

The Feelings Around Food

30-Minute Trinity Coaching Call

Core message: Most overeating isn't a knowledge problem. It's a feelings-and-habits problem.

1. CHILD — “But I want it...” [0–6 mins]

Opening

Most of us know roughly what we should be eating.

We know that constantly snacking, having biscuits with our tea, finishing the kids' leftovers or pouring a glass of wine every evening probably isn't helping us lose weight.

But knowing that doesn't necessarily stop us doing it.

Because quite often, **we aren't eating because we're hungry. We're eating because we want to change how we feel.**

Ask the group:

What are some of the things you say to yourself before eating something you hadn't planned to eat?

Examples:

- “I deserve a treat after today.”
- “I'm bored at my desk.”
- “I need something crunchy.”
- “The kids have gone to bed — this is my time.”
- “I've been good all day.”
- “I need something sweet after dinner.”
- “I'm stressed and just need something.”
- “It's Friday. I deserve a glass of wine.”
- “I've already messed today up, so I might as well carry on.”

Ask:

Think about the last time you ate something you hadn't planned to eat. Were you actually physically hungry?

Often, the answer is no.

It might have been:

- Boredom

- Stress
- Reward
- Comfort
- Tiredness
- Procrastination
- Habit
- Something we associate with a particular time or situation

Explain the consequence

One biscuit isn't the problem.

But if food becomes our answer to boredom, stress, tiredness, celebration and relaxation, those tiny decisions happen again and again.

You can be:

- Eating three nutritious meals
- Doing your LIST sessions
- Hitting your steps
- Getting your protein and fibre in

...and still wonder:

“Why aren't my clothes getting any looser?”

That's when it becomes incredibly frustrating because you feel like you're doing everything right.

Key point

You don't need to have a binge-eating problem to have feelings around food. Most of us have simply taught our brain that certain feelings mean it's time to eat.

2. ADULT — Why Your Brain Does This [6-18 mins]

Lesson 1 — Your brain learns food loops

Introduce the habit loop:

TRIGGER → BEHAVIOUR → REWARD

Example:

Stressful meeting → chocolate → brief relief

Your brain learns:

“That helped. Remember that.”

Next time you have a stressful meeting, your brain knows exactly what to suggest.

More examples:

3pm tiredness → biscuits → energy/pleasure

Kids go to bed → wine → relaxation

TV goes on → snacks → entertainment

Friday evening → takeaway → reward

Bad day → chocolate → comfort

Explain:

This is something Dr Jud Brewer talks about in his work on habits and cravings.

Our brains are designed to learn from rewards.

Originally:

Hunger → find calorie-dense food → eat → feel good → remember where food came from

But that same circuitry can learn:

Stress → chocolate

Friday night → wine

Boredom → cupboard

Ask the group:

Can you identify one food habit where you almost always have the same trigger beforehand?

Lesson 2 — An urge isn't an instruction

Introduce *Brain Over Binge* and the idea of separating **having an urge** from **acting on an urge**.

Your brain can produce the thought:

“Go and get something sweet.”

That doesn't mean you actually need something sweet.

Stress might be real.

The craving might be real.

The feeling might be uncomfortable.

But:

A feeling can explain why you want to eat without becoming a reason you have to eat.

Ask:

Have you ever had a craving, become distracted by something else, and 20 minutes later realised you'd completely forgotten about it?

The urge wasn't an instruction.

It was something your brain suggested.

Lesson 3 — HOW You Eat Changes HOW MUCH You Eat

There are two parts to eating:

What you eat and how you eat it.

Eating quickly makes it very easy to overshoot how much food we actually need.

Eating while distracted can also make it much harder to properly experience the meal.

Compare these:

Meal A

- Sitting at a table
- No phone
- Chewing slowly
- Actually tasting the food
- Putting your cutlery down
- Noticing yourself becoming full

Meal B

- Laptop open
- Answering emails
- Scrolling Instagram

- Eating quickly
- Barely noticing what you're eating

It could technically be exactly the same lunch.

But it's a completely different eating experience.

Ask:

How many meals do you eat each week while doing something else?

TV?

Laptop?

Phone?

Driving?

Standing in the kitchen?

In a meeting?

Key point

The aim isn't just to eat fewer calories.

It's to **actually experience and enjoy the calories you do eat.**

3. THE PLAN — Breaking Food Autopilot [18–25 mins]

PAUSE → NOTICE → CHOOSE

Step 1 — PAUSE

Before eating something outside your planned meals or snacks:

Pause for 30 seconds.

You're not saying:

"I can't have this."

You're simply delaying the automatic response.

Ask yourself:

"What am I actually feeling right now?"

Step 2 — NOTICE

Run through **HALTS**:

H — Hungry

Am I physically hungry?

A — Angry / Anxious

Has something happened that's wound me up?

