Am I Hungry?®

Mindful Eating for Binge Eating

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When is Overeating Binge Eating Disorder?

By Michelle May, M.D.

While most people overeat, or even binge at times, Binge Eating Disorder (BED) is not just overeating. BED affects an estimated 3.5% of women and 2% of men in the U.S. The incidence is considerably higher among people seeking weight loss. However, restrictive dieting and weight stigma tend to propel the Binge Eating Cycle* and compound the problem.

*From *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat with Binge Eating: A Mindful Eating Program for Healing Your Relationship with Food and Your Body*

What is a binge?

Binge-eating episodes are associated with three or more of the following:

- Eating large amounts of food when not feeling physically hungry
- Eating until uncomfortably full
- Eating more rapidly than normal
- Eating alone due to embarrassment about how much one is eating
- Feeling disgusted, depressed, or very guilty afterwards

What is Binge Eating Disorder?

The diagnosis of Binge Eating Disorder was added to the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM 5) in May 2013. Here is a summary of the diagnostic criteria:

- Recurrent episodes of binge eating occurring at least once a week for three months
- Eating, in a discrete period of time, a significantly larger amount of food than most people would eat under similar circumstances.
- A feeling that you cannot stop eating or control what or how much you are eating

In addition, there is marked distress about binge eating. Those with BED do not use compensatory measures to counter the binge eating, such as vomiting or excessive exercise. For complete BED criteria, visit http://amihungry.com/programs/mindful-eating-for-binge-eating/diagnostic-criteria-for-binge-eating/.

What does BED feel like?

Kari Anderson, DBH, LPC, co-creator of the Am I Hungry? Mindful Eating for Binge Eating Program, explains that a person with BED may eat "normally" with others, stop on the way home to buy favorite binge foods, then binge and hide evidence of the episode. The aftermath of a binge episode is extreme feelings of shame and disgust.

Dr. Anderson adds, "Individuals with BED are typically competent and accomplished in other areas of their life, yet feel unable to stop this secret behavior. Bingeing is a way to escape or disconnect from feelings that seem intolerable. There may be difficulty managing states of emotional and physical distress without using food. On the other hand, the thought of giving up the behavior evokes anxiety."

While most people can relate to overeating or even bingeing from time to time, the lives of those with binge eating disorder are significantly disrupted by the binges and the aftermath. They may suffer in silence for years—trying and failing numerous diets, feeling alone, ashamed, and depressed. But they are not alone; there are millions of people with BED.

How is BED treated?

If you think you may have binge eating disorder, seek treatment from an experienced treatment specialist.

Mindfulness-based strategies aimed at self-regulating emotional and physical states have shown promise in the treatment of Binge Eating Disorder. In a recent study using the Am I Hungry? Mindful Eating for Binge Eating Program. participants went from a range of severe binge eating to a non-bingeing level on the Binge Eating Scale.

Resources

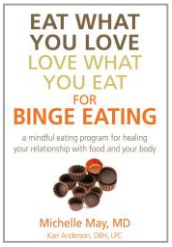
Binge Eating Disorder Association (BEDA): http://bedaonline.com/

Binge Eating Scale: http://amihungry.com/programs/mindful-eating-for-binge-eating/binge-eating-scale/

Eating disorder specialist in your area: http://edreferral.com/

Am I Hungry? Mindful Eating Program for Binge Eating (including health professional training): http://amihungry.com/programs/mindful-eating-for-binge-eating

With effective treatment, there *is* hope for recovery from binge eating disorder and the freedom to live the vibrant life you crave.



Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat for Binge Eating: A Mindful Eating Program for Healing Your Relationship with Food and Your Body

http://amihungry.com/programs/mindful-eating-for-binge-eating

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