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# Overcoming Binge Eating

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**DUMMIES®**  
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## **Learn to:**

- Recognize the difference between emotional hunger and physical hunger
- Stick to practical and healthy eating habits
- Finally! Discover answers to not only how but why

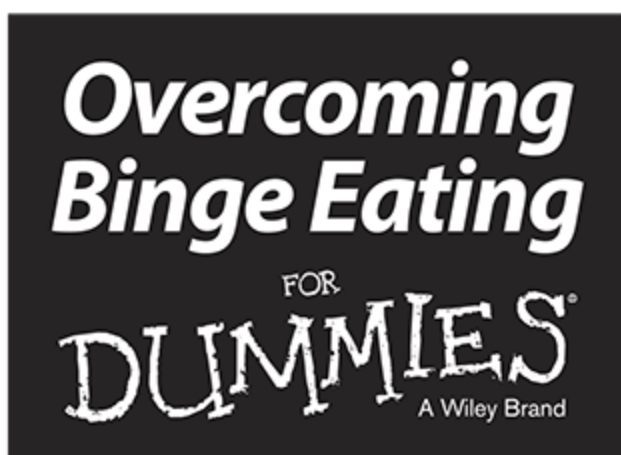
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DUMMIES<sup>®</sup>  
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## **Overcoming Binge Eating For Dummies®**

Published by: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com)

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2013942772

ISBN 978-1-118-55087-8 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-118-55090-8 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-55092-2 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-55093-9 (ebk)

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# Overcoming Binge Eating For Dummies®

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# Introduction

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Do you eat when you feel stressed, sad, or angry? Do you sometimes follow strict diets only to find yourself out of control with food when you return to “normal” eating patterns? Do certain foods or situations inevitably set off an unstoppable urge to eat? Has the quantity of food you eat had a negative impact on your health? Do you feel desperate and hopeless after an eating binge? Have you ever wondered whether you have a problem with binge eating?

If you answered “yes” to any or all of these questions, you’re reading the right book. Whether you’re just starting to realize that there’s a problem or have known it for a while, the information, ideas, and strategies we provide can help get you started on the road to healing and sustainable recovery from binge eating or any other type of overeating. This book is your road map to systematically but gently identify and change the feelings and behaviors that drive your binge eating.

If you identify yourself as a binge eater, you may be ready to take action today. But even if you don’t feel that your habits completely fit with what’s described as binge eating disorder, you can still benefit from these strategies as you address why you eat for reasons other than physical hunger. No matter where you are in your journey, this book can help you improve your health and well-being.

Depending on the severity of your struggles with food and eating, you may frequently recognize yourself (or someone you love) and your behaviors during the course of reading this book. Perhaps you’ve been formally diagnosed with binge eating disorder or self-diagnosed

as an emotional eater. Left unchecked and untreated, disordered eating of any kind worsens over time, and the habits and behaviors become that much more entrenched. The sooner you seek support, the better.

Hopefully, it's heartening to know that you don't have to go it alone — we'll be with you every step of the way as you begin to understand binge eating and exactly what to do about it. We hope that this book is just what you need to finally make a difference in your physical and emotional well-being. You may use it as a jumping-off point for seeking professional help in a more informed way. With compassion towards yourself and a deeper understanding of the fact that binge eating didn't develop overnight and will take some time to change, you can achieve sustainable results.

## ***About This Book***

Although binge eating disorder (BED) has been understood and treated by professionals for some time now, the publication of this book coincides with the first formal inclusion of the diagnosis BED in the *DSM-V* (fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*), which is used for all psychiatric diagnoses. Recognizing binge eating disorder as a diagnosable condition alongside other eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa represents an important shift in the understanding and treatment of binge eating.

To get the most out of this book, you don't need to start at the beginning and read straight through, although reading the entire book, in whatever order you choose, will certainly benefit you in the long run. Put another way, like a good meal, take what you want and leave the rest. In fact, you often see us use food metaphors in

discussing various aspects of the disorder because attitudes about food and eating extend to most other areas of life including money and relationships. That may sound strange, but as you read through, you'll undoubtedly make the connections.

Also feel free to skip sidebars and anything marked with a Technical Stuff icon. We've written them to enhance and deepen the material in each chapter, but they're not essential to understanding what you need to know.

It's useful to note that each chapter and section stand alone, so if you prefer, you can begin wherever you like, picking and choosing what's most helpful to you in learning about and reframing your long-held views and reflexive responses to food and emotions. You may even want to revisit certain sections repeatedly in order to more fully grasp new concepts, strategies, and practical ideas in a way that works for you.

