

FOOD, EATING AND OVEREATING

The basics you need to know to start losing weight permanently



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You want to lose weight.

You have tried many 'diets'.

You have plenty of knowledge of what healthy eating looks like.

Isn't that frustrating? You know it is not the knowledge that's missing.

Ideally, you want to be guided by research and follow good practice for healthy eating. You do not like crazy diets, although you may have tried some. Mainly because you do not know what else to try.

It just does not seem to work.

Losing weight permanently feels impossible.

I used to think that. Especially as I became older. I thought weight gain was a fact of life. And, as a doctor and with many years of health research experience I know there are plenty of studies that seem to demonstrate that this is true.

You have probably been successful in the past. You have lost some weight but have not been able to keep it off. You are tired and frustrated with the yo-yo dieting and weight cycling.

There is very good research that shows that any 'diet' leads to weight loss but equally it shows that this weight loss is unsustainable, it does not last long term.

That is where I can help. I am only interested in weight loss that is permanent and that is easy to maintain. I also thought this was not possible. If you think about it though, it is the only way. If you want to make it permanent it has to be easy to maintain. That is what allows you to lose weight and move on and do other things in life.

It is possible and doable.

You do not need to believe it just yet.

I am only interested in weight loss that is permanent and that is easy to maintain.

For now, as long as you are intrigued, I can help you get there.

Reframing the problem

The problem is not the weight. **Weight is a symptom**, the manifestation of the problem.

What causes weight to go up is overeating. Overeating is a behaviour and solving overeating is a behavioural change question.

Most 'diets' tackle weight as if weight is the problem. They offer 'how to', a to do list to solve the problem: lists of foods and recipes of what you can or cannot eat. It is valuable information (probably knowledge you already have) but it does not address the cause of the weight gain.

To eliminate overeating we need to understand the cause of the behaviour. This behaviour is overeating. Why are you overeating?

First, we need to understand food and eating.

Food and eating

This will be simple and basic information. If you are following my blog you already know this is [one of the principles](#) I use in my ['Stop overeating'](#) coaching programme.

I aim for the simplest process so that you achieve the result you want and to ensure changes are permanent.

There is no good reason to overcomplicate it and many good reasons why simple is best.

Complicated processes and tons of information may sound more scientific but they can be counterproductive. The more complicated the system, the more things you need to remember, the more likely it is that the change will not be sustainable because it will not fit in your daily life (i.e. calorie counting, precise food composition, etc.). It also makes you dependent on someone else's guidance. I am warning the scientists and doctors among you. The latest 'diet', 'superfood', or the latest clinical trial are not the answers.

Why do we eat?

There are four reasons.

1. [To provide our body with the energy it needs to function: eating for fuel](#)

This is the only biological reason we have to eat food. Our body needs energy to function properly. This energy comes from food. The more balanced the type of food we eat, the more likely we cover all our body's needs.

2. [To enjoy ourselves: eating for pleasure](#)

We get pleasure from food because **there is a biological reward associated with eating.** Our brain gets a dopamine hit when we eat. The brain is in charge of our survival and it loves dopamine. This mechanism is there to make sure we seek food by creating a desire for food.

Strictly speaking there is no need to obtain pleasure from food.

When the desire for food drives us to eat more than what we need, we have created an overdesire. Overdesire for food leads us to eat beyond our biological needs.

Some foods are very efficient at creating an overdesire. Typically, these foods contain sugar and flour.

When we choose to reward ourselves with food we are exploiting this mechanism. We intentionally seek the pleasurable rather than the nutritional purpose of food.

There is a second aspect to eating. Eating behaviour has an important societal component. Most if not all cultures incorporate food and eating as a mechanism for connection and communication with others. We use food to celebrate and to mark special occasions. This satisfies another of our basic human needs, belonging and being accepted in a group.

The societal and cultural component of eating behaviour is very powerful and shapes our thinking about food and our behaviours around it.

3. To avoid feeling uncomfortable emotions: emotional eating

Unfortunately, we do not know how to deal with the negative emotions we experience in our daily lives. We've never been taught what to do or how to solve negative emotions. We instinctively avoid them. That is normal, the brain is geared to avoid what makes us feel uncomfortable.

Because of the association with pleasure and the reward mechanism it provides, **we have learnt to use food as a compensating mechanism.** This, and the over-abundance of food around us, especially the foods that create an exaggerated reward response, means that we use food as a mechanism to mask uncomfortable emotions. It is a learnt behaviour and we learn it very early on.

