

Eat when you're hungry

A short book about eating because you're bored, sad or stressed, and finding the feeling still there afterwards

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First edition

Written by AI with human guidance. It can contain mistakes, which later editions correct.

Contents

1. Before you start
2. Wednesday, ten to four
3. Why eating the feeling seems sensible
4. "I'm an emotional eater"
5. "Food calms me down"
6. "I'm stressed, I need something"
7. "I'm just bored"
8. "It's the only comfort I've got"
9. "But I really am hungry"
10. "It's the only break I get"
11. "I can't just sit there feeling it"
12. "Well, the day's ruined now"
13. "I'll be good from Monday"
14. "The kitchen's right there"
15. What the visits cost
16. Naming the feeling
17. Answering the feeling
18. The ten minutes
19. Eating when you are hungry
20. The decision
21. Evenings, hormones, offers and the times it's out of control

22. Wednesday again

23. Notes

Before you start

This is a short book and you can read it in two or three sittings. It's about one habit. Something happens, or nothing happens, and you find yourself in the kitchen. You weren't hungry. You eat something, standing up, fairly fast, and go back to whatever it was. The thing that sent you there is still there. Now you're also a bit full, and a bit disappointed in yourself, and at some point later in the day you'll do it again.

I'm going to argue three things. The first is that this makes sense from the inside. Food is close, quick, private and pleasant, and for about as long as it takes to eat it, it does take the edge off. The second is that it can't do the job you've given it. A feeling has its own causes and its own clock, and a plate of cheese and crackers touches neither. What you get is a short break with a snack attached, and you could have had the break without the snack. The third is practical. When you want to eat and you're not hungry, you stop for long enough to name what you're feeling, and then you answer that instead. When you are hungry, you eat. Chapters 15 to 19 cover how.

This book doesn't say that food shouldn't be enjoyed, that any food is bad, or that you should eat less. It isn't a diet, and it makes no promise about your weight. It never asks you to go hungry, and it says more than once that when you're hungry the right thing to do is eat.

Four cautions.

If you regularly eat a large amount of food in a short time and feel unable to stop, often alone, often fast, and feel disgusted or ashamed afterwards, that may be binge eating disorder. The NHS advises seeing a GP as soon as you can, and says it's a serious condition that most people recover from with the right treatment. You can also ring the eating disorders charity Beat. This book isn't a treatment for it, and chapter 20 says more.

If you have, or have had, any eating disorder, including restricting what you eat or making yourself sick, talk to whoever treats you before applying anything here. The advice in this book assumes a person who eats regular meals and wants to stop the extra visits, and it may not suit you.

If the feeling that keeps sending you to the kitchen is low mood, and it's been there most of the day for a couple of weeks or more, that may be depression. See a GP. The habit may still be worth working on, but not instead of that.

And if you take medicines that change your appetite, or have a condition such as diabetes that needs a particular pattern of eating, nothing here overrides what you've been told by the people treating you.

The notes at the back give my sources and their limits. Where I'm giving my own reasoning and not a finding, I'll say so.

Wednesday, ten to four

It's ten to four on a Wednesday afternoon. You're working at the kitchen table, as you do two days a week, and an email has come in from a client. It's polite and it's unhappy, and it asks why something wasn't done that you thought had been. You read it twice. Your stomach tightens. You start a reply and stop.

Then you're at the fridge. You didn't decide to go there. You cut a few slices of cheese and eat them with crackers, standing at the worktop, looking at nothing. It takes about four minutes. You have a couple more crackers because the packet's open. You go back to the table.

The email is still there. It's exactly as unhappy as it was. You still don't know how to answer it. The only things that have changed are that it's five to four, you're slightly full, and there's a small extra weight in your chest that wasn't there before, which is the knowledge that you've done it again.

At half past nine that evening you're on the sofa. Your partner's out. There's nothing you want to watch. You're not hungry, you had dinner at seven, and you're in the kitchen with a bag of crisps. On Sunday afternoon, after a phone call with your mother that went the way those calls go, it was toast and peanut butter, two rounds, eaten at the counter with the phone still warm in your other hand.

None of this is a great deal of food. It's not a binge. It's a handful of visits a day, and they have a pattern. Something is felt. Food follows. The feeling stays. You've been trying to stop for years,

mostly by trying to have more willpower, and it hasn't worked, which is one of the things you feel bad about while eating.

I'll use a few terms throughout. **Hunger** is the body's need for food. It builds slowly, it's felt low down, and it'll accept most things. **The pull** is the wish to eat when there's no hunger. It comes on fast, it's felt in the mouth and the head, and it usually wants one thing. **The feeling** is what's actually there when the pull arrives. On Wednesday it was dread about the email. In the evening it was boredom. On Sunday it was something between sadness and anger. **The visit** is the trip to the kitchen and what's eaten there. **The after** is what you feel when the visit's over, which is the feeling you started with, plus fullness, plus a verdict on yourself. And **the ask** is the question this book will put in the gap between the pull and the visit, which is "What's actually going on?"

The habit has some regular features. This list is my own observation and not a research finding.

You're not hungry. You often know it at the time.

It's fast, it's standing up, and it's not really tasted. If you sat down with the same cheese and crackers and a plate, it would be a different event.

It wants particular things. Nobody goes to the fridge in a state of dread and eats a raw carrot.

The feeling is still there afterwards. This is the thing to notice above all. The visit was meant to do something about it and didn't.

And the after is worse than the feeling was. You went in with dread and came out with dread and self-disgust, and the second is harder to bear than the first.

Try one thing before reading on, and don't change anything yet. For a week, each time you find yourself eating outside a meal, write down three things. What you ate, how hungry you were out of ten, and what you were feeling in the minute before. If you don't know the feeling, write "don't know". At the end of the week look at the hunger column.

Why eating the feeling seems sensible

I don't want to start by telling you that food isn't the answer. You know that, and you've told yourself so on every visit for years. It hasn't helped, because the habit isn't stupid. There are real reasons for it, and they deserve stating before anything is said against them.

Food is there. It's the one comfort in the house that's always in stock, needs no one else, and costs nothing at the moment of use. A friend might be busy. A walk needs a coat. The fridge is eight steps away.

It works, briefly. The first mouthful of something salty or sweet when you're wound up is a real pleasure, and for the minute or two of eating, the email is somewhere else. You aren't imagining that. Chapter 4 will look at how long it lasts.

It's private. Nobody has to know you were struggling. You didn't ring anyone in tears. You ate some crackers.

It's a break that doesn't look like one. Standing at the fridge is allowed in a way that sitting on the sofa at ten to four doing nothing isn't. The visit gives you permission to stop for four minutes.