Within this book, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and want to visit one of these web pages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, as if the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading this as an e-book, you've got it made — just click the web address to be taken directly to the recommended web page.

## ***Foolish Assumptions***

If you picked up this book, we assume that you fit into at least one of the following categories:

✓ **You're a binge eater, or you suspect you may be.**

Healing and recovering from an eating disorder of any kind doesn't happen overnight even if you'd like that to be the case. Whether you're at the beginning of the

journey and just realizing that you may have a problem or a bit farther down the path and looking for further motivation and resources, you'll find what you need in this book.

- ✓ **You love someone who's a binge eater.** Watching someone you love struggle with binge eating in its various forms can be extremely difficult. We wrote this book not only for people struggling with binge eating, compulsive overeating, or emotional eating but also for loved ones affected by someone else's disordered eating.
- ✓ **You're a professional who treats people who suffer from disordered eating or related issues and conditions.** Perhaps you treat people with all kinds of eating disorders, related psychological conditions, and/or the physical consequences that may result. Of course you know your stuff, but this book offers a quick, practical, and layman-friendly reference guide that you and your patients can use together.

## ***Icons Used in This Book***

Throughout the book, we use icons in the margins to call special attention to certain paragraphs. Keep an eye out for the following symbols.



This book is chock full of practical information you can use now and in the future. When we use a tip icon, we're highlighting a specific idea or technique we've found particularly useful for almost everyone we've treated over the years.





We cover a lot of ground in this book, but what we know about eating disorders and how to treat them often stems from a few key ideas and philosophies. When you see a remember icon, we're either reminding you of something we've written about before or stressing how important it is to keep one of these central ideas in mind as you read.



Eating disorders can have a long-term impact on your psychological and physical health. When we use a warning icon, we want you to take into account that your well-being is your top priority as well as ours.



Dealing with binge eating encompasses many different subjects: medicine, psychology/behavior, physiology, nutrition, cultural awareness, and more. Sometimes we delve more deeply into these areas, and we label that exploration with a technical stuff icon. You don't have to read those paragraphs to get the big picture of a section or chapter, but you certainly may want to if you're seeking more in-depth information.

## ***Beyond the Book***

In addition to the material in the print or e-book you're reading right now, this book comes with an eCheat Sheet you can access on the web anywhere, anytime at [www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/overcomingbingeeating](http://www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/overcomingbingeeating). The articles there address a range of binge-eating tips:

- ✓ Don't know where to start or need a reminder of how to eat a healthy, satisfying diet that will sustain you both mentally and physically? Check out ten ideas for eating healthfully.
- ✓ Even though it may be uncomfortable to think about, binge eating poses serious short- and long-term risks to your health. For an idea of what you need to be on the lookout for, we include a list of the most significant medical risks.
- ✓ If you're reading this book because you have a friend or loved one who suffers from binge eating, we offer tips to help you stay on the right track in your efforts to support someone else's recovery from disordered eating.
- ✓ Perhaps you're struggling with the urge to binge right now. Take this list of alternate activities with you everywhere and turn to them when you need ideas for something you can do to distract yourself that's meaningful and engaging, not just a time-filler.

## ***Where to Go from Here***

You can start wherever you like in *Overcoming Binge Eating For Dummies*; you don't have to begin with [Chapter 1](#) and read straight through to get the information you need to understand and begin to recover from binge eating. For example, if you're interested in sampling a smorgasbord of the treatments out there, skip to [Chapter 10](#) to get a sense of all your options. If you're looking for motivation, Chapters [7](#) and [9](#) are good starting places. If you want to dive right into nutrition, [Chapter 12](#) has lots of tools and tips for meal planning and coping skills for dealing with food. And if you're the friend or family member of someone who binges,

[Chapter 21](#) is the first in a series of chapters about how to help someone you love get better.

## Part I

# **Binge Eating Disorder: What It Is and What It Isn't**





Visit [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) for great Dummies content online.

## *In this part . . .*

- ✓ Identify the components of binge eating disorder (BED) and other eating disorders. Distinguish BED from compulsive overeating, emotional overeating, and the nervosas — anorexia and bulimia.
- ✓ Look into possible reasons for developing an eating disorder. Heredity and environment both play a role in the emergence of many eating disorders.
- ✓ Realize that BED is an addiction recognized by the American Psychiatric Association with a variety of effective treatment methods.
- ✓ Understand that BED and other disordered eating habits result in both physical and psychological ailments. In the same vein, existing physical and emotional disorders may contribute to the development of eating disorders.