

HOW TO BANISH



**ANXIETY-BASED
BINGES**

PUREHEALTH®
RESEARCH

HOW TO BANISH ANXIETY-BASED BINGES

by

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RESEARCH

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Why Do Stress and Anxiety Cause Some People to Binge?

Binge eating disorder and anxiety are tied closely together¹. Feelings of anxiety can sometimes trigger binge eating episodes in people. It is believed that about 37% of those who are diagnosed with binge eating disorder also have a diagnosis of anxiety.

It is thought that there isn't a simple linear connection between the two disorders, but that there are a host of factors that cause people to binge eat. This includes biological, psychological, and social factors. Let's get a look at each to see how these could be affecting your anxiety and binge eating.



Biological Factors

There are neurological factors at play that cause people to often overeat when they are feeling anxious or stressed. For example, there is the release of dopamine, which provides you with the feeling of a reward. It is a pleasurable feeling, and it can be released when you binge eat. The dopamine provides you with some temporary relief from the anxiety.

This has caused some researchers² to feel that binge eating and dopamine release are not dissimilar from what someone experiences when they are a substance abuser. In these cases, though, the substances are food rather than drugs or alcohol.

There are other similarities to substance abuse, as well. People who binge eat will often feel withdrawal symptoms between their episodes of binging. They will keep following the same behavior patterns, even though they know they are damaging their health.

“The dopamine provides you with some temporary relief from the anxiety.”





If you feel like you are in a situation like this, where you can't help yourself and the tips in this book don't help, you should seek the attention of a medical professional.

Some of the things that you might feel when you are dealing with a binge eating disorder include:

- Feeling deprived when can't binge
- Feeling as though you do not have control over your eating behaviors
- Eating quickly
- Eating until you are uncomfortably full
- Eating alone because you are ashamed
- Feeling upset with yourself after overeating

Psychological Factors

Those who binge eat may find that they are doing so because they are trying to distract themselves from the other emotions they are feeling. This could be depression, or anxiety, as is the focus of this book. They feel that the anxiety is too hard to handle, and even though they might know that overeating is bad for them, they feel it's better than the way they are feeling before they eat.

Social Factors

There are social factors that could play a role, as well. Those who have had a history of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse might be at a greater risk to start binge eating when they are feeling anxious. Any life stressor could end up pushing these people toward food as an outlet.

Additionally, those who have difficulties being around and connecting with other people can have an increased risk of binge eating disorder and anxiety. Of course, you also have to consider the social pressures that we all face to be thin. Those types of pressures can get to feel as though they are too much, and they could drive some people to binge eat.



Tips to Stop Binge Eating Due to Anxiety

While there are some tips that you can use to help stop your binge-eating because of anxiety, it is important to stress that these are not solutions that will make your anxiety disappear or cure binge eating. These tips are meant to help you get stronger control and to help you curb those times when you want to reach for food because of anxiety.



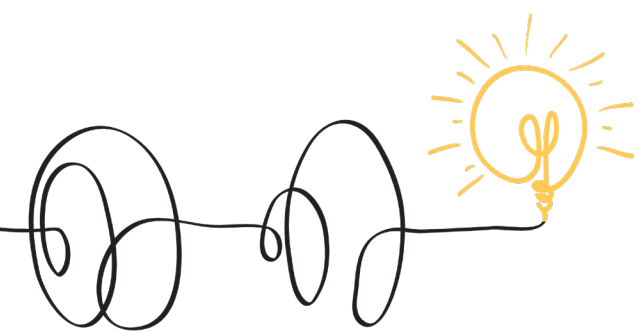
However, you have to keep in mind that you should be working on **dealing with both your anxiety and your binge eating if you have true anxiety**. Talking with a therapist or psychologist will ensure you get the help you need.

The tips below can help you to get some form of control over binge eating. You will find that if anxiety is the cause of binge eating, you should focus on finding ways to deal with the anxiety.



Acknowledge the Problem

Before you can attempt to fix a problem, you first have to acknowledge that there is a problem in the first place. Many people who suffer from anxiety and binge-eating don't want to see the problem in front of them, or they feel that they aren't willing to confront it quite yet.



If you are reading this book, though, then you know there is a problem, and you want to find ways to make it better in your life. Since this so often feels like an addiction, as mentioned, earlier, the first step is admitting there is a problem. Once you do that, you can move forward.

