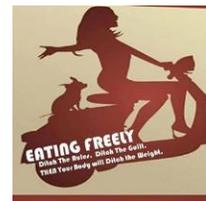


# Breaking The Cycle of Emotional and Binge Eating

## Getting Started – What’s The Problem?



## A short note from the author



First of all, hello there, and congratulations on downloading this book. You have taken a positive step towards understanding your Emotional Eating better, and I know this book will be helpful to you. It may also be a bit scary! But that's ok, it means you are pushing yourself a little bit out of your comfort zone, and that's what we must do in order to bring about change.

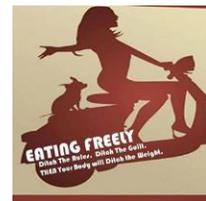
As a Psychotherapist and Eating Disorders Specialist, I've worked with many clients, mostly female, but some male, and the one issue that bothered me more than any other in working with this group of clients was the amount of time they had spent struggling with Emotional Eating, Binge Eating and even Bulimia in complete secret, isolated and ashamed of their behavior, yet unable to reach out and ask for the help they so desperately needed.

In response to this recurring problem, I developed my first online program, based on the sessions of my live groups which I had run in my centre in Dublin, Ireland for over three years.

Since we launched that first program in mid-2012, we have had purchasers from as far away as Australia and New Zealand, as well as the USA, Canada and of course Ireland and the UK. This told us that our hunch was correct, and that there IS a gap in the range of services available to adults struggling with food and body image for a support that provides more than just information, but is less scary than making an appointment with a Counsellor. Since then we've gone on to devise other ways for sufferers to get the help they need, online or in person, all based on feedback from clients.

I hope you find this book informative, thought provoking and just scary enough to help you feel you are finally beginning to take back control of your life, and breaking free from Emotional Eating.

Warmly, Emma



## Getting Started - What's the Problem?

This book focuses on an exercise called “My Problem Is...” because many times, clients come to a Counsellor for help, and they are not even sure what the real problem is. When you have struggled with Bulimia or Binge Eating Disorder for many years, it can be difficult to see any other problem – the eating disorder IS the problem. But is it really?

In fact, once we look beyond the negative and upsetting behaviors – bingeing, purging, restricting food, over-exercising, and some of the obvious consequences of the behaviors such as health issues, we can begin to see how deeply a disordered relationship with food can impact on many areas of daily life.

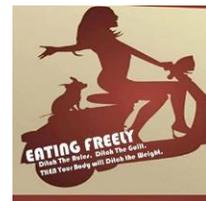
The reason for doing this is not to frighten you, or to send you into a deep depression, but rather to challenge the part of you that regularly tries to deny that it is a big problem. Approaching any issue from a ‘solution focused’ perspective, needs to focus first on what the problem or problems are, so that we can then come up with solutions. As Carl Rogers, a famous Psychotherapist once said “When I accept myself as I truly am, then I can change”. So I’m going to walk you through a series of exercises now, designed to help you begin to identify the real problem, and then find better potential solutions. You’ll need some post its or a sheet of paper and a pen for one of the exercises.

### Exercise 1

So, here’s an initial exercise for you to try, based on a very common ‘False Belief’ that many clients have.

Q: How many times a week, a month or a year, do you think **\*“If I can just eat ‘healthily’, stop eating junk food and exercise regularly, I’ll be fine”**?

Using this Problem, or your own ‘Problem Statement’ which could be “I have no willpower”, or “I’m so weak, I never stick to anything”, or whatever statement sums up your own personal problem or block to overcoming your Emotional Eating, I invite you now to complete Exercise 1. Writing is very therapeutic, so if you can, print off the exercise sheets and do them the old fashioned way, with a pen. You’ll also need some paper and if you have post its, they’ll help later.



