association survey.



Stress eating serves as a soothing distraction, and, for many people, it's become an unhealthy habit. When you're stressed out, levels of cortisol (aka the stress hormone) go up, which can boost your appetite and cravings for foods high in fat and sugar. "Fatty and sugary foods (often known as comfort foods) seem to chill out the part of your brain that sends stress signals," explains Candice Seti, PsyD, a weight-loss therapist.

Unfortunately, emotional eating only acts as a Band-Aid for stress, and afterward, the stress comes right back, often compounded by guilt from overeating or making unhealthy choices. The good news is you can successfully get out of a stress-eating spiral with smart strategies that include being compassionate with yourself and making a plan to better handle stress in the future. Here's how:

Identify the Stressor

The next time you feel the urge to stress-eat, take a moment to ask yourself, "Why am I so stressed out?" To break the habit of stress eating, it's important to investigate what's triggering your stress in the first place, says Lucy Call, RD. Common culprits include work, personal conflicts, financial struggles and many things that are simply out of your control (like the COVID-19 pandemic). Whether you journal on paper or jot a few things down on your phone's notes app, identifying your stressors can take your mind off of food and empower you to address what's really upsetting you — like an overpacked schedule or ongoing work conflict — instead of eating to make it go away.

Clean Up Your Kitchen

For many of us, stress eating is so automatic and habitual that we hardly think about it — we just grab whatever's in sight. "In order to guard against this mindless eating, try to keep less nutritious foods out of sight," says Katie Rickel, PhD, a clinical psychologist and CEO of Structure House, a residential weight-management facility in Durham, North Carolina. For example, store ice cream in the very back of the freezer beyond the frozen meat and veggies and keep high-calorie junk food in an out-of-reach cabinet or on the highest shelf in your pantry. Even better, make low-calorie, healthy snacks highly accessible by cutting up fresh fruits and veggies and storing them in a glass container front and center in your fridge. Organizing your kitchen for weight-loss success can help streamline healthy habits.



Grilled Ratatouille Salad

(Food Network)

Ingredients:

- 1 small eggplant
- Kosher salt
- 3 medium tomatoes
- 1 medium zucchini
- 1 medium red bell pepper
- 1 small red onion
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Freshly ground pepper
- 1 Tbsp. plus 2 tsp. red wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup fresh basil leaves, thinly sliced

Directions:

Slice the eggplant into ½ -inch-thick rounds. Soak in a bowl of lightly salted water, 15 to 20 minutes; drain and squeeze out the excess moisture. Meanwhile, slice the tomatoes and zucchini into ½ -inch-thick rounds. Stem and seed the bell pepper; slice the pepper and onion into ½ -inch-thick rings. Heat a grill or grill pan to medium high. Brush the vegetables with the olive oil on both sides and season with ½ teaspoon salt and pepper to taste. Grill the vegetables (in batches if necessary), turning, until soft and marked, about 6 minutes for the tomatoes, 7 to 8 minutes for the bell pepper, onion and zucchini, and about 10 minutes for the eggplant. Let cool. Drizzle the vegetables with the vinegar. Divide the zucchini and eggplant among plates and arrange in a circle, overlapping slightly. Top with the bell pepper, tomato and onion. Sprinkle with the basil.

Per serving: Calories 150; Fat 11g (Saturated 2g); Sodium; Carbohydrates 12 g; Protein 4 g

4 servings

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Post Reminders of WHY You Want to Lose Weight

When you're stressed out, it's easy to lose sight of the long-term benefits of making healthy food choices because you just want to feel better ASAP. To get yourself back on track, post reminders of why you want to lose weight on your cupboards or fridge, such as a photo of the grandchildren you want to see graduate high school or the 5K route you want to tackle. "These tactics can create that imperative millisecond of space and time in which you can choose not to seek comfort in food," says Rickel. Another option: Write yourself reminders on Post-It notes about how good you feel when you get through a night without stress eating.