We eat when we feel stressed, anxious, upset, overwhelmed or simply bored just to name a few of the most common negative feelings and emotions we do not like experiencing. Food gives us a quick, albeit short lived, relief.

Unfortunately, because food only masks rather than solves these negative emotions, we unconsciously create a vicious circle. The reward food provides is strong but it extinguishes very quickly. The negative emotion returns and on top now we feel bad for having eaten food we did not want to eat. We pile up a second negative emotion and loathing self-talk. We eat again to compensate.

Why do we eat?

1. Eating for fuel
2. Eating for pleasure
3. Emotional eating
4. Compulsive eating

4. Eating against your own will: compulsive eating

This is eating out of control, binge eating. It feels as if you are eating against your will.

Restrictive diets can create compulsions. It is similar to emotional eating and the solution is similar: understand and solve the negative emotions.

What is overeating?

When does eating become overeating? It is very simple.

Overeating is eating more than what our body needs to function.

The symptom of overeating is weight gain. You know you are overeating if you are an adult and you are putting on unwanted weight.

Our body only needs food to function. Any additional food we eat is unnecessary and it means we are overeating.

When we consume more than what our body needs to function, the body stores the excess food by converting into fat. Our bodies are incredibly efficient in storing food. Nothing goes wasted.

The only reason to eat food is for fuel (1).

All other reasons lead to overeating (2, 3 and 4). Most of the time this includes eating for pleasure.

I always get a strong pushback about this last point. I know. Please, continue reading.

Many of you think you eat for pleasure, to enjoy the taste of food.

It is possible. I can tell you though, that most of the time you are kidding yourself. I know you are very intelligent and come up with sophisticated reasons why you can eat food your body does not need. It is a clever disguise of emotional eating.

Here is how I know it.

Answer these questions to know if your 'eating for pleasure' is 'emotional eating'

1. Do you want to lose weight?
2. Do you feel you have control over how much 'food for pleasure' you eat?
3. Can you say 'no, thank you' when presented with your most favourite food

If your answer is 'yes' to the first and 'no' to the second and/or third questions, I am afraid every time you tell yourself you 'eat to enjoy food' is emotional eating.

The truth is, if you had control of how much food you eat 'for the taste', you probably would not need to lose weight.

Can I 'eat to enjoy the taste' and be the weight I desire?

Yes, you can.

To be very honest with you, it is easier if you decide that you will only eat for fuel and dissociate pleasure from food.

It is actually possible to not have 'desire' for food.

Do you want that?

Many of my clients answer a categorical 'no'.

Do you smoke? Do you even want to smoke?

Would you want to answer the same about food? Wouldn't it be amazing to not even want foods that lead us to overeating?

I cover all this in my coaching programme.

I also want you to know that the alternative is possible.

You can enjoy food and not overeat.

It requires being intentional about it.

I do a combination of both. There are foods I no longer want to eat and there are others I decide when and how much I will eat. It is all intentionally decided with a weight goal in mind. The best is that food, eating and weight are no longer an issue in my life. It has given me so much freedom and time to do lots more interesting things. That was a benefit I did not expect. You will be surprised too.

What's next?

Are you intrigued?

Do you want to know more?

Do you want to stop overeating?

Three things you can do to stop overeating

1. [Follow my blog](#) where I write about food, eating and permanent behavioural change.
2. [Get in touch](#), you might be one free session away from success and I am happy to help if that is all you need.
3. Register for my 1:1 [coaching programme](#).

The coaching programme is for you if you:

- Need additional help
- Want to ensure you reach your goal
- Want to reach your weight goal faster
- Want an easy and permanent process to maintain your weight goal
- Want to learn how to apply the same skills to other behaviours (you totally can)
- Want to move on from losing weight to the much more wonderful achievements you desire in your life

If any of these resonate with you, I can help.

Get in touch to [schedule a free 1:1 session](#) and you can decide for yourself.

By the end of the coaching programme my clients do not even remember that losing weight used to be impossible

I look forward working with you

About me



Certified Life Coach – Life Coach School, US

Medical Doctor, MD – University of Barcelona, Spain

Scientist

- **PhD** – University of Bristol, UK
- **Master in Public Health, MPH** – Johns Hopkins Public Health School, US
- **Master in Science, MSc** – London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK

Work with me

www.healththroughcoaching.net