**Exercise No.1 - Sample:**

**My Problem Is:** *I never Stick to Anything, I have no discipline.*

**My Solution is:** *To go on another diet, stop bingeing, exercise regularly and stick to it all this time.*

**Q: How long have you been trying to make this particular solution work for you?**

*Since college, that is when I began worrying about my weight, so about 12 years now.*

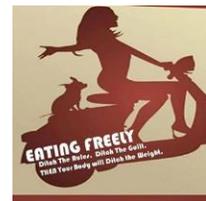
**Q: Has it worked?**

*No!*

In the box below, write down how long you have spent trying to make this ‘solution’ work for you. Then write down the longest period of success you have had, and the shortest. The shortest period may be a regularly recurring ‘short’ period, for example it might be an hour on a Monday morning! The final box is “How often does this happen?” and you write how often you have both your long periods of success, and your short periods of success in the final box. There is an example in bold in the box to help.

**EXAMPLE**

No. of Years Trying	Longest Period of Success	Shortest Period of Success	How Often?
<b>12</b>	<b>1 year</b>	<b>An Hour</b>	<b>Once, when I was living abroad</b> <b>3-4 times a week</b>



## Your Turn! Exercise No.1

My Problem Is: \_\_\_\_\_

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My Usual Solution Is: \_\_\_\_\_

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Q: How long have you been trying to make this particular solution work for you?

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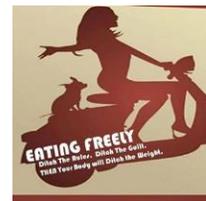
Q: Has it worked?

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In the box below, write down how long you have spent trying to make this 'solution' work for you. Then write down the longest period of success you have had, and the shortest. Follow the example in the Sample Exercise Page.

No. of Years Trying	Longest Period of Success	Shortest Period of Success	How Often?



## After the Exercise : Understanding the REAL Problem

I wonder how you feel having completed this exercise, and if your understanding of what the problem is has changed at all?

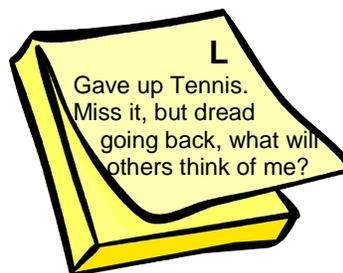
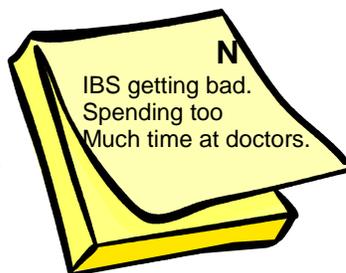
Even if you DO still believe that your willpower, or lack of strength, is the problem, how is your repeated 'solution' working out for you? If you are reading this book, then I have to guess not very well. And if you can accept that it might be time to do something differently, then read on.

### EXERCISE 2

Exercise Sheet 2 is called **The Balloon Model**. You can see that the model suggests that a disordered relationship with food can impact on all the following areas:

Activity/exercise	Lifestyle	Relationships
Physiology	Emotional Eating	Attitudes
Body Image	Food Meanings	Self
Lapse	Motivation	Nutrition