Adopt a New De-stressing Routine

"Unless you have a replacement food or activity, it's almost impossible for our brains to hear 'don't' when we tell ourselves 'don't eat the chocolate cake,'" says Lucy Call. If your typical wind-down routine is to head for the pantry and plop down in front of the TV, try swapping this for a new self-care routine that's not food-based, like a brisk walk or evening skin care regime. If you tend to go through a certain drive-thru on the way home after a tough day of work, consider taking a different, more scenic route while listening to some relaxing music instead.

Make Time to Meditate

Meditation can be a great tool for stress management as you calm your body and mind by slowing your heart rate and breathing, says Seti. If you already struggle with emotional eating, mindfulness meditation can help you have fewer episodes, shows a review in *Eating Behaviors*. To get started, try a guided meditation or healthy eating meditation with an app like Headspace or Unplug. Set aside a specific time each day and aim to stick to it for at least 10 days, suggests Seti.

Practice Breathing Techniques

When you feel yourself losing control of your stress and cravings, take a few minutes to practice deep breathing or diaphragmatic breathing. "Breathe in through your abdomen and let it fill up like a balloon. Hold the breath for a few seconds, then release and repeat for several minutes," advises Diana Gariglio-Clelland, a registered dietitian with Balance One. "Focusing on the rhythm and quality of your breath can help take your mind off of the stress and combat it by improving oxygenation in your body and releasing tension in your muscles." As simple as it sounds, this technique can help you relax and significantly lower your cortisol levels, per a recent study in *Frontiers in Psychology*.

Mini Workouts

Putting in just a few minutes of exercise can help ward off stress eating. "The endorphins [feel-good hormones] released from moving your body and sweating are one of the most effective ways to reduce stress," says Call. Case in point: Students who did 15 minutes of high-intensity interval exercises after mental work ate 125 fewer calories when offered all-you-can-eat-pizza than those who rested, per a study in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*. Make regular exercise a habit by signing up for a calorie-scorching class and committing to going at the same time every week, suggests Call.

Busy Hands

If you tend to find yourself stress eating as a way to self-soothe while you're sitting around or watching TV, try getting your hands moving with a fun activity instead. "Just taking 10–15 minutes to direct your attention to something tactile and calming can help you forget about your desire to stress eat," says Liz Wyosnick, RD. This could mean enjoying an adult coloring book, painting your nails, knitting, crafting, foam rolling or even organizing items around your home.

Seek Support

In stressful times, it helps to have a support system on standby. "If stress eating is a



Pepper Jack Chicken with Succotash

(Food Network)

Ingredients:

- 4 ounces pepper-jack cheese, shredded
- 2 cups baby arugula, roughly chopped
- 2 large skinless, boneless chicken breasts (12 ounces each)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil, plus more for brushing
- Kosher salt
- 1½ to 2 tablespoons Cajun spice blend
- Vegetable oil, for the grill
- 1 cup frozen lima beans, thawed
- 1 medium yellow summer squash, diced
- 2 cups corn kernels
- 1 cup grape tomatoes, halved
- Juice of 1 lime

Directions:

Combine the cheese and arugula in a bowl. Cut a deep 2-inch-wide pocket in the thickest part of each chicken breast with a paring knife. Stuff with the arugula mixture. Brush with olive oil and season with salt and the Cajun spice blend. Preheat a grill to high. Grill the chicken until blackened and a thermometer inserted into the thickest part registers 155 degrees F, 8 to 10 minutes per side. Transfer to a cutting board. Meanwhile, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a skillet over high heat. Add the lima beans, squash and corn, season with salt and cook until the squash is just tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the tomatoes and cook 2 more minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the lime juice. Slice the chicken and serve with the succotash.

4 servings

Per serving: Calories 462; Fat 16g (Saturated 6g); Carbohydrates 30g; Fiber 7g; Protein 48g

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chronic struggle for you, bring it up with a trusted friend or loved one beforehand and ask if they'd be open to being your go-to person to call when you're tempted to stress-eat," says Call. Then, your friend can help you talk out your thoughts and feelings and remind you to stick to your nutrition goals. Working with a professional such as a therapist could also help if it's a persistent issue.