It was how comfort came when you were small. Many people were given something nice to eat when they'd fallen over or been upset. It was kindly meant, and it taught a link that's still there.

And it feels like doing something. When a feeling arrives and there's nothing obvious to do about it, going to the kitchen is at least an action.

I think the visit is trying to meet four needs, and this list is mine. You want relief from the feeling. You want a pause. You want comfort. And you want something to do with your hands and your attention while the feeling is there.

All four are reasonable. My argument is that the visit serves them badly. The relief lasts as long as the chewing. The pause is real, but it comes with a snack you didn't want, and you could have had the pause alone. The comfort is a stand-in for the real thing, which is a person, or rest, or an end to the problem. And the something-to-do is over in four minutes, after which the feeling is still there with fullness and the after on top. The visit answers the wrong question. The rest of this book is about finding the right one.

"I'm an emotional eater"

You may have a name for yourself. You're an emotional eater. You've done the online quiz, or a friend has said it, or you've said it about yourself with a small laugh at a dinner. It explains the visits, and it also makes them feel like part of who you are.

I'd like to look at that label, because the research on it is stranger than you'd think.

Psychologists have measured emotional eating for decades with questionnaires that ask things like whether you eat more when you're anxious or lonely. People who score high are called emotional eaters. The odd thing is what happens when you take those people into a laboratory, put them in a bad mood, and offer them food. Peggy Bongers and Anita Jansen reviewed those studies in 2016. Again and again, in the lab and in everyday settings, self-described emotional eaters didn't eat more when upset than anyone else. The questionnaires, they concluded, don't measure what they claim to. A high score may reflect concern about eating, a sense of eating being out of control, or a tendency to explain overeating by pointing to feelings, rather than a real link between mood and mouth.

A large pooling of experiments by Catharine Evers and colleagues in 2018 found the same. Across fifty-six studies, being put in a negative mood didn't increase eating in people who called themselves emotional eaters. It did increase eating in one group,

which was people who were restraining their eating, meaning trying to eat less than they wanted to. I'll come back to that in chapter 12, because I think it's the most useful finding in this book.

What does this mean for you? Not that the visits aren't happening. They are, and you've got a week's notes to prove it. It means that "emotional eater" is a description you've adopted, and that the description does work of its own. If you believe that feelings make you eat, then a feeling arriving will seem to be an instruction, and the visit will seem to be what a person like you does. Bongers and colleagues found in another study that people who ate more after a bad mood also ate more after a good mood, and after simply being shown food. The eating wasn't tied to feeling bad. It was tied to cues in general, and feeling bad is one cue among several.

So I'd drop the label. Not because it's unkind, but because it's inaccurate, and inaccurate in a way that helps the habit. You're not a type of person. You're someone who has learned to answer a range of moments with food, and one of those moments is feeling bad. That's a habit, and it's a habit with a gap in it, which is the moment between the pull and the fridge. The rest of the book works in that gap.

"Food calms me down"

The plainest defence of the visit is that it works. You were wound up, you ate, and you felt better. If it does that, what's the objection?

Let me take the claim seriously and then measure it.

Michael Macht, reviewing how emotions affect eating, listed five different ways they can do it, and one of them is eating to regulate an emotion. So the thing you're describing is real, and the researchers who study eating know it. Food, especially the kind the pull wants, is pleasant, and pleasure crowds out a feeling for as long as the pleasure lasts. The question is how long that is, and what the feeling does in the meantime.

Take the second question first. Feelings have their own clocks. Philippe Verduyn and colleagues had people record their episodes of fear, anger, joy, gratitude and sadness day by day, and how long each lasted. What made a feeling last longer was how important the situation was, how strong the feeling was at the start, and whether the thing that caused it came back, either in reality or in the person's thoughts. Nothing on that list is touched by cheese. The email is exactly as important after the crackers. And going back to the table and reading it again is the reappearance that extends the feeling. The visit doesn't shorten the feeling's life. If anything, it delays the thing that would, which is dealing with the email.

Now the first question. The relief lasts about as long as the eating. There's a study on this that I find persuasive. Heather Scherschel Wagner and colleagues made people feel low with sad films and then gave some of them their own chosen comfort food, some an equally liked food that wasn't a comfort food, some a plain food, and some nothing. Everyone's mood recovered, and it recovered by about the same amount in all four groups. The comfort food did no better than nothing. The authors' phrase for what's going on is that people give comfort food credit for a recovery that would have happened anyway.

I think that describes Wednesday. The dread about the email peaked when you read it and had begun to fall before you reached the fridge, because that's what feelings do. The crackers arrived during the fall and took the credit. If you'd stood at the worktop for four minutes and eaten nothing, you'd have felt about the same at five to four. You'd have missed the pleasure of the first cracker, which I don't deny is a pleasure, and you'd have missed the after, which is not.

So food does calm you down, in the sense that you feel calmer a few minutes after eating. It does it the way a watch that's stopped tells the right time twice a day. The calm was coming. Chapter 17 will ask you to test this yourself, by waiting ten minutes and seeing what the feeling does on its own.

"I'm stressed, I need something"

Stress is the visit's most respectable reason. You've had a day. The client email, two meetings that overran, a child's form due tomorrow. By ten to four you're stretched thin, and the body seems to be asking for fuel.

It's worth knowing what stress does to eating, because it isn't what most people think. Arthur Stone and Kelly Brownell had a hundred and fifty-eight adults keep daily records of stress and eating for eighty-four days. On stressful days people were much more likely to eat less than usual than to eat more. As stress got worse, the chance of eating less went up and the chance of eating more didn't. A large majority of people were consistent, either eating less under stress or eating more, but not both. So stress doesn't make bodies hungry as a rule. For most people, it does the opposite.

There is a more specific pathway that Tanja Adam and Elissa Epel described in a review. Stress raises cortisol, and cortisol, along with the brain's reward system, can increase the drive for rich, palatable food. Eating such food seems to damp the stress response for a while, which is why it feels helpful. Their concern was that repeating this over months could make the pattern compulsive. I mention it because it's the biological version of what you've noticed. The pull under stress is real, it wants particular things, and it gives short relief. What it doesn't do is anything about the stress.

So separate the two things that were happening at ten to four. Your body wasn't short of fuel. You'd had lunch at one. What you were short of was a break, and possibly a way to stop the email from sitting on your chest. The pull turned up because the body under stress is inclined to reach for something rewarding, and the kitchen is where the rewarding things are. The visit was a break disguised as hunger.