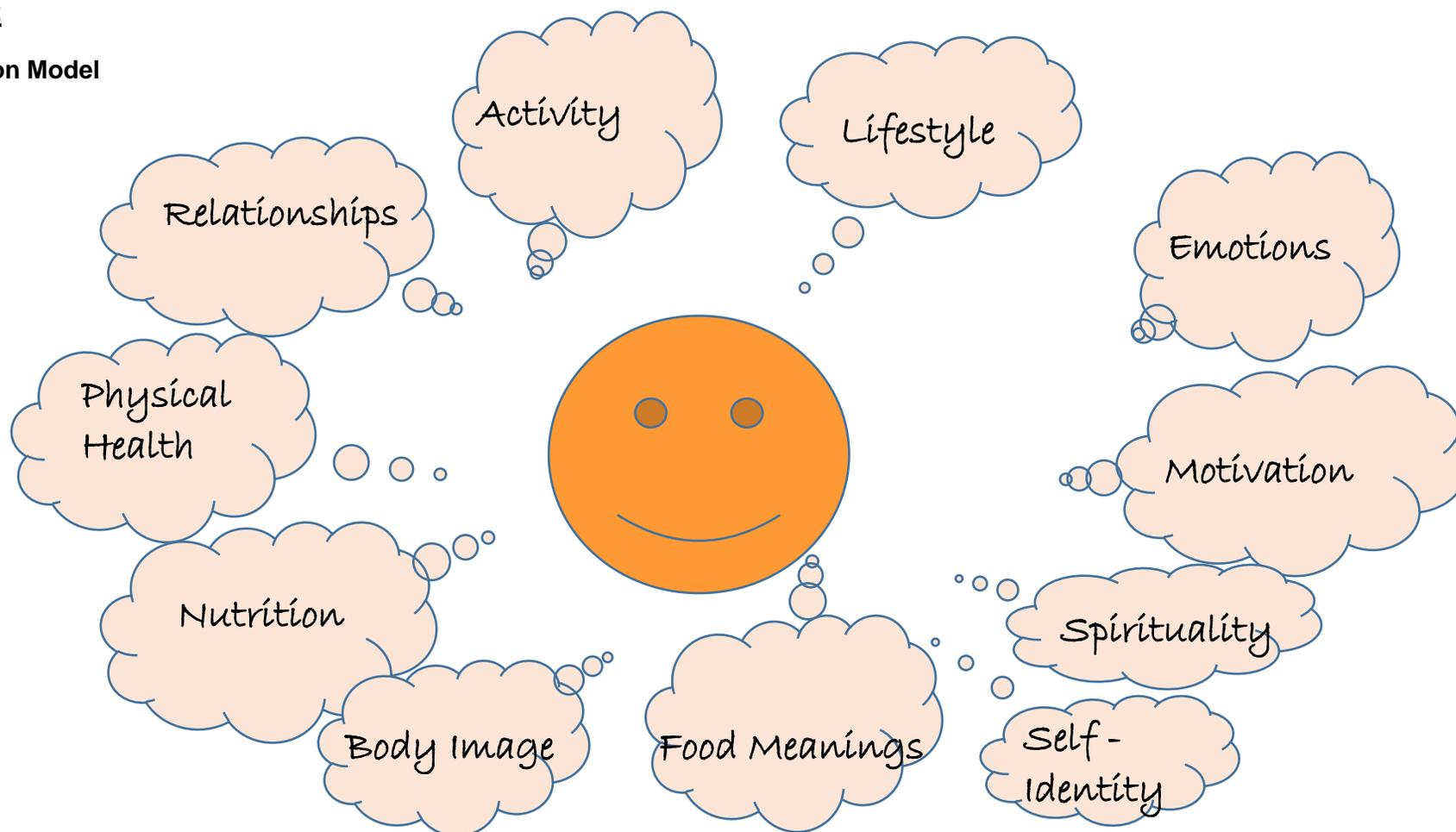
Take a few minutes to look at this model, and then using your post its or sheet of paper, write down the impact your relationship with food and or your weight or body image is having on three areas of your life – **Relationships, Nutrition and Lifestyle**. Don't overthink it, just write down everything that comes into your head, each point on an individual post it. You can mark each post it with an R, N or L depending on which heading it fits under.





## Exercise 2

### The Balloon Model



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Now, when you have written all your post its, use the table below to stick all the relevant post

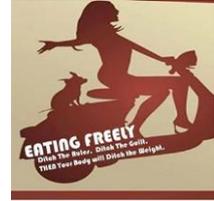
<b>Nutrition</b>	
<b>Relationships</b>	
<b>Lifestyle</b>	

its into the relevant rows below, even if you had some of them under another heading.

Which category is the most crowded with post its?

How do you feel about what you see?

Does this help you to understand the far-reaching effects of your relationship with food, in a way you did not really understand before? You might want to use another “My Problem Is...” Sheet again now, and work through what you now see as the primary problem, based on your table above.



## Extra Activity

There are two reasons we focus on these three areas over the others:

1. They are the areas that are most affected by a dysfunctional relationship with food, so bringing about changes in a) any, or b) each of these three areas can make a significant difference in your day to day life;

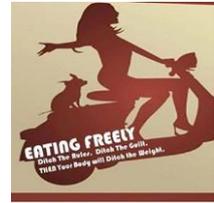
2. We can only do so much within the restrictions of a short free book, so I try to prioritise what I hear repeatedly are the most important areas to change for clients, within an initial short time frame. This can make the difference between a client keeping going, or giving up.

