

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for April 13, 2020
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, and Healthy Relationships we'll talk about some tips for emotional eating.

I remember having my first apartment on my own in college. As final exams approached each quarter my behaviors would be the same. Rather than study, I'd suddenly get the urge to tidy and clean everything in my small space. And I'd cook and snack, and bake and snack, and buy Little Debbie's and snack. I had very clear signs of an individual that reacts to stress with emotional eating.

One of the things our family has looked forward to over the past few weeks are new videos from the Holderness family on Facebook and YouTube. They often perform parodies of songs that reflect our current social distancing commonalities. I couldn't help but notice a recurring theme recently. As mom helps her kids with their math, she eats. As mom gets overwhelmed by most any other situation, she eats. Another example of emotional eating that I have a feeling many of us can relate to right now.

According to Dr. Sylvia Byrd and Dr. David Buys of Mississippi State University Extension, everyone reacts to stress in his or her own way. There are both positive and negative ways of dealing with stress. Positive responses include participating in an enjoyable hobby or physical activity or joining a virtual support group. Negative responses include substance abuse, overeating or emotional eating, skipping meals, or not eating at all. Negative responses to stress can be detrimental to your health, both physically and mentally.

Maybe you have found yourself turning to comfort foods during the past few weeks. Most of the time these foods are laden with fat, salt and calories. Or they could be foods high in sugar and low in fiber. (Chocolate Peanut Butter Eggs, anyone?) Pat Brinkman, my Extension colleague in Pickaway County, reminds us it is best to avoid those foods because they can increase the development of chronic inflammation in our bodies.

In Brinkman's fact sheet "Eating Healthy During Stressful Times" she explains that high levels of chronic inflammation are believed to cause rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, asthma, reduced kidney function and inflammatory bowel disease. Prolonged chronic inflammation increases our risk of cancer, heart disease, diabetes and other diseases.

So how do we deal with emotional eating? I've heard that some people put a sign on their refrigerator door that reads, "Are you really hungry or just bored?" Here are some ways of resolving less severe problems with emotional eating:

- Substitute other activities for eating when you are not hungry.
- Find a "virtual" support group or accountability partner that you can talk to.
- Choose healthy snacks and meals while avoiding "junk" foods.

Another thing to consider as parents is that we may be guilty of encouraging emotional eating in our children. Parents and caregivers frequently offer favorite foods to children when they are upset to cheer them up. Using food as a coping mechanism can lead to emotional eating later in life. Talking with your children about their problems and the issues they face can help them choose healthier ways of dealing with stress. Another common occurrence is using food as a reward. If a child does something good, the parent offers a favorite food or treat. This can be harmful, because children begin to associate positive events with overindulgence.

I hope you can join me for "Kids in the Kitchen" this week. My children and I air our program at 11:00 AM on Thursdays via Facebook Live. This week we will be checking out recipes from the 4-H Project "Pantry Panic." We will be making stir-fry and a casserole and talking about how to creatively utilize the foods that you have on hand.

There are a few ways that you can watch our show. You can watch our recorded episodes on our Facebook page "OSU Extension Coshocton County" any time. Or if you are not a Facebook person, just head to our website, coshocton.osu.edu, and you can watch all our videos and see all our recipes.

Remember: Call friends and family to check-in on how they are doing. Get outside and enjoy the sunshine when it is around, even if that means bundling up a little bit this week. Keep cooking. Keep cleaning. Keep learning. Keep living. Be sure to check out coshocton.osu.edu for resources about healthy living and healthy finances. Today I'll leave you with this quote from John Wooden, "Don't let what you can't do stop you from doing what you can do."

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!