

The Emotional Eaters

By Mary Disharoon, MA, LMFT

You can do a better job of managing your unconscious eating when you are able to recognize the different forms it takes in your day-to-day life.

1. **The Comfort Eater:** This part uses food to care for you and help you feel less anxious and more calm and comfortable. Stress and uncomfortable feelings can trigger this eater to come forth, especially when you are alone.
2. **Numbing-Out Eater:** This part uses food to deaden any feelings that are surfacing. It can also prevent you from feeling anything at all, by keeping you constantly numb with over-eating.
3. **The Addict Eater:** This part is in a class of eater all its own. It is powerful, clever and habitual. It has certain foods and beverages that it wants and it doesn't like to be told "No." It's constantly scanning and oftentimes sneaky as it looks for and grabs any opportunity to get its way. It capitalizes on the power of your other emotional eaters and any physical cravings or life situations that might offer an opening for it to get its way.
4. **The Volume Eater:** This part eats and eats large quantities of food. It can also tend to eat fast, and forget what has just been consumed. It also has little to no awareness while it is eating.
5. **The Sweet Eater:** This part loves sweets, and usually prefers sweets to nutritional foods. This can feel like a young part, since the behavior of enjoying sweets and befriending sweets may have started in your childhood.
6. **The Sexual-Protection Eater:** This part wants to cover over your natural beauty with excess weight to protect you from your own attractiveness. It can also overload you with food and weight to cut you off from your own natural sexual appetites.
7. **The Grounding Eater:** This part keeps you grounded with a heavy belly and a heavy body.
8. **The Connecting-with-Other-People Eater:** This part likes you to connect with other people by joining in their eating and drinking so you won't have to feel separated from others by being different.
9. **The Food-as-Friend Eater:** This part forms a relationship with certain foods and drinks to create an experience of being with a friend.

10. **The Nostalgic Eater:** This part helps you hold onto memories of good times in your past that were associated with certain food. By making sure you have the same foods that you enjoyed in your past, it tries to recreate the experiences so you can feel the good feelings.
11. **The Car Eater:** This part enjoys eating in the car, as a driver, a passenger and even when parked.
12. **The Situational Eater:** This part automatically eats in certain situations. You might enter your home and go automatically to the kitchen for a snack. You might watch TV and automatically eat popcorn. You might get a coffee or tea, and automatically eat a cookie with it. You might be ready for bed and automatically eat cereal.
13. **The Secret Eater:** This part likes to stay hidden. It's also known as the Closet Eater. It might be feeling shy or even ashamed to eat in front of others, or it might just enjoy the experience of eating alone without any interruptions.
14. **The Happy Eater:** This part likes a good time to be expanded on, with good food and good drink. The joy of eating meets the happy mood, and the senses are indulged. If you feel good, you want to feel even better. More means better.
15. **The Entitled Eater:** This part thinks it deserves to be able to eat – whatever it wants, whenever it wants it. It tends to step forth when you are dealing with something that is difficult, boring or painful, and reminds you that this suffering entitles you to a reward.
16. **The Scarcity Eater:** This part holds a belief that there won't be enough, so you better eat as much as you can because you may not get another chance. It thinks there may not be enough because someone else might eat it first, or there may not be enough money or time to buy it again, or it might go out of season, or not ever be cooked in this same exact way again.
17. **The Picky Eater:** This part is very particular about what it likes to eat, and may eliminate whole categories of foods that might be healthy yet unappealing to this part.
18. **The Drinking Eater:** This part likes to drink its food, and enjoys milk, juice, coffee, tea, soda, shakes, alcohol and other types of liquids.
19. **The Mindless Eater:** This part eats without any conscious thought of what it is eating, how much, how it tastes, how it makes you feel, etc.
20. **The Why-Try-Anyway Eater:** This part becomes discouraged and eats with abandon when your expectations of yourself, or your life, or of others are unrealized. The unmet achievement might be personal, relational or professional.
21. **The Thrifty Eater:** This part does not like food to be wasted, and will eat, even if you are not hungry or prefer that kind of food, just to make sure it isn't thrown away.

22. **The Indulgent Eater:** This part doesn't like to be limited or restrained. Instead, it likes to be completely open to the full experience of eating, without the encumbrance of should's or have-to's. No need to think about it -- if it feels good, eat it.
23. **The Rebel Eater:** This part does not appreciate any other authority, except its own. It will eat as an act of independence, declaring "No one will be the boss of me!" even if its choices are self-destructive.
24. **The Passionate Eater:** This part finds eating to be a passionate and seductive experience. The enjoyment of good, delicious food can be extremely pleasurable and at times, orgasmic.
25. **The Leave-Life's-Business Eater:** This part uses food so you can get a break from the busyness of your life. It helps you leave, for short periods of time, the stresses of being a parent, of completing a difficult project, of getting through a long tiresome day, etc.
26. **The Favorite Foods Eater:** This part has certain favorite foods that it feels entitled to eat, even if these foods create physical symptoms such as a headache, stomachache or insomnia.
27. **The Intoxicated Eater:** This part comes out when you are in an altered state and causes you to eat mindlessly, whether you're at a cocktail party, or settled into the privacy of your own home.
28. **The Convenience Eater:** This part eats any food that is readily available at work or at home, or food that is fast and easily accessible on the way home.
29. **The Snacking Eater:** This part eats little bits all through the day and evening, right up until bedtime.
30. **The Gourmet Eater:** This part values fine dining, whether it's at home, at a dinner party or at a fine restaurant.
31. **The Fear-of-Hunger Eater:** This part gets anxious and eats whenever it feels pangs of hunger, or when the clock says its time for a meal, or when anticipating being caught without food and how hunger might surface.
32. **The Celebratory Eater:** This part comes out when you celebrate an occasion – holiday, graduation, birthday, anniversary, promotion or funeral.

This list was influenced by the work of Yolanda Koumidou-Vlesmas, LCSW,
who developed the Dieting Know More program.
<http://www.dietingknowmore.com>