So the goal of this entire exercise is to:

**Help you to focus on the first key area you need to tackle in order to bring about positive change – and it may not be about food or exercise in the initial stages.**

**1. Work on Food/Nutrition** - If most of your post its are about nutrition/food, you can choose to make positive and effective changes to your daily eating as your first step, but that does NOT mean going on another diet. It may mean going to a Registered Nutritional Therapist and getting professional help, or it may mean committing to NOT diet, but instead commit to eating nutritionally dense, healthy meals and snacks instead of cycling through restriction and bingeing. There is a webinar available to watch on my website in this regard, watch it to learn about the science on this! It's a fantastic additional resource for you to have and learn from.

**2. Work on relationships in your life** – Eating Disorders can be very isolating and we tend to withdraw a lot from those close to us. If you can see that your relationship with food is impacting your relationships with others by the number of post its in this column, then commit to making changes right now that will help you to reconnect with one or two people in your life whom you are close to, and can trust. Commit to going out with a group of friends you have consistently cancelled on recently, or ring someone you haven't met for a long time and arrange to have a coffee or a walk. Ask your mum or dad to have coffee or meet you for lunch. Whatever it is you need to do to re-activate or improve a connection, just identify one thing you CAN do, and then do it.



**3. Lifestyle Changes** - However, you may decide on the number of post its in this column that a lifestyle change might be best to start with, and this can be less daunting or threatening than thinking about changing your relationship with food, or working on your relationships with other people, and that's ok. Lifestyle changes can include commitments to cut back on alcohol, or to say yes and go out more, or start a weekly class that you've had on the long finger. It could be something as practical as beginning to look for a new job. Whatever it is, just picking something and **DOING** it will change your perspective and your energy, and will have a ripple effect on other areas.

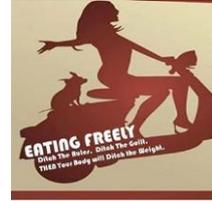
Even if you are just reading through this book for now, it really helps to take a few days to let this exercise sink in, and by using a journal to record your thoughts and feelings, as well as reading the Supplementary Reading attached at the end. You may feel differently in a few days' time, compared to what you might have experienced as your gut reaction after the first read. So your final task now is to answer the questions below, and I invite you then to come back to this book in 4-5 days time and re-read the book, then re-answer the questions below, and compare your two sets of responses. It may be helpful to re-watch the webinar too.

### **Conclusion**

Using your journal or sheet of paper, ask and answer the following questions:

- What did you **think** of this exercise?
- How did you **feel** when doing this exercise?
- What is it like for you to read your list and what you have written about yourself?
- What impact is it having on you now?
- If you are feeling negative right now, what do you need to do for yourself for the rest of, and after, this session to deal with that feeling?

I recommend after this chapter that you put this workbook away, and take some time to simply sit, and breathe. \*If you use a meditation, mindfulness or relaxation App, now is a good time to use it. Then get up from your chair and go and do something else, away from your PC or device, for at least 30 minutes, to give yourself a chance to process the information from this session.



## NEXT STEPS

If you found this e-book helpful, despite it being challenging or scary too, then you may feel that how I work, might work for you. If you do feel you would like to work with me, I am inviting you to schedule a complimentary Online Breakthrough Session with me. Click here to book your consultation at a time that suits you.

<https://onlineappointmentemmamurphy.acuityscheduling.com/schedule.php?appointmentType=1891405>

### So, what is the Online Breakthrough Session all about?

We'll work together to get crystal clear on:

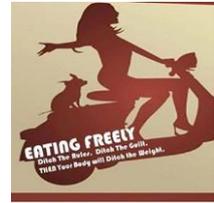
1. What you really want your relationship with food and your body to feel like;
2. How you want to feel about yourself in 12 months time;
3. What is holding you back and, in particular, what self-sabotaging behaviours are getting in the way of you getting on with your life;
4. What steps we can take to map out your pathways from here to there;

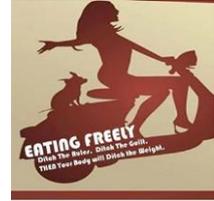
At the end of the call, if you are interested in learning more about working with me through my one to one 12 Week CBT and Nutritional Rehabilitation Program, we can talk about that too. You'll find more information about this program here:

<http://www.eatingdisorderecovery.com/online-counselling/>

Once again, thanks for taking the time to download this eBook which I hope you found helpful. Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries or questions, and please see below here your supplementary reading for the eBook.