I'd put it this way, and it's my reasoning and not a finding. Under stress you have two needs. One is for the pressure to come off for a few minutes. The other is for the thing causing it to be dealt with. Food meets the first badly and the second not at all. A four-minute walk to the end of the road meets the first as well or better, and leaves you in a fit state for the second. Chapter 16 has more on this, and chapter 9 deals with the objection that eating is the only break you're allowed.

There's a version of stress eating that's worth a separate word. Some people don't eat under stress at all, and then eat a great deal when the stress lifts, at seven in the evening when the day is finally done. That's the same habit at a different hour. The feeling then is something like exhaustion and relief mixed, and food is being asked to mark the end of the day. Chapter 20 has a section on evenings.

"I'm just bored"

Half past nine, the sofa, nothing on, and the crisps. There's no email here and no phone call. You'd struggle to name a feeling at all. You're just bored, and bored people eat. Everyone knows that.

Everyone is right, as it happens. Andrew Moynihan and colleagues found in a week-long diary study that people ate more on days when they felt more bored, and in experiments that a boring task increased the wish to snack. Remco Havermans and colleagues did something odder. They had people watch an hour of a documentary, and on another day an hour of the same short clip from it repeated over and over. When bored, people ate more chocolate. In a parallel experiment, when bored, people were also more willing to give themselves mild electric shocks. The authors' conclusion is that eating when bored isn't about wanting pleasure. It's about wanting anything at all. Bored people will take a shock to break the monotony. Crisps are just the nearest thing that isn't a shock.

I find that clarifying. Boredom is the mind reporting that it has nothing to do and would like something, anything, to attend to. It's an ordinary state and there's nothing wrong with you for having it. The trouble is only that the fridge is what you've trained it to reach for. The crisps are attended to for six minutes, and then you're bored again, with the packet empty and the after starting.

Moynihan's third study points at the answer. Bored people ate more of the less healthy food, as you'd expect. But they also ate more of a healthy food that had been made interesting, and no

more of a healthy food that was dull. The boredom wasn't looking for fat or salt. It was looking for something to happen. That's good news, because things can be made to happen without a kitchen.

So the ask, on the sofa, produces a plain answer. What's actually going on is that nothing's going on, and you'd like something to be. That's a real need. Chapter 16 will ask you to keep a short list of things that answer it, and the list needs to be more interesting than crisps, which sets the bar low. A hand of cards, a phone call, the guitar, the crossword, a bath, going to bed early. What tends not to work is the phone, because the phone is the crisps of attention, and you'll be bored again in six minutes with the after on top.

One more thing about the evening. Some evening eating has no feeling in it at all, not even boredom. It's the sofa and the time and the packet, and it happens because it happened yesterday. That's a matter of setting, and chapter 13 is about it.

"It's the only comfort I've got"

On Sunday, after the call with your mother, the toast and peanut butter was something else. It wasn't stress and it wasn't boredom. You felt small and sad and slightly furious, and there was nobody in the house, and you wanted something warm and kind, and the kitchen had it.

I want to be gentle here, because this is where the visit comes closest to doing something real. Food made with care is one of the ways people have always shown love, and toast is warm and soft and smells of childhood. When you're sad and alone, it's not nothing to have something warm to hold. I won't pretend it is.

But look at what comfort actually consists of, when you get it from a person. Someone notices you're low. They come and sit with you. They may not say much. You feel less alone, and the feeling has somewhere to go, and slowly it eases. Comfort is mostly company, and toast is company for about the time it takes to eat it, after which you're alone again with a plate.

There's also something the visit does to sadness in particular. Verduyn's diary work found that sadness lasts longer when the thing that caused it keeps coming back to mind, and the after tends to bring it back. You eat the toast, you feel worse about yourself, and worse about yourself is very close to the feeling your mother's calls leave you with. So the visit can feed the sadness it was meant to soothe. I'm reading the study a little beyond its findings here, and I'll say so, but it matches what you've noticed. Sunday's toast didn't end Sunday's feeling. It gave it a second course.

The honest position, I think, is this. When you're sad, you need comfort, and comfort is real, and you're right to want it. The kitchen offers a version that's available and quick and about a tenth of the real thing. The real thing costs more. It means ringing someone and saying "That call with Mum was awful, have you got ten minutes?" It means letting someone see you low. It's harder, and it works, and it doesn't come with the after.

And when there's no one to ring, comfort can still be more than toast. A bath, a blanket, an early night, a walk somewhere green, a film you've seen before. The common feature is warmth and rest rather than food. If you want a hot drink while you do it, have one. The point isn't to deny yourself. It's to give the sadness what it was asking for, which was to be looked after, and to notice that being looked after isn't the same as being fed.

"But I really am hungry"

Sometimes the pull arrives dressed as hunger, and you can't tell them apart. It's ten to four. You had lunch at one. Perhaps you are hungry. Perhaps that's a perfectly good reason to eat, and this whole book is making a fuss about a snack.

Sometimes you are. Let me be plain about that, because this book is not going to ask you to override hunger. If it's ten to four and you're hungry, eat something and eat it properly. The habit isn't eating between meals. It's eating without hunger, for a reason that isn't hunger.

So it's worth being able to tell. The differences below are my own description, drawn from what people commonly report, and not a clinical test. Hunger builds. It's been coming on for a while before you notice it, and it grows if you ignore it. The pull arrives all at once, usually within a minute of something happening. Hunger is felt in the stomach, as emptiness, and sometimes as a lack of energy or a slight headache. The pull is felt in the mouth and in the mind, as a wanting. Hunger will accept a wide range of food. If you're hungry, an apple or a bowl of soup would do. The pull wants a specific thing, usually something rich, salty or sweet, and an apple would be an insult to it. And hunger goes away when you eat and stays away. The pull can go away with eating and come back in half an hour, because the thing it was about hasn't moved.

There's a test in there, and it's the one I'd use. Would an apple do? If yes, you're probably hungry, and you should eat, and it doesn't have to be an apple. If the answer is a firm no, that it has to be the

cheese or the crisps, then what you have is the pull, and the ask applies.

Look at your week of notes. My guess is that the hunger column has a lot of twos and threes in it. If it has a lot of sevens and eights, then the problem may be that your meals aren't feeding you, and chapter 18 is about that. It's common, in my observation, for people who eat a great deal between meals to eat rather little at them, out of a wish to make up for the extras. That produces real hunger at four, which then gets answered with crackers, which spoils dinner, which produces real hunger at nine. Feeding yourself properly at meals removes the hunger from the afternoon and leaves only the pull, which is easier to see once it's on its own.

"It's the only break I get"

Here's an objection I think is fair. You're at the kitchen table from half past eight until six, with a screen in front of you. Nobody would blink at you going to the kitchen for four minutes.

