



Questions to Help Prevent a Binge

Am I hungry at the moment?

Is there a physiological basis for the urge to binge? Have you eaten enough? Could it be that your body is craving food simply because you have purged nutrition from your body through unhealthy weight loss practices such as vomiting, abusing laxatives or exercising?

It is important to eat a regular balanced diet. Many interventions for Bulimia or Binge Eating Disorders ensure that regular mechanical eating is in place before attempting to work through any psychological issues.

Is there something else that I am craving?

If you are not hungry, maybe you are trying to achieve something else by eating. This might include anything- from craving love or attention to coping with stress, or simply killing time.

Ask yourself: How much better will binge eating actually make me feel? Often the answer is not much. This is often because you are actually hungry for something else. It can be helpful to use a thought diary to capture how you are feeling.

Have I remembered why I want to get better?

Many people experience Binge Remorse- shame, guilt, hopelessness- immediately following a binge. Often people vow to never to binge again. However the sensations immediately prior to a binge are quite the opposite. People often experience a sense of excitement, sometimes to the point of dissociation. The fact is that bingeing becomes a practiced coping strategy and motivation to stop a binge is usually very high after a binge and very low beforehand. Needless to say, this makes it difficult to stop at the very time you need to. This being the case, it is important to write down and explore why it is you want to stop bingeing so this information is accessible at that critical moment. Similarly, people often experience difficulty remembering strategies that can be employed at this time- so we recommend having a "binge survival tool kit" where this information is written down also.

If you do binge, don't despair. Consider afterwards what things you could have done differently to prevent the binge from occurring. Do so in a neutral and non-

judgemental manner as this is a learning process: look for lessons rather than mistakes.

☑ Are there thoughts that contribute to or maintain bingeing, which could be restructured?

Common thinking patterns unfold before and during a binge. This often includes thoughts around such as “Here we go again”, “I’ve blown it” and “I will never get better.” Consider whether there is any evidence to support these beliefs... and try to restructure them so they are more realistic or so the feelings are at least partially diffused.

☑ Could I be managing my feelings another way?

Often there are other ways to feel better apart from binge eating. Distraction can be helpful- is there anything else you could be doing? The trick is often to identify some things that are engaging. This might mean something that is emotive, involves deep thought or involves others. Examples other people have found helpful include:

- a movie or good book
- music
- doing something such as origami or knitting
- completing a puzzle or card game with others
- calling a friend to chat or talk about how you are feeling
- go for a walk or do something else you enjoy

Other things can be helpful:

- Calling or talking to someone for support instead. Who are good support people for you?
- Relaxation exercises such as positive visualisation, deep breathing, meditation or progressive muscle relaxation;
- Structured problem solving (if the urge to binge has resulted from something unpleasant or that may have just happened);
- Talking and communicating about your feelings in a clear and assertive manner (if your urge to binge-eat has resulted from a disagreement with someone)

☑ Can I identify/ manage “at risk” times?

For many people, bingeing can be quite predictably mapped in terms of what “triggers” a binge. This might range from eating a “bad” food; to certain social situations such as parties with alcohol; to times/ places eg at home, in the evening, immediately after work/ school.

Binges can be prevented by putting behavioural strategies into place. For example, if you drive home from work via the shops to purchase “binge food”, try to drive home a different route. If a binge morphs from eating a meal, have clear practices after meal such as eating on a plate, sitting down, and followed immediately by a planned activity. If it is when the rest of the family is watching TV, work out how you can remain in view.