Honor Your Hunger

"Eat consistently throughout the day so your hunger doesn't build up by the end of the day," says Gariglio-Clelland. "It's important to eat in order to feel satisfied and to avoid eating in response to ravenous hunger later — which can be exacerbated by stress," adds Call. "Try to set yourself up for success and choose options that will make your body feel good." Think: filling, fiber-rich foods, lean proteins, healthy fats and complex carbs.

Take One Mindful Bite

Think back: How often have you eaten the last cookie or potato chip in the bag only to realize you didn't really taste any of them? When you're stress eating, you're often so distracted and disconnected you eat too much but don't feel all that satisfied. "Next time you're in the whirl of it, challenge yourself to slow down for one mindful bite," says Rickel. Get rid of all distractions, bring the food to your mouth, and take in the smell, sight, sound and feeling of it. Chew slowly to savor the texture and taste, and feel the food move down your esophagus and into your belly before you go for the next bite. Then, repeat the process as many times as necessary. As you practice mindful eating, you might find paying attention to the experience makes you feel calmer and more satiated.

https://blog.myfitnesspal.com/7-ways-to-stop-stress-eating/?utm_source=mfp&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MFP_NewNormal_StressAwarenessLaunch_20210409_15-30D&utm_content=blog_position2

SCALP MELANOMA QUICK TIP

Melanoma is the most dangerous type of skin cancer. It is derived from melanocytes, the skin's pigment cells, and can spread quickly (metastasize) through the lymph nodes or blood-stream if not detected at an early stage. Scalp melanomas are more lethal than other melanomas.

One nationwide study found that people with scalp and neck melanomas die from the disease at nearly twice the rate of people with melanomas elsewhere on the body. In fact, although only six percent of patients have skin lesions on the scalp and neck, they account for 10 percent of all melanoma deaths.

Why are scalp melanomas more lethal? One reason may very well be a delay in diagnosis because of their location, in an area usually hidden by hair, where one cannot see them without some effort. There's a growing belief that the biology of the melanoma itself or the environment of the scalp may play a role. The scalp is well vascularized with numerous blood vessels, and the lymphatic drainage is varied and complex. It may be that melanoma in this location can easily spread to the brain, making it more aggressive.

Visit your dermatologist for an annual skin check and be sure they check your scalp thoroughly!

Adapted from: <http://www.skincancer.org>



Fish Tacos with Watermelon Salsa (Food Network)

Ingredients:

- 4 cups diced seedless watermelon
- ½ small red onion, finely diced
- ½ cup roughly chopped fresh cilantro
- Juice of 2 limes, plus lime wedges for serving
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and finely diced
- 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for brushing
- Kosher salt
- 1 pound skinless wild striped bass fillets
- 1 teaspoon chipotle chile powder
- 1 romaine lettuce heart, thinly sliced
- 8 corn tortillas
- 1 avocado, sliced

Directions:

Make the watermelon salsa: Combine the watermelon, red onion, cilantro, lime juice and jalapeno in a bowl. Toss with 1 tablespoon olive oil and 1/2 teaspoon salt and set aside.

Preheat a grill to high. Sprinkle the fish on both sides with the chile powder and ½ teaspoon salt; drizzle both sides with the remaining 2 teaspoons olive oil. Brush the grill with olive oil, then add the fish and grill until marked and cooked through, 4 to 5 minutes per side. Transfer the fish to a plate and break into bite-size pieces. Meanwhile, toss the lettuce with 2 tablespoons of the juices from the watermelon salsa and a pinch of salt. Warm the tortillas on the grill and fill with the fish, watermelon salsa, avocado and lettuce. Serve with lime wedges.

