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How Can I Avoid Holiday Over-Eating?

Turkey, stuffing, cookies, candy canes, fruitcake...there are so many eating opportunities during the holiday season that it's easy to imagine becoming a "blimp" by spring. To determine if you're eating problematically, ask yourself a few questions: Do you know what you're eating when you're eating it, or are you just scarfing things down? Are you eating to please others ("I don't want to hurt Mom's feelings...")? Most importantly, are you eating to deal with your feelings?

Eating without thinking, and eating when you're not really hungry are signs of brewing trouble (and excess pounds). During the holidays, it would certainly be cruel to deprive ourselves of enjoying all the wonderful foods surrounding us, but it's important to be sure that we are enjoying them. As you progress from party to party, keep a few things in mind:

- Don't eat while you're talking. Wait for a break in the conversation so you can concentrate on the food's flavor, texture and aroma.
- If you feel you need to eat because of an emotion, first figure out what type of food you're in search of – crunch and violent, soft and soothing, cold and perky, warm and filling, etc. Then go straight for that – don't eat everything in the house until you hit on the correct "emotion food." Finally, only eat enough to quell the urge. When you feel better stop.
- If you want to taste everything, limit yourself to small bites; you're looking for experiences, not calories.
- Save your appetite for what you like best. Don't fill up on turkey if you know you want two slices of pie.
- Don't let yourself get over-hungry. If you do, you can wind up stuffing yourself way beyond the point of being full, and taking in more calories than if you'd eaten properly.

Remember, don't try to deny yourself life's pleasures. Most of us rebel and take twice as much of that which we're told we can't have. Instead, let yourself enjoy the holidays – sensibly.

Talk to someone who can help. If you would like the name of a qualified psychologist in your area, please try our Psychologist Locator.