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WEIGHT TIPS FOR TEENS

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Is this you?

- You are eating more than your body needs
- You are feeding your feelings with food
- You sneak or steal food, or lie about what or how much you have eaten
- You are embarrassed about your body weight or size
- Your life is limited by your eating or your weight
- Your doctor, parents, partner or friend is concerned about your health because of your weight
- You are being teased, humiliated or hurt because of your weight

GET HELP!

You do not have to do it alone.

Millions of people, young and old, are turning to food to fill an emptiness inside. When we are babies, whether we start on the breast or the bottle, we learn that food is comfort; food is nurturing; food is love; food is life.

If we are in emotional pain, lonely or needing comfort, food often becomes our “quick fix.” When we eat to excess over a long period of time, or when we cannot stop eating, just like with any addiction, we need and deserve help.

1. **Get Your Feelings Out Regularly**

As you witnessed on Oprah's show, anger and other strong feelings are just energy that is trapped in the body. Because we are often afraid to feel our feelings, we keep them bottled up inside and don't intentionally release them in healthy ways. We will often eat food to attempt to numb them out. Eventually they will leak out in destructive ways, and often on the people we love. Emptying our emotions helps relieve the stress and hunger that lives inside of us.

A. For more techniques to help you avoid emotional eating, we encourage you to read the excerpted chapter "What Else?" from our book **Be the Hero**.

B. Create emotional release times. In order to release pent up feelings, schedule regular sessions with a friend, parent, mentor, counselor, life coach or spiritual teacher – someone who is not afraid of feelings whom you can talk to, cry with, yell in front of, and hit pillows.

C. Join a support group. A variety of groups are led by professional counselors, and there are also self-help groups such as at Overeaters Anonymous and Weight Watchers which can be great resources for support. Some support groups are specifically for men, women, teens and so on.

2. **Journal**

Journaling is a great way to be in relationship with yourself. We are so often caught up in our world of numbing out that we are not listening to our inner voices, feelings, and thoughts. Keeping a journal can be very therapeutic. Consider starting your journal entries with "if you really knew me" to increase the likelihood of being more real and vulnerable with yourself.

3. **Use Available Technology**

Emailing, texting or joining social networking sites can be great ways to connect, to get support and to get feelings out – as long as you are "getting real" and not allowing these devices to replace the necessity of human contact. The lead-in sentence "if you really knew me" is a simple, powerful way to connect below the surface on email as well as in person.

4. **Be Physical**

Walk, dance, play sports, swim, do yoga – find an activity you enjoy, and move your body. It is not just good physically, but it also helps emotionally and spiritually as well.

5. Be Proactive About Your Health

See a doctor or a nutritionist, or take fitness or nutrition classes. These are great ways to empower yourself, keep you motivated, and change your life.

6. Practice Loving Yourself

The inner critic in our head is often running the show. Keep a lookout for the voice that rips you down. Replace it with the voice of your inner cheerleader – the one that builds you up. Every day, morning and night, while brushing your teeth, look into your eyes in the mirror and talk to yourself as if you are a loving parent. Compliment yourself. Say out loud things like: I am proud of you; You are beautiful; I love you; You are so strong; You are doing your best ...Even if it feels silly or like a lie...Say it. Keep doing it until you believe it. Nothing about you or your weight has to change in order for you to love yourself. That is the place to start.

7. Feed Your Soul

This can mean finding a spiritual path or practice by going to church, being in nature, praying, meditating, reading a book, listening to music or doing whatever else feeds your soul.

8. Break Eating Habits

Chart your daily habits. This can be in your journal. When do you eat, when don't you eat? When are you unconsciously eating out of habit? Replace the time when you eat in unhealthy ways with something that feeds your heart. Take a class or find a hobby that is fun. If you can, join a gym. It is always nice to do this with a friend or someone you love. These habitual eating times might be the perfect times for support meetings or counseling sessions.

9. Help Someone

Find ways to give to others. Tutor a younger person. Volunteer to help animals, children, elders, or the homeless. Perhaps you can do environmental projects. What are you passionate about? Maybe there is a non-profit organization or a cause near you that will ignite your passion. It is hard for service, depression and destructive behavior to live in the same body. Focus your attention on being in service or helping others.

10. Get a Job

Find a job that does not involve food, ideally something you like doing. No matter what it is, if you are not just sitting at home and watching TV, you are less likely to eat.