

# Detaching food from the emotional needs of Comfort, Reward and Control

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Most unhealthy eating and exercise habits are providing for the powerful emotional needs of Comfort, Reward, or Control.

**Comfort** is the need of feeling good. Eating pleasure foods makes us feel good both physically and psychologically. We associate feelings of pleasure with certain foods—usually high in fat, carbs or both. From our early years we are given these types of foods at birthday parties, holidays and as a way to make us feel better. Furthermore, carbs are our body’s preferred source of energy and fat provides the most calories for survival, so it makes sense we have a hard-wired comfort response to eating foods high in carbs and fat.

Some alternative ways to feel comfort are a hot shower, nap, listening to music, reading, a favorite hobby, deep breathing, meditation, or writing.



**Reward** is the need to feel appreciated. Most of us don’t get nearly the appreciation we crave so we often “feel like” rewarding ourselves and the easiest way to do this is with food and treats. Furthermore, many of us were conditioned as kids that good behavior and good work get a special treat like ice cream, cookies or candy.

Some alternative ways to reward yourself are by writing in a journal what you accomplished each day and giving yourself praise for what you accomplished. Even easier is making a “to-do” list each day and checking it off. By seeing what you actually did get done on paper, you’ll feel good about what you accomplished—which is self-appreciation.

But perhaps most powerful alternative is deciding to change your beliefs about rewards and how you feel appreciated. Changing from the self-destructive belief that good work deserves good food to the new self-enhancing belief that good work deserves a good workout is

something you can choose to start believing today. Just this one belief will completely change what you “feel like” doing!

It is also imperative that you understand that everyone who you’d like to appreciate you more wants you to appreciate them more! We all want appreciation, so the best way to feel appreciation is to give it and watch it come back to you! So rather than appreciating yourself with food and treats, appreciate yourself by giving appreciation to others. This “give to get” approach seems counterintuitive, but it really works if you give it time to start coming back to you—often in larger quantities than you give!

For example, start thanking and appreciating those you work with. Just a sincere “thank you” when appropriate will do a lot to start the appreciation flowing back to you.

### **ASSIGNMENT:**

**Use the “Comforts & Rewards” worksheet to make a list of alternative things you can do to experience comfort and to feel appreciated.**



**Control** is the need to have a choice. When you feel like everyone in your life is telling YOU what to do, it’s hard to deny yourself the choice of doing what you “feel like” doing. This need can become a defiant attitude of:

**“Why should I let others decide what I do, what I should weigh or what I should eat?”**

The lack of control in other areas of your life, can lead to trying to control others at home (kids and spouse). This always leads to friction because they want to have their own control and are at the same time trying to control you! This need for control leads to arguments, fights, constant yelling and disrespect, all causing substantial stress, depression, anger, and resentment, drawing one strongly to find comfort in food.

To avoid this force that destroys you and your loved ones, you MUST adopt the new belief that you can only and should only control yourself and that trying to control others to feel good always leads to massive amounts of pain and self-destruction.

By focusing on your own life, and letting others do more of what they want, you put your energy where it should be. When you are focused on your goals and what you want to accomplish, you don't have time or energy to get upset about how the towels in the bathroom were folded or become furious when your husband forgets to put his plate in the dishwasher. When you have control over exciting and compelling things in your life, you'll lose the need to constantly control others to feel satisfied with your life.

As a parent, I understand we parents need to control our kids. We can't just let them do whatever they want. But most parents overly control their kids and expect them to act like adults and obey their every command, causing needless pain and suffering. From personal experience, I know loosening control over your kids can be one of the best things you can do to greatly lower stress in your life!



To find other things that will give you the feeling of control, make a list of things you would like to do to feel in control of your own life and begin to work on that list. That list might include learning sign language, how to ride a motorcycle or learning a foreign language. It might include travelling to a foreign country or going back to school or running a half

marathon.

Make sure you include easy things like "Read the paper alone every Sunday morning" or "Go to one movie a month" so you can start feeling more control.

### **ASSIGNMENT:**

Using the "I Want to" worksheet to make a large list of both easy things you can start doing now and the bigger things you'd love to do. Pick one big one and one or a few smaller ideas and get started!