Everybody would notice you going for a walk at ten to four, or lying down, or sitting in the garden. The visit is the only break that comes with permission.

That's true of a great many workplaces and it's often true of people who work at home, who have nobody watching and yet feel watched. So I won't tell you that you don't need the break. You need it, and the visit is how you've been taking it. What follows is my reasoning.

The break and the food have got welded together, so that you can't have one without the other. But the break is the part doing the work. The relief you feel at the fridge is the relief of having stood up, walked away from the email, and been somewhere else for four minutes. The crackers come along for the ride and take the credit, as chapter 4 said. You could test this. Walk to the kitchen, put the kettle on, look out of the window while it boils, make a tea, and walk back. That's a four-minute break with everything in it that the visit had, except the food and the after.

If the kettle feels like cheating, that's the welding. It means you've learned that a break has to have food in it to be a break, and that's a rule you can unlearn. The break can be the kettle, the garden, the front step, the stairs, or standing at the window. What makes it a break is that you stopped, not that you ate.

As for permission, I'd suggest that most of it is in your head. Very few employers mind a four-minute walk to the end of the road at ten to four, and the ones who'd mind wouldn't know. If you work at home, nobody minds at all, and you're the one who's refusing to let yourself sit in the garden without a plate to justify it. Give yourself the same permission you've been giving the fridge.

There's a larger version of this objection that's worth a sentence. If your day is genuinely so packed that a walk is impossible and the fridge is the only escape, the problem is the day. The visits are a symptom of it. Changing the visits will help a little. Changing the day will help a great deal more, and that may be a conversation with an employer or a family rather than with yourself.

"I can't just sit there feeling it"

This is the belief that the whole habit rests on, and I'd like to spend some time on it. It says that the feeling is unbearable, or at least unpleasant enough that doing nothing about it isn't an option. Something has to happen, and the kitchen is what happens.

Start with what the alternative to the visit actually is. It isn't sitting there feeling it forever. It's sitting there feeling it for a few minutes. Verduyn's work, mentioned in chapter 4, found that feelings last longer when the situation is important and the feeling was strong at the start. Most of the feelings that send you to the kitchen aren't like that. The email is a nuisance, not a disaster. Boredom on the sofa is mild by definition. Even the Sunday sadness is a familiar, medium-sized thing that you've survived every fortnight for years. These feelings peak and fall, and the fall begins soon after the peak. What you've been doing is eating on the way down and crediting the food.

Now look at what pushing the feeling away does. Catharine Evers and colleagues induced negative feelings in people and then either told them to suppress the feeling, to hide it and push it down, or to reappraise it, meaning to think about the situation differently, or gave no instruction. Then they measured how much people ate in a taste test. Those told to suppress ate more, and specifically more of the comfort foods. The feelings themselves didn't cause the extra eating. The suppressing did. That's a small set of studies and a laboratory setting, but it points at something you may recognise. The visit isn't a response to the feeling. It's a response to the effort of not having the feeling.

That suggests a different move, and it's the one this book will ask for. Instead of pushing the feeling down and then eating, you turn towards it for a moment. You name it. "That's dread about the email." "That's boredom." "That's Mum." Naming it doesn't make it go away, and it isn't meant to. It makes it a known thing of a known size, and known things of known sizes are easier to sit with than a vague pressure that wants a cracker.

You'll find, I think, that the feeling is more bearable than you assumed, once you look at it. It's dread. You've had dread before. It's uncomfortable and it isn't dangerous. It's already fading. And you can do something about the email in a minute.

I'd add that "sit there" is the wrong picture. You don't have to sit. You can walk, or put the kettle on, or ring someone, or go and do the thing that caused it. Chapter 17 sets this out as ten minutes, and the ten minutes aren't a test of endurance. They're just long enough for the feeling to show you what it does when you don't feed it.

"Well, the day's ruined now"

The after has a sentence in it, and the sentence causes more visits than any feeling does. It's ten to four, you've had the crackers, and you think something like "Well, that's today gone." The day has been spoiled. You may as well have the rest of the packet.

Tomorrow you'll be careful.

I want to take that sentence apart, because it's doing all the damage.

First, what happened. You ate some cheese and crackers. It was perhaps three hundred calories, if you count such things, and I'd rather you didn't. It's a snack. The day contained lunch and will contain dinner, and it isn't measurably different from a day in which you didn't have the crackers. Nothing has been ruined. A small unplanned thing occurred.

Second, where the sentence comes from. It comes from a rule you've been running, which is that a good day is one without visits. Under that rule, a single visit turns a good day into a bad one, and once a day is bad, further visits cost nothing, because it can't get worse. It's the logic of someone who's dropped a plate and decides to drop the rest of the set. I think you'll recognise it, and I think you'll see that the rule creates the collapse. Without the rule, one visit is one visit, and the second is an entirely separate decision.

Third, what the after does. Tatjana van Strien and colleagues followed nearly six hundred parents for five years and found, in the mothers, that low mood went with more emotional eating, and

emotional eating went with gaining weight, in a chain. That's one study and it's about weight, which this book isn't. I mention it for the shape of the chain. Feeling bad leads to the visit, the visit leads to the after, and the after is a kind of feeling bad. It's a circle, and the after is the part you can break, because it's made of a sentence.

Here's what I'd replace the sentence with. "I wasn't hungry and I ate. What was I feeling?" That's it. No verdict. The visit becomes a piece of information about what was going on at ten to four, and the information goes in the notebook, and the day continues. Dinner is at seven, as it was going to be. Nothing is made up for and nothing is skipped.

This will feel too easy, as if you're letting yourself off. But look at what the harsh version has achieved over the years. It has never once produced a good day. It has produced hundreds of ruined ones, each ruined by a single snack and a sentence. Kindness here isn't softness. It's the only thing that stops the second visit.

"I'll be good from Monday"

Every few weeks the after builds up into a resolution. From Monday, no snacks. Nothing between meals. Perhaps a proper diet this time, one with a name. You feel better the moment you decide, and for a few days it holds, and then a Wednesday email arrives.

I'd like to show you why this makes things worse, because I think it's the least obvious thing in the book and the most important.

Go back to the Evers meta-analysis from chapter 3. Across fifty-six experiments, being put in a bad mood didn't increase eating in most groups. It increased eating in one group, and that was people restraining their eating, meaning people who were trying to eat less than they wanted. In other words, the people whose feelings most reliably sent them to the food were the people on a diet. The restraint didn't protect them from the visit. It was the thing that made the visit likely.

There's a good deal of older research behind this, and it points the same way. When you're holding yourself to a rule about food, the rule takes effort, and a bad feeling uses up the effort, and the rule breaks, and once it's broken the collapse from chapter 11 follows. A person with no rule has nothing to break. They have a bad feeling and a fridge, and a decision.