Warm Regards,  
Emma Murphy MIACP





### **Supplementary Reading - The Diet Conspiracy**

Conspiracy theorists love to pick apart the JFK assassination, the crack epidemic in American cities, or the role of the bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms in the Oklahoma City bombing. Maybe next they should turn their suspicions to the American dieting industry. There isn't actually a conspiracy to keep American women focused on a self-defeating ritual of starvation in pursuit of an unattainable ideal of extreme thinness, but there may as well be. American women spend inordinate amounts of money and time trying to lose weight, that, physiologically, they probably can't and shouldn't lose.

Ideal body shape has of course changed over the course of history – put a picture of Marilyn Monroe next to one of Calista Flockhart and Marilyn looks decidedly plump – but the idea that we can work to change our basic body shape one way or another has persisted. Science shows, however, that our ideal body weight (which has little to do with a Hollywood-derived cultural ideal) is somehow “wired in” to our genetics and physiologies, and there is little we can do to change that.

Our culture tends to despise heavy people for their perceived lack of control over their eating habits. The cultural myth depicts overweight people as compulsive eaters who never exercise and who somehow have brought their “fatness” on themselves. In reality, studies reveal that fat people tend to eat about the same amount as thin people; fat people simply have a higher internal “set point” than thin people.

“Set point” is a term popularized by William Bennett and Jel Gurin in their book “The Dieter’s Dilemma” (Basic Books 1982). Their analysis, which has since been augmented by other studies, shows that the body monitors the amount of fat reserves it has, increasing or decreasing metabolism (the burning of fat and calories) as needed to maintain that amount of fat. For example; a 5'4” woman weight 145 pounds. She loses 20 pounds on an eight-week weight loss diet, greatly reducing her fat and overall food intake. She weighs 125 pounds but is often irritable and tired. Over a period of six months, she replaces the lost 20 pounds. Her body has slowed her metabolism to stabilize itself at her set point, despite all her effort.

Bennett and Gurin cite a number of studies which indicate that as the body monitors fat stores, it produces signals of hunger or satiety to keep those stores constant. Research with a variety



of populations – conscientious objectors during World War II, prison inmates who volunteered as subjects, military recruits and volunteers on a liquid diet – all show that the subjects had trouble both losing and gaining weight. In all four populations, subjects reported emotional and mental distress when they forced themselves to gain or lose large amounts (30-50 pounds) of weight. After the studies ended, most subjects’ set point re-regulated the body, and the subjects returned to the pre-study weights.

The “trick” to real weight loss, then, is to reset the thermostat, to reconfigure the set point. While no one is quite sure how to change the set point, most doctors agree that increased exercise over an extended period of time will effect some sort of permanent increase in metabolic levels. For example, while people have thought that it is inevitable to gain weight with age, physiologists now posit that as people age, they exercise less, and their metabolic rate decreases. The amount of exercise and the length of time needed to effect such a change obviously vary from individual to individual, but it would be wise to listen to health counsellors who talk of a “lifestyle change”. A life style change means that we cannot view exercise as a temporary measure that is a component of a temporary weight-loss diet; we must see it as an integral part of our lives.

Popular culture has resisted acceptance of set point theory, possibly because in some way it seems un-American. Our country was built by exploration, hard work, sacrifice, and determination. To be told that there is something we *cannot* change, no matter how “hard” we work, is unacceptable to the American myth of self-creation and self-improvement.

But the set point is not a well known, everyday concept for another, more insidious reason. If women accepted their body weights and shapes as normal and physiologically inevitable, then women’s magazines would lose much of their editorial and advertising content. Women would not read “lose five pounds the week before Christmas” and would not buy diet pills. They would not read “Toning for a Smooth View from Behind” before going out to buy cellulite reduction cream. They would have time, money and energy spent now on dieting to devote to their careers, their educations, their families and their friends and themselves. They could write, draw, paint, hike, swim, play.

Maybe it is a conspiracy after all.

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