L — Lonely

Am I looking for comfort or connection?

T — Tired

Am I actually just exhausted?

S — Stressed

Am I trying to change how I'm feeling?

And also:

B — Bored

Do I just want stimulation?

Identify the loop

Trigger: 3pm slump at work

Behaviour: Biscuits from the kitchen

Reward: Break/stimulation

Or:

Trigger: Kids finally in bed

Behaviour: Wine and snacks

Reward: "My day is finally over."

Ask:

What am I actually trying to get from the food?

Comfort?

Energy?

Entertainment?

Relaxation?

Reward?

A break?

Step 3 — CHOOSE

Now ask:

“What would actually help me right now?”

If you're hungry → **eat**.

If you're stressed → perhaps go outside for five minutes.

If you're bored → change your environment.

If you're tired → make a cup of tea and get to bed earlier.

If you're lonely → message or call someone.

If you still genuinely want the chocolate → **you can eat the chocolate**.

The goal isn't:

Trigger → restriction

It's moving from:

Trigger → automatic eating

to:

Trigger → awareness → choice

The Feelings Around Food Experiment

For the next seven days, experiment with these:

1. Sit down to eat

Avoid eating while standing at the fridge or kitchen worktop.

2. Have one screen-free meal every day

No:

- Phone
- Laptop
- TV

Just eat.

3. Put your cutlery down

Regularly put your knife and fork down between mouthfuls.

Finish what's in your mouth before loading up the next one.

4. Slow down the first five minutes

Don't worry about making every meal last 20 minutes.

Start by deliberately slowing down the beginning of the meal.

5. "Put the calories down" between meals

Notice the calories that barely register as eating:

- Latte
- Handful of nuts
- Biscuit at work
- Kids' leftovers
- Picking while cooking
- Little bits from the cupboard

If you're genuinely hungry, have a deliberate snack.

6. Choose food you actually have to eat

Where practical, prioritise satisfying solid meals rather than routinely drinking your calories.

Remember:

We're not trying to eat as little as possible. We're trying to make the food we DO eat more conscious and satisfying.

4. THE FEELINGS AROUND FOOD DIARY [25–27 mins]

For the next week, when you experience an urge to eat something you hadn't planned, make a quick note.

You don't need to meticulously track everything you eat.

Just record:

1. What was the trigger?
2. What was I feeling?
3. What did I want?
4. What did I do?
5. How did I feel afterwards?

Example:

Trigger: Difficult Zoom meeting

Feeling: Stressed

Wanted: Chocolate

Did: Ate four biscuits

Afterwards: Brief relief, then annoyed

Another:

Trigger: 3pm at my desk

Feeling: Bored/tired

Wanted: Something crunchy

Did: Went for a five-minute walk and made tea

Afterwards: Urge disappeared

At the end of the week ask:

“What patterns can I see?”

Maybe:

“Almost all my unplanned eating happens between 3–5pm.”

Or:

“I'm rarely hungry after dinner. I've just associated sitting on the sofa with eating.”

Or:

"I eat when I'm stressed after work."

Once you know the trigger, you can actually start doing something about it.

5. PARENT — What Would Future You Choose? [27–30 mins]

Bring it back to the Child → Adult → Parent framework.

The Child says:

"I want something that makes me feel better NOW."

The Adult says:

"I understand why my brain is asking for that."

The Parent says:

"And I'm going to make the choice that looks after me."

This isn't punishment.

It's not:

"You can't have chocolate because you're on a diet."

It's:

"I can have that if I genuinely want it. But I'm not going to automatically use food to solve a feeling that food can't actually fix."

Bring it back to their bigger goal

This isn't really about resisting a biscuit.

It's about:

- Putting your clothes on and feeling good
- Seeing your body change
- Having more energy
- Feeling in control around food
- Not constantly negotiating with yourself
- Being able to enjoy treats without them controlling you

Ultimately:

You want to be the person making the decision rather than the craving making it for you.

THIS WEEK'S ACTION

Sometime in the next **48 hours**, eat ONE meal differently.

Do four things:

- 1. Sit down.**
- 2. Put your phone away.**
- 3. Slow down and really taste the food.**
- 4. Pay attention to when you start feeling satisfied.**

Then:

Post a photo of the meal in the Trinity WhatsApp group.

Alongside the photo, tell us:

“What did you notice from eating this meal differently?”

For example:

“I normally eat lunch at my laptop in eight minutes. Today I sat outside and ate it without my phone. It took me 18 minutes and I realised I was actually satisfied before I'd finished everything.”

Final Thought

You aren't trying to become perfect around food this week.

You're trying to become **curious about your behaviour**.

When you notice an urge:

PAUSE → NOTICE → CHOOSE

Ask:

Am I hungry?

Or am I trying to change how I feel?

And then make the choice that looks after **both present-you and future-you.**