So the Monday plan does three things, all unhelpful. It puts a rule in place that a feeling can break. It makes every visit a failure of the rule and so feeds the after. And it usually involves eating less at

meals, which produces real hunger in the afternoon on top of the pull, so that you're now dealing with both.

I'm not going to offer you a better diet, because this isn't a diet book and it has no view about your weight. I'm going to offer you the opposite of a diet, which is permission. You may eat anything. Nothing is banned. Meals are eaten in full, sitting down, until you've had enough. If you want cheese and crackers with lunch, have them with lunch. What changes isn't what you're allowed. It's that when the pull arrives without hunger, you ask what's going on before you answer it with food.

That's a much smaller change than the Monday plan, and it's one a feeling can't break, because there's no rule to break. On the Wednesday when the email arrives, you're not a person on a diet being tempted. You're a person who wasn't hungry, noticed the pull, and asked. If you then eat the crackers anyway, you've broken nothing. You've collected some information.

I'd ask you, gently, to stop having Mondays. They've cost you a great deal and given nothing back. A person who eats when hungry, enjoys their meals and asks a question when the pull comes has no need of them.

"The kitchen's right there"

Some visits have no feeling in them worth naming. It's half past nine, the crisps are in the cupboard, and the cupboard is on the way from the sofa to the kettle. Nothing happened. You ate them because it was half past nine and they were there.

That's a matter of setting, and it deserves a chapter of its own, because the ask won't help much with it. You can't name a feeling that isn't there. What you can do is change the route.

I'll keep this short, because it's practical and not deep, and it's my own suggestion. Some of the visits are triggered by seeing or passing food, and those can be reduced by not seeing or passing it. That doesn't mean banning food from the house, which is a diet by another name. It means that the crisps don't live at eye level in the cupboard you open for tea bags. It means the fruit bowl is on the table and the biscuits aren't. It means that when you work at the kitchen table, you sit with your back to the fridge, or work in another room two days a week.

There's a difference between food you keep in the house and food you keep in the way. Keep whatever you like in the house. Just don't leave it where the evening route runs.

There's also the matter of what a setting has been taught. If you've eaten crisps on the sofa at half past nine for a year, the sofa at half past nine has become a cue, the way the cinema is a cue for popcorn. The cue fires whether you're bored or not. The way to

unteach it is to sit there a few evenings and not eat, and the cue weakens. It helps to give the hands something to do for those evenings. A cup of tea does most of the work.

And the route matters at work too. If the fridge is between your desk and everything else, put the kettle somewhere it isn't. If there's a bowl of sweets on a colleague's desk, take the other way round. None of this requires willpower. It requires moving a bowl.

One caution. This chapter is not the answer, and I'd be wary of anyone who says it is. Moving the crisps removes the visits that were about the crisps being there. It does nothing for the Wednesday email or the Sunday call, because those visits would find food in any cupboard. For those, the ask is the answer, and chapters 15 to 17 are where it lives.

What the visits cost

You may think the habit costs a few hundred calories a day and some mild self-reproach. I think it costs more, and most of this chapter is my own reckoning. I'll say where a study comes in.

The feeling, untreated. Every visit is a feeling that didn't get dealt with. The email was still unanswered at five to four. The boredom was still there at twenty to ten. The Sunday sadness had nowhere to go. Over years, that's a great many feelings that were fed instead of answered.

The after. This is the real cost and the one you know best. A small unpleasant feeling goes into the kitchen and a larger one comes out. Multiply it by a few visits a day and it's a running low hum of disappointment in yourself, all day, every day. That hum affects how you feel about everything else.

The circle. The after is a bad feeling. Bad feelings bring the pull. Van Strien's chain from chapter 11, in which low mood and eating feed each other, is the version of this that's been measured. You've been living in the unmeasured version.

Meals. Crackers at four take the edge off dinner. Dinner, eaten without hunger, is less enjoyable. Some of the best eating in your week is being spoiled by the worst.

Evenings. An evening that's spent going to the kitchen every forty minutes isn't restful. You end it neither entertained nor rested nor fed, and slightly full.

The skill of comfort. If food is what you reach for when sad, the other ways of being comforted go unpractised. Ringing someone gets harder. Sitting with a feeling gets harder. The muscle you'd need in a real crisis is the one you've been resting.

Your belief about yourself. Years of visits and Mondays have taught you that you can't be trusted around food and can't manage your feelings. Neither is true. Both feel true, and that's a cost that reaches into things that have nothing to do with eating.

Money and teeth. Small, and real. Snack food isn't cheap by the gram, and eating between meals is harder on teeth than eating with them. I won't dwell on either.

Weight. I've put this last on purpose, and I'd rather you didn't put it first. Eating without hunger several times a day will, for many people, add up over years, and van Strien's study is one that found it. But this book makes no promise about your weight, because I can't predict it, and because a book that made weight the goal would put you back on a Monday plan, which chapter 12 argued is the surest way to more visits. If your weight is a health question, take it to a GP. The visits are worth ending for the other reasons, whatever the scales do.

In return for all that, you've had the first mouthful of the crackers, which was genuinely nice, and a four-minute break you could have had anyway. That's the trade, laid out. I'd take the other side of it.

Naming the feeling

The first practical step is the ask. It goes in the gap between the pull and the visit, and it takes about ten seconds. Everything in this chapter is my own method, built on the research earlier in the book.

The pull arrives. You notice it, and this is the hardest part, because the habit has been running without notice for years. If you kept the week of notes from chapter 1, you've had practice. The moment you catch yourself standing up, or opening a cupboard, or thinking about the cheese, is the moment.

Check for hunger first. Would an apple do? If yes, you're hungry. Eat, and skip the rest of this chapter. Eating when hungry is the title of this book and it's never the problem.

If not, ask what's actually going on. Say it in words, in your head or out loud. "What's actually going on?" Then answer with a feeling, in one or two words. I'd keep a short list to choose from, because in the moment the mind goes blank. Bored. Stressed. Sad. Angry. Tired. Lonely. Worried. Flat. Most visits are one of those seven, and "tired" is more common than people expect.

Then name the cause, if you can. "Stressed, the email." "Bored, nothing on." "Sad, Mum." "Tired, bad night." You're not analysing. You're labelling. The label is the whole job.

If you don't know, say that. "Don't know, but not hungry" is a perfectly good answer and it still does the work, which is to separate the pull from the food for long enough to look at it.