Keep a Journal

The Mayo Clinic³ has provided a few tips for helping people to get more control over their emotional eating. Keeping a journal is one of their tips, and it can work for some, as it provides you with a picture of just how it is affecting your life.

The journal should include the way you feel including feelings of anxiousness, stress, depression, etc. Note the days and times, and what is causing those feelings. Also, keep your food intake in this journal. Track what you are eating, how much, and when.

You will likely start to see patterns and may find certain stressors that are causing your anxiety and overeating. Removing those stressors from your life, or at least finding a way to handle them better, could help you to stop your binge eating.





Reach for Water and Have a Reality Check

When you are feeling like you want to eat, and you know that a binge episode is coming, take a step back before placing an order of filling your plate. You should make sure that your hunger is physical rather than emotional. It's important to be honest with yourself when you are trying to determine this.

If you ate recently, then you probably aren't too hungry. Give the craving some time to pass and have some water⁴ in the meantime.

Deep Breathing and Meditation

Anxiety can often cause your breathing, heart rate, and blood pressure to rise. When this happens, your body often responds by unleashing stress hormones. People sometimes reach for food to deal with those feelings.

However, when you start to notice feelings of anxiety encroaching, you might be able to head it off before it affects you too much. Acknowledge what you are feeling and take some deep breaths. Focus on keeping calm and think about what comes next.

The initial thing that people often do is bargain with themselves, saying that they deserve to have a treat because of the way they feel. They know it's going to make them feel better for a few minutes.

You have to remember how you feel after binge eating, though. Through deep breathing exercises, as well as meditation, it might be possible to overcome the initial desire to binge.

Replacements and Hobbies

One of the other things you can do is find ways to replace binge eating with other activities. When you start to feel anxiety that you cannot calm, train yourself to do something else that can release those feel-good chemicals in your brain.

A replacement might be getting up to take a short walk. It might be exercising. Reading a chapter of a book, watching a video about a hobby that you enjoy.

**The key is to try to get your mind off of food.
Focus on something else and deal with the
anxiety more healthily.**



Improve Self-Care

Overall, you will find that improving self-care can be a fantastic way to reduce anxiety (or at least learn to deal with it better) and reduce instances of binge eating. When you are working to take better care of yourself physically and mentally, you are more likely to strive to stop doing things that harm you. Good self-care practices can help you to feel better and more confident, and they can keep the anxious thoughts from finding their way into your mind.

There are various types of self-care, of course. It might be spending time with family, reading, enjoying some time with a hobby or game, etc. You will need to determine exactly what self-care entails for you and then follow through and treat yourself right.

Exercise

Exercise is one of the best options when you are trying to reduce anxiety and stress, and it can work well as a replacement for binge eating. Exercise is associated with becoming more resilient to stress emotionally, according to a study published in *Frontiers in Physiology*⁵.



Reducing feelings of anxiety and stress could help reduce instances of binge eating. You will find that exercise also helps you to stay in better shape. It can also give you something to do when you start to feel a binge coming on. Instead, you can get up and go for a walk around the neighborhood or go for a ride on your exercise bike.

Add Food to Your Diet that Could Help Reduce Anxiety

Here's a tip that many people don't think about. If you start to plan the foods you eat as part of your normal diet now, you can add foods that are reputed to help reduce anxiety⁶.

Some foods you will want to add to your diet include pumpkin seeds and bananas, which contain potassium. Pumpkin seeds also contain zinc. Blueberries, rich in vitamin C and antioxidants, are also a good option. Look for other foods with antioxidants, such as strawberries. Get your magnesium from leafy greens and your omega-3 fatty acids from salmon.



Eating right is not just healthy for your body and your physical appearance, but it can help to reduce feelings of anxiety that can lead to binge eating.

Don't Head Too Far in the Opposite Direction

Of course, you want to get control over your binge eating, but you don't want to overcorrect. Some people, when they are trying to stop bingeing or want to stop gaining weight end up with other eating disorders. If you are trying to lose weight after spending time as a binge eater, do it the right way.



Remember to Reach Out for Professional Help

The tips above can help you reduce your feelings of anxiety and help to reduce the amount of binge eating you are doing. For some, these tips can help you to get your life back on track. For those who have serious anxiety disorders and binge eating disorders, though, it may not be enough. There is never any shame in seeking out help from a qualified medical professional.



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