Per Serving: Calories 437; Total Fat 18 g; Saturated Fat 3 g; Protein 25 g; Carbohydrate 45 g

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“101 Ways to Take Care of Yourself When the World Feels Overwhelming”

A therapist shares small ways to practice self-care. *By Annie Wright*

I think that, for most of us, there are times in life when it all just feels like Too Much. There may be some days, weeks, months, maybe even years when — for whatever reason — just getting through the day or going to work or putting one foot in front of the other feels hard. Really, really hard. Maybe it’s because you’re wrestling with anxiety, depression, or some other mental illness. Maybe it’s because you’ve had your heart broken. Maybe you’ve gone through a physical or emotional trauma. Maybe you’re deeply grieving. **Or maybe there’s no easily understood reason for why you’re feeling bad.** Whatever the case, I want you to know that it’s OK if you’re going through a tough time.



This doesn’t make you any less lovable, worthy, or capable. This just means you’re human. Being a human can be a messy, hard, confusing, painful experience sometimes. So if you or someone you love is going through one of these tough times right now, a time where it all just feels like too much, **I want to offer up 101 suggestions for self-care to help you or your loved one get through this time.**

1. Have a good, long, body-shaking cry.
2. Call a trusted friend or family member and talk it out.
3. Call in sick. Take comp time if you can. Take a mental health day.
4. Say no to extra obligations, chores, or anything that pulls on your precious self-care time.
5. Book a session (or more!) with your therapist.
6. Dial down your expectations of yourself at this time. When you’re going through life’s tough times, I invite you to soften your expectations of yourself and others.
7. Tuck yourself into bed early with a good book and clean sheets.
8. Watch a comforting/silly/funny/lighthearted TV show or movie. ("Parks and Recreation," anyone?)
9. Reread your favorite picture and chapter books from childhood
10. Ask for some love and tenderness from your friends on social media. Let them comment on your post and remind you that you’re loved.
11. Look at some really gorgeous pieces of art.
12. Watch YouTube videos of Ellen DeGeneres and the adorable kids she has on her show.
13. Look at faith-in-humanity-restoring lists from around the internet.
14. *Ask for help.* From whomever you need it — your boss, your doctor, your partner, your therapist, your mom. Let people know you need some help.
15. Wrap yourself up in a cozy fleece blanket and sip a cup of hot tea.
16. *Breathe.* Deeply. Slowly. Four counts in. Six counts out
17. *Hydrate.* Have you had enough water today?
18. *Eat.* Have you eaten something healthy and nourishing today?
19. *Sleep.* Have you slept seven to nine hours? Is it time for some rest?
20. *Shower.* Then dry your hair and put on clothes that make you feel good.
21. Go outside and be in the sunshine.
22. Move your body gently in ways that feel good. Maybe aim for 30 minutes. Or 10 minutes if 30 feels like too much.
23. Read a story (or stories) of people who overcame adversity or maybe dealt with mental illness, too. (I personally admire J.K. Rowling’s story.)
24. Go to a 12-step meeting. Or any group meeting where support is offered. Check

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Grilled Eggplant with Yogurt and Mint
(Food Network)

Ingredients:

- 1 large 1½ -pound eggplant
- Kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ¼ cup 2-percent Greek yogurt
- 1 teaspoon dried mint
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- Pinch cayenne pepper

Directions:

Stripe the eggplant with a vegetable peeler and cut into ½ -inch-thick slices. Sprinkle the eggplant slices generously with salt, place in a colander and let sit 30 minutes. Rinse the eggplant under cold water and pat thoroughly dry.

Meanwhile, combine the olive oil and garlic in a small glass cup, and microwave just until the oil is hot and bubbling, about 20 seconds. Whisk together the yogurt, mint, cumin, cayenne, 2 tablespoons water and salt to taste in a small bowl. Heat a grill pan over medium-high heat or prepare an outdoor grill for medium-heat cooking. Brush the eggplant slices on both sides with the oil and garlic mixture.

Grill until the eggplant is browned and tender, moving and turning the slices frequently, about 15 minutes. Drizzle the mint sauce onto the eggplant slices.