Write it down. A line in the notebook or on the phone. Feeling, cause, time. You'll build a record over a fortnight, and the record will show you two things. Which feelings send you to the kitchen most, and at which hours. Most people find, I think, that it's two or three feelings and two or three times of day, and that's a much smaller problem than "I'm an emotional eater".

What the ask does is worth understanding, because it isn't magic and it isn't willpower. Chapter 10 gave the research on suppression. A feeling that's being pushed away leaks out as a visit. A feeling that's been named is in the open, where it can be looked at and answered. The naming doesn't shrink the feeling. It changes your relationship to it, from something you're fending off to something you're holding.

Then, having named it, you may still go to the kitchen. In the first week you often will. That's fine. You've done the ask, and the visit is now a visit with a label on it, which is different from a visit in the dark. The next chapter is about what to do instead, and it'll take a few weeks to become the natural next step.

Answering the feeling

Once the feeling has a name, it can be answered, and the answer depends on the name. That's the whole point of naming. Food is one answer to everything, which is why it fits nothing. What follows is my own list. Adjust it to your life.

Stressed. Two needs, as chapter 5 said. First a short break, then the thing. The break is four minutes away from the desk, and it's the kettle, the front step, the end of the road, or the window. Then you go back and do the smallest useful part of the thing that's stressing you. For the email, that's writing the first sentence of the reply. Stress usually eases faster once the thing is being dealt with than it ever does while it's being avoided.

Bored. Something has to happen, and it has to be more interesting than crisps. Keep a list on the fridge door, which is where you'll be standing when you need it. A phone call to someone you like. A game. The guitar. A crossword. A bath. A walk round the block in the dark. Bed with a book. Not the phone, for the reason chapter 6 gave.

Sad. Comfort, and comfort is mostly company. Ring someone and say what happened. If there's nobody to ring at that hour, warmth and rest. A blanket, a hot drink, a familiar film, an early night. The point is to be looked after. If you find you're sad most days, that's for a GP and not a list.

Angry. Movement. Anger is a physical state and it wants to be walked off. Twenty minutes outside, fast, and it will have changed shape. Don't write the email while angry and don't eat while angry. Both come out badly.

Tired. Rest, which food is a poor substitute for. If it's the afternoon, a break and some daylight. If it's the evening, the visit is often the body asking to go to bed, and the answer is to go to bed. A surprising share of evening visits stop when people simply go up an hour earlier.

Lonely. A person, in whatever form is available. A message, a call, a plan for the weekend, a walk to the shop where someone will say hello. Loneliness is a need for contact, and no cupboard has any.

Worried. Worry is a loop, and the answer is either a step or a decision to leave it until morning. Write down the worry and one thing you could do about it tomorrow. Then close the notebook.

Flat, or don't know. Sometimes there's no feeling to speak of, only a wish for something to change. The kettle answers this better than anything, because a hot drink is a small event, takes a few minutes to make, and gives the hands something to do. Have it with milk, or sugar if you take it. This isn't a diet.

Two things about the list. First, none of it is heroic. You're not being asked to meditate or run five miles. You're being asked to match a small need with a small answer, instead of matching every need with crackers. Second, the answer may not fully work. Ringing a friend may leave you still a bit sad. That's all right. The

visit wouldn't have worked either, and it would have left you with the after. An answer that half works and leaves you clean is better than one that doesn't work and leaves you full.

And if, having named the feeling and tried the answer, you're now hungry, eat. Sit down and eat something you'll enjoy. The whole method exists to protect eating from being used for other things, not to stop it.

The ten minutes

Here's the piece that makes the rest possible. When the pull arrives and you're not hungry, you give it ten minutes before you decide anything. Not ten minutes of gritted teeth. Ten minutes in which you do the ask, try the answer, and see what the feeling does on its own. This is my own method, and the reasoning behind it is in chapters 4 and 10.

The claim under test is chapter 4's. The relief you feel after eating is mostly the feeling fading by itself, with the food taking the credit. If that's right, then ten minutes without food should leave you feeling roughly as you'd have felt with it. The only way to know is to try, and the ten minutes are the trial.

So the pull comes at ten to four. You check for hunger. Not hungry. You ask, and it's stress, the email. You put the kettle on and stand at the window while it boils. You make the tea. You go back and write the first sentence of the reply. It's now about eight minutes past, and I'd invite you to look at the pull. In my observation it's usually smaller, and sometimes gone. The feeling is still there, but it's the ordinary discomfort of an unanswered email rather than the tight, urgent thing it was, and the tea is in your hand.

At ten past, decide. If you want the crackers, have them. I mean that. Sit down, put them on a plate, eat them with attention, and write down that you did. You did the ask and the ten minutes, and you chose to eat, and that's a different act from the visit. Most of

the time, in my experience of the people who try this, the wish has gone, and the crackers are forgotten until you notice at six that you didn't have them.

Some things make the ten minutes easier. Doing the answer from chapter 16 during them, so they're not empty. Having the kettle as a default, so there's always something to do with your hands. Being out of the kitchen for most of them, since the fridge is a persuasive object. And not treating a visit at the end of them as a failure, because it isn't. It's a decision, made with information, after a wait. That's the opposite of the habit.

I'd suggest doing this without exception for two weeks, and keeping the notes. What you're building is evidence about your own feelings. After a fortnight you'll know which ones fade in ten minutes, which is most of them, and which don't. The ones that don't are the ones that need more than a kettle, and by then you'll know their names.

One caution. The ten minutes are for the pull. If you're hungry, there's no waiting. Delaying meals or snacks when you're actually hungry is a diet, and chapter 12 explained what diets do to this habit.

Eating when you are hungry

This book has spent a lot of pages on not eating, and I'd like to correct the balance, because the other half of the rule is the more important one. When you're hungry, eat. Eat enough. Eat things you like. Sit down. This chapter is about protecting that, and it's my own view throughout.

The visits and the meals have been in a bad arrangement for years. The visits spoiled the meals, and then the meals got shrunk to make up for the visits, and the shrunk meals produced hunger that turned into more visits. Breaking the circle means fixing the meals as well as the visits, and the meals are the easier half.

Three meals, or whatever number suits your day, at roughly regular times. Eaten until you've had enough, which is not the same as until you're stuffed and not the same as until the plate's clean, but is the point where you're no longer hungry and feel comfortable. Nobody leaves the table hungry to make up for the crackers. If the meals are doing their job, the afternoon hunger from chapter 8 disappears, and what's left at ten to four is the pull, on its own, easy to see.

Include the foods the pull wants. If you love cheese, have cheese with lunch. If crisps are the thing, have them with a sandwich, on a plate, sitting down. A food that's allowed at meals loses most of its charge between them. A food that's forbidden everywhere becomes the thing the pull reaches for first, and chapter 12 explained why. This is the opposite of what diets say, and it's the reason diets keep failing on Wednesday afternoons.

