

# 17 ways not to eat because of boredom

It's amazing what boredom can do to your weight loss plan. You're driven by motivation and determination when you're busy, but the minute you've got some downtime, it all goes down the tubes.

You're not alone. But you're also not destined to have your efforts overruled by extra time. According to Dr. Cynthia G. Last, a Boca Raton, Florida, clinical psychologist and author of *The 5 Reasons We Overeat* (Birch Lane Press, 1999), the trick is *really* understanding your triggers.

"Boredom that never feels like it goes away," says Last, "might be part of a depression." If you think that's the case for you, ask yourself what's really wrong, and why you're using food to feel better. Talk to friends and family. And ask your doctor for help.

"But if your plans are thrown off track by occasional boredom eating, it's probably a habit. Or something you're just used to doing as a pleasurable activity."

Or, says Samantha Heller, MS, RD, senior clinical nutritionist at the New York University, eating when you're bored might actually be a sign of stress – you feel like you have so many things to do that you're avoiding all of them, and are bored because of it.

"If you understand your triggers," says Heller, "you're better able to control how you behave when they happen." Make self-analysis your first step toward beating boredom eating.

## Make a Plan of Attack

Whatever's behind your boredom eating, your second step is to come up with a plan. Try this:

**1. Analyze your pattern.** When does boredom eating usually become a problem for you? Mid-week? Evening? If you know when it's most likely to strike, you'll be better prepared for the battle.

**2. Come up with alternates.** Know ahead of time what you'll do instead of eating the next time you're bored. "On an index card, make a list of alternate activities," says Last. "Have the list with you at all times, so you can take it out when you need it."

Make sure your list is full of fulfilling things you *like* to do (a list of boring activities won't help). And try to include a variety of things that will suit different moods and times of day. Be sure to add a few items that will help you toward your weight goal, too. Here are some ideas to get you started:

*If you have 10 minutes:*

- Journal the foods you've eaten so far today.
- Make a grocery list of healthy foods.
- Schedule your next exercise session.
- Make a pot of herbal tea.
- Shop online for a beautiful new dress.

*If you have 30 minutes:*

- Go for a walk.
- Look through past weeks in your Journal. Check out weeks that worked, and see if there's anything you did then that you can do again this week.

- Check out the [message boards](#) in the WeightWatchers.com
- If you have a buddy on the plan, too, call or email and see how he or she is doing.
- Write a personal page in your journal. How do you feel about your weight loss so far? What can't you wait to accomplish?
- Read some of a favorite book.

*If you have an hour or more:*

- Look through healthy recipe ideas.
- Clean out your closets. Throw away clothes that are now too big, or donate them to charity.
- Go for a long bike ride.
- Start a craft project. Needlepoint or decoupage will keep your hands busy, and you'll have something to show for it in the end.
- Take your kids to the park.
- Go to a Weight Watchers Meeting.

### **Next Steps**

Figuring out when boredom-eating attacks happen will help.

**Subscriber Highlight:** Focus on your overall progress and not just the number on the scale.