

Relief Binges & Holidays

Yes, it pays to stay strict during any personal Eating Season (well, frankly in our culture the longest season that ISN'T some kind eating season is from January 2 to February 13. No doubt it won't be long until the food manufacturers figure out some food traditions for Martin Luther King Day.)

I've also seen countless people, myself included, make it through holidays and vacations only to fall apart the day, or a few weeks after, into what I call a "relief binge" and I know that most of you know exactly what I'm talking about. In fact, one of the ways I think you can gauge whether you're what I would classify as an emotionally addicted eater is if you do know what I'm talking about when I say "relief binge"!

Emotionally addicted eaters push down all of the anger/frustration about not being able to eat all the holiday crapola; there's usually some disappointment/let down involved, maybe some family issues that came up over the holidays. People who managed to hold it together during challenging meals, people who endured "in the spotlight" with everyone around, do eventually find ourselves alone with our feelings in our quiet moments and we often end up falling apart into one of these binges, which are **just** as harmful or moreso as getting off track during the holiday or special occasion. In fact, after that happens, we seem flummoxed at how we managed so well when it was tough, then fell apart when it SHOULD have been easy. (This is also a big clue, when we're able to acknowledge it, that this isn't nearly as much about our relationship with others, as it is about our relationship with ourselves.)

Binges—eating alone when no one is watching—are what do in most emotionally addicted eaters. So not only do we need to think/plan ahead for our holidays and vacations, we need to stay ahead of our eating decisions in the quieter times as well, maybe *especially* in the quieter times. I think it is essential to have firm, simple eating plans for those first few weeks after any holiday, or emotional challenge, just as it is essential to have plans for the first few days we arrive home from vacation or traveling, the other most common relief binge event.

Bottom line is that it is okay to be upset, it's okay to be disappointed, let down, rattled or even angry about things that happened, or didn't happen, during special occasions. But for the addicted among us, it is essential that we find ways to respond to those jumbled, mixed feelings that are not food-related. We really need to separate our emotions from our eating choices, and that mostly takes a few years of not doing it.

It mostly takes practice.

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