Sit down to eat. Not because of manners but because sitting down turns eating into a meal, which is a thing you can notice and remember, and a meal you remember keeps you fed for longer than one you ate standing up while reading. It's also almost impossible to have a visit sitting down. Visits happen at the counter.

Snacks are fine, if you're hungry. A person who eats lunch at twelve and dinner at eight may well be hungry at four, and the answer is to eat something at four, sitting down, and enjoy it. That isn't a visit. It's a small meal. The difference is hunger, and only hunger.

And enjoy it. The point of all this is not to eat less or to be virtuous. It's to separate two things that got tangled. Food, which is one of the reliable pleasures of a day, and feelings, which need other things. Once they're apart, the food gets better, because you're eating it hungry, sitting down, tasting it. That's a gain, and it's a gain you get from the first properly eaten lunch.

The decision

This chapter asks you to decide something. It comes late because at the start it would have sounded like the advice you've always been given, which is to stop snacking. By now you've seen why that advice never worked, which is that it was a diet, and diets feed the visit. And you've seen what does work. Feelings fade on their own, and the food has been taking the credit. Stress wants a break and then the thing. Boredom wants anything, and food is just nearest. Sadness wants company. Pushing a feeling down is what leads to the kitchen, and naming it is what doesn't. And a visit isn't a ruined day. It's a line in a notebook.

Here's the rule I'd suggest. Put it in your own words if you like.

I eat when I'm hungry, and when I want to eat and I'm not, I name the feeling and answer that instead.

It has five parts, and each answers a chapter.

I eat when I'm hungry. Proper meals, sitting down, until I've had enough, including the foods I love. Nothing is banned. There are no Mondays.

I check for hunger before I eat between meals. Would an apple do? If yes, I eat. If no, it's the pull.

I ask what's actually going on. One or two words, from the short list. I write it down.

I answer the feeling, not the food. A break, a call, a walk, a bath, bed. Then, if I'm hungry, I eat.

I give it ten minutes. After the ask and the answer, I decide. If I still want it, I sit down and have it on a plate, and it's a decision and not a visit.

It helps to plan for the moments when the habit will try to restart. Peter Gollwitzer and Paschal Sheeran pooled ninety-four tests of plans in the form "when X happens, I'll do Y" and found that they make people more likely to follow through. A plan like this works because you've decided what to do before the moment comes. Three are worth writing down.

When I find myself at the fridge or the cupboard without having decided to be there, I'll put the kettle on and ask what's going on.

When I catch the sentence "well, the day's ruined," I'll replace it with "I wasn't hungry and I ate. What was I feeling?"

When something upsetting happens, an email or a call or a row, I'll go outside for four minutes before I go into the kitchen.

I'll be honest about what to expect, and this is my expectation and not a finding. In the first week you'll do the ask and go to the kitchen anyway, often. That's fine. The ask is being learned, and the visit with a label on it is already different. In the second week you'll start to notice the ten minutes working, and the notebook will begin to show which two or three feelings do most of the sending. Some feelings will turn out to need more than a kettle,

and one of them may need a GP. You'll have Wednesdays that go badly, and Sundays. The after will try to come back, and you'll answer it with the sentence.

Against that, you should find within a fortnight that the visits are fewer and that the ones that remain are chosen. You should find your meals taste better, because you're arriving at them hungry. You should find that a bad feeling is a thing you can name and look at, rather than a pressure that needs a cracker. And the hum of disappointment that's run under your days for years should quieten, not because you've become virtuous, but because you've stopped setting yourself a test you were bound to fail.

Evenings, hormones, offers and the times it's out of control

When it's the evening, after everyone's in bed. This is the commonest time and the hardest, because the feeling is usually a mixture of tired, flat and finally free, and food is being asked to mark the end of the day. Two things help. Decide, at dinner, what the evening's own thing will be, so that the sofa isn't empty when you reach it. And go to bed when you're tired instead of eating past the tired point. Many evening visits are a body asking for sleep and being given crisps.

When you're premenstrual, or pregnant, or ill. Hunger changes, and the changes are real. If you're hungrier in the days before a period, eat more in those days. That's hunger, and the rule says eat. The ask is still available for the pull, but don't mistake a real change in appetite for a feeling that needs naming.

When you work at home. The kitchen is your office, and chapter 13's advice matters most here. Work with your back to the fridge, take breaks that go outside, and eat lunch at a set time away from the screen, so that the afternoon has a proper meal behind it.

When someone offers. A colleague brings cake, a host presses seconds. If you're hungry, or it's a proper occasion, say yes and enjoy it. If you're not, "No thanks, I'm fine" is a complete sentence and needs no reason. What you're avoiding is eating to please someone, which is the pull in company.

When you're the one who brings the biscuits. Some people feed others as a way of showing love, and feed themselves along the way. Keep the love and change the medium. A cup of tea made for someone does the same work.

When children are watching. They learn how feelings are handled by watching you. A parent who says "I'm cross about that email, I'm going to walk round the block" is teaching something. A parent who goes to the fridge is teaching something else. And when a child is upset, comfort them with company and not with a treat, so that the link you're undoing in yourself doesn't get built in them.

When you're sad most of the time. If the feeling that sends you to the kitchen is low mood, and it's there most of the day for two weeks or more, the visits aren't the problem. See a GP. The NHS describes the symptoms of depression and says to see a GP if you've had them for most of the day for more than two weeks.

When the eating feels out of control. If you regularly eat a large amount in a short time and can't stop, often alone and fast, and feel disgusted afterwards, that may be binge eating disorder, and the NHS advises seeing a GP as soon as you can. The main treatments are guided self-help and cognitive behavioural therapy, and most people recover with the right support. Beat's adult helpline is 0808 801 0677. The method in this book is for ordinary visits and isn't a substitute.

When the rules start to take over. If you notice that the ask has turned into a reason not to eat when you're hungry, or that you're delaying meals, or that food has become something you think

about all day, stop, eat, and talk to someone. This book is on the side of eating. If it's being used against it, put it down.

When you slip. You'll have a Wednesday when the email arrives and you're at the fridge before the ask has a chance. Afterwards, write it down. "Wasn't hungry, ate, feeling was dread." That's all. The next visit is a separate decision, and dinner is at seven, unchanged.

Wednesday again

It's ten to four on a Wednesday afternoon, some months on. You're at the kitchen table, and an email has come in from a client. It's polite and it's unhappy. Your stomach tightens.