Per Serving: Calories 110; Total Fat 7g; Saturated Fat 1g; Protein 3g; Carbohydrate 11g; Sugar 5g

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- out church listings, hospital listings, or school listings, for example.
25. If you suspect something may be physiologically off with you, go see your doctor and/or psychiatrist and talk to them. Medication might help you at this time, and professionals can assist you in assessing this.
26. Take a long, hot bath. Light a candle and pamper yourself.
27. Read inspirational quotes.
28. Cuddle someone or something. Your partner. A pillow. Your friend's dog.
29. Read previous emails, postcards, letters, etc. from friends and family reminding you of happier times.
30. Knit. Sculpt. Bake. Engage your hands.
31. Exhaust yourself physically — running, yoga, swimming, whatever helps you feel fatigued.
32. Write it out. Go free-form in a journal or on a computer. Get it all out and vent.
33. Create a plan if you're feeling overwhelmed. List out what you need to do next to tackle and address whatever you're facing. Chunk it down into manageable and understandable pieces.
34. Remind yourself you only have to get through the next five minutes. Then the next five. And so on.
35. Take five minutes to meditate.
36. Write out a list of 25 reasons you'll be OK.
37. Write out a list of 25 examples of things you've overcome or accomplished.
38. Write out a list of 25 reasons you're a good, lovable person.
39. Write out a list of 25 things that make your life beautiful.
40. Sniff some scents that bring you joy or remind you of happier times.
41. Ask for support from friends and family via text if voice-to-voice contact feels like too much. Ask them to check in with you via text daily or weekly, whatever you need.
42. Lay down on the ground. Let the Earth or floor hold you. You don't have to hold it all on your own.
43. Clean up a corner of a room of your house. Sometimes tidying up can help calm our minds.
44. Ask yourself: What's my next most immediate priority? Do that. Then ask the question again.
45. Read some poetry. *Rumi*, *Hafiz*, and *Mary Oliver* are all excellent.
46. Take a tech break. Delete or deactivate social media if it feels too triggering right now.
47. Or maybe get on tech. If you've been isolating, maybe interacting with friends and family online might feel good.
48. Go out in public and be around others. You don't have to engage, but maybe sit in a coffee shop or on a bench at a museum and soak up the humanity around you.
49. Or if you're feeling too saturated with contact, go home. Cancel plans and tend to the introverted parts of yourself.
50. Ask friends and family to remind you that things will be OK and that what you're feeling is temporary.

To be continued... Next month we will provide you with another 50 ways to take care of yourself when life feels overwhelming.

<https://www.upworthy.com/101-self-care-suggestions-for-when-it-all-feels-like-too-much>

At the Gameplan for Living, we know that the future of healthcare is in the prevention of illness and injuries.

It is our mission to provide preventative care utilizing sports medicine principles and lifestyle modification training to create an atmosphere of health, safety, and performance to allow employees to enjoy an enhanced quality of life and reach their retirement—and beyond—SUCCESSFULLY!

www.gameplanforliving.com

Questions / Support:
info@gameplanforliving.com



Hearty Garlic Greens

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ pounds autumn hearty greens, well washed, stems removed, and sliced into 3-inch strips
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 8 cloves garlic, sliced paper-thin
- 1 pound spinach
- ¼ to ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes

Directions:

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Put hearty greens in water and blanch for 4 minutes. Immediately plunge blanched greens into a bowl of ice-cold water to stop the cooking. Drain, squeeze dry, and set aside.
2. Heat oil and garlic in a large skillet over medium-low heat. Cook until the garlic is golden around the edges, 8 to 10 minutes. With a slotted spoon, remove garlic from skillet; set aside.
3. Raise heat to high. Add hearty greens and cook for an additional 5 minutes. Add spinach; season with salt and red pepper flakes. Cook until spinach wilts, stirring frequently (about a minute). Return garlic to pan and stir. The greens can be served immediately or at room temperature.

Per serving: 78 calories; 3 g protein; 5 g fat; 6 g carb; 3 g fiber.

www.wholeliving.com