You notice the tightening, and you notice that the thought of cheese has arrived with it, and this time you see the two things arrive together. You're not hungry. Lunch was at one and it was a proper lunch, with the cheese in it. You ask. Stress, the email.

You put the kettle on and go and stand on the back step while it boils. It's cold. The neighbour's cat is on the fence. You come in, make the tea, and go back to the table, and write the first sentence of the reply, which is "Thanks for flagging this, and I'm sorry it's caused a problem." It's now eight minutes past. The email is still unhappy, and you're still not looking forward to the rest of the reply, but the tight thing has loosened, and the cheese hasn't crossed your mind since the cat.

At ten past you check, out of habit. You could have the crackers. You don't want them.

It wasn't always like this. In the first week you did the ask and went to the fridge anyway, four times out of five, and wrote it down, and felt faintly ridiculous. In the second week the notebook showed you that it was stress at four and tiredness at half past nine and almost nothing else, and that was a smaller problem than the one

you'd been carrying. In the third week you went to bed at ten instead of eating crisps and were surprised to find that you'd been tired, not bored, for about a year.

There have been visits since. A bad Sunday, after a worse call than usual, when you named it and rang your sister and still had the toast afterwards, sitting down, with butter, and it was fine, and it was a decision. A Thursday when the day did feel ruined for an hour and the sentence came back, and you answered it, and the day wasn't.

Meals are better. You arrive at them hungry, which you'd forgotten was a thing, and you sit down, and you have what you like. The hum under the day has mostly gone. You still have feelings, at roughly the rate you always did. You know most of their names now.

If you've read this far and changed nothing yet, try one thing. The next time you find yourself in the kitchen without having decided to go there, put the kettle on, and while it boils, ask what's actually going on. Then see what the feeling does in ten minutes without help.

Notes

This book gives general information about an everyday habit. It isn't medical or dietary advice, and it's no substitute for a doctor or a dietitian who knows you, or for specialist treatment for an eating disorder. The NHS services I mention are those for England as I found them in September 2026.

I've kept sources out of the chapters where I could so they read easily. Here they are by chapter, with the limits I'm aware of. Unless I say otherwise, I read the published summary of each paper and not the full text. I checked each paper for a retraction or correction notice in September 2026 and found none. Where a chapter isn't listed, it rests on my own reasoning. That includes chapters 1, 2, 8, 9, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 21. The client's email, the phone call, the cheese and crackers, the crisps, the toast and everything else in the running example are invented.

Before you start. The description of binge eating disorder, the advice to see a GP as soon as you can, the treatments and the Beat helpline number are from the NHS page "Binge eating disorder", last reviewed in July 2023. The two-week guide for low mood is from the NHS pages on depression.

Chapter 3. Bongers and Jansen, "Emotional eating is not what you think it is and emotional eating scales do not measure what you think they measure", *Frontiers in Psychology* 7, 2016, article 1932. A review. Bongers, de Graaff and Jansen, "'Emotional' does not even start to cover it: generalization of overeating in emotional eaters", *Appetite* 96, 2016, pages 611 to 616. Four conditions, two sessions,

intake measured by a taste test. Evers, Dingemans, Junghans and Boevé, "Feeling bad or feeling good, does emotion affect your consumption of food? A meta-analysis of the experimental evidence", *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews* 92, 2018, pages 195 to 208. Fifty-six experiments, 3,670 participants, high heterogeneity. The authors call for better experiments and for studies in everyday settings. The argument that the label does work of its own is mine.

Chapter 4. Macht, "How emotions affect eating: a five-way model", *Appetite* 50, 2008, pages 1 to 11. A review. Verduyn, Delvaux, Van Coillie, Tuerlinckx and Van Mechelen, "Predicting the duration of emotional experience: two experience sampling studies", *Emotion* 9, 2009, pages 83 to 91. The emotions studied were fear, anger, joy, gratitude and sadness, reported daily. Wagner, Ahlstrom, Redden, Vickers and Mann, "The myth of comfort food", *Health Psychology* 33, 2014, pages 1552 to 1557. Four studies with sad film clips. The phrase about credit is theirs. Applying all three to the Wednesday email is my extension, and the stopped watch is my image.

Chapter 5. Stone and Brownell, "The stress-eating paradox: multiple daily measurements in adult males and females", *Psychology and Health* 9, 1994, pages 425 to 436. One hundred and fifty-eight adults, eighty-four days of diaries. Eighty-two per cent of participants were consistent in the direction of their response. Adam and Epel, "Stress, eating and the reward system", *Physiology and Behavior* 91, 2007, pages 449 to 458. A review proposing a model, which the authors say is only beginning to be tested in humans. The two-needs description of stress is mine.

Chapter 6. Moynihan, van Tilburg, Igou, Wisman, Donnelly and Mulcaire, "Eaten up by boredom: consuming food to escape awareness of the bored self", *Frontiers in Psychology* 6, 2015, article 369. A diary study and two experiments. The effects in the experiments were strongest in people high in a trait the authors call objective self-awareness. Havermans, Vancleef, Kalamatianos and Nederkoorn, "Eating and inflicting pain out of boredom", *Appetite* 85, 2015, pages 52 to 57. Thirty participants in each of two experiments. What I say about the phone is my own observation.

Chapter 7. Verduyn and colleagues as above. The chapter says where I read beyond the finding.

Chapter 10. Verduyn and colleagues as above. Evers, Stok and de Ridder, "Feeding your feelings: emotion regulation strategies and emotional eating", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 36, 2010, pages 792 to 804. Three studies, taste tests, laboratory setting. The suggestion that naming a feeling makes it easier to hold is mine and is close to the reappraisal condition without being the same thing.

Chapter 11. Van Strien, Konttinen, Homberg, Engels and Winkens, "Emotional eating as a mediator between depression and weight gain", *Appetite* 100, 2016, pages 216 to 224. Two hundred and ninety-eight fathers and 294 mothers over five years, self-report questionnaires. The chain was found in the mothers and not the fathers, and the overall effect of depression on weight was not significant. The dropped plate and the replacement sentence are mine.

Chapter 12. Evers and colleagues 2018 as above, for the finding on restrained eaters. The older research I refer to is the work of Herman and Polivy on restraint, which I haven't cited specifically here. The argument that permission removes the rule that feelings break is mine.

Chapter 14. Van Strien and colleagues as above. Everything else is my reckoning.

Chapter 19. Gollwitzer and Sheeran, "Implementation intentions and goal achievement: a meta-analysis of effects and processes", *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 38, 2006, pages 69 to 119. The rule and its parts haven't been tested together, and what I say to expect is my expectation and not a finding.

Chapter 20. NHS pages on binge eating disorder and depression, as above. Everything else in the chapter is my own suggestion.