

World Summit on **O**BESITY AND **W**EIGHT **M**ANAGEMENT

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Understanding emotional eating and tools for mindful eating**Jennifer Bourbonnais***Lifestyle Nutrition and Wellness, USA*

This subject matter focuses on one of the psychological or behavioural perspectives into obesity. Many people who need to lose weight know what they need to do but have trouble doing what they know because they are using food to cope with life feelings and events. During this presentation, I will explain in detail, with visual examples, and my personal defeat, the vicious cycles that keep people in an over-eating, bingeing, and emotional eating crisis.

Cycle 1: The dieting cycle – individuals putting themselves on a restrictive diet, ignoring physiological hunger, feeling deprived, and in a temporary lifestyle state. Eventually, they eat/binge, and then experience euphoria and/or possible physical discomfort. This cycle continues with shame, guilt, and failure. The cycle continues when they restart the diet.

Cycle 2: Sugar addiction cycle – most people reach for high carbohydrate foods during an emotional eating crisis. They crave sugar, they want and love it. Sugar releases dopamine and high levels of insulin. In turn, the blood sugar crashes, fat is stored, and appetite cravings ignite. The cycle continues when people keep reaching for sugar & simple carbohydrate foods.

Cycle 3: Emotional eating cycle – occurs when individuals reach for food, especially high carbohydrates foods. Typically, this happens when a negative emotion (sad, bored, anxious, lonely, etc.) is experienced. They eat to alter their mood and shift from the negative feeling of what is bothering them and temporarily feeling better. This cycle is often followed up with guilt and failure because typically emotional eaters are trying to lose weight.

Cycle 4: The overlapping cycles – this section eliminates the confusion. It sheds light on the fact that most people are on a diet, addicted to sugar, eating to cope, and sometimes out of plain habit. Individuals will see clearly into the overlap, make sense of the cycles, and become more mindful of their behaviour. In turn, they will have improved confidence in their weight loss efforts.

I will also provide five tips to help people overcome senseless eating by learning and implementing tips that will allow individuals to escape the cycles, be free from emotional eating, and become mindful eaters.

These tips include:

- 1) Understanding emotional eating triggers – time, place, who, & what
- 2) Tuning in to physiological hunger and becoming aware of which hunger is operating. Psychological versus physiological.
- 3) The practice of mindful eating – Learning how to eat without distractions and avoid the trance of being focused on something else.
- 4) Learn to overcome deprivation and dieting – understanding that forbidden foods are the ones that are typically eaten during an emotional eating crisis.
- 5) Body respect & self-confidence – success visualization and appreciating what the body can do and become. Letting go of past failures.

What will audience learn from your presentation?

- Understand insights and feel empowered to overcome the vicious emotional eating cycles.
- Gain tips and tools to implement mindful eating techniques to overcome senseless eating.
- Able to apply practical thoughts and behaviours to overcome a behavioural challenge.
- This knowledge will help broaden the understanding of the psychological side of obesity. It will allow faculty and clinicians to have a deeper understanding to help obese individuals.
- This program will offer the opportunity for obese individuals to consider mindful eating and incorporate the challenge of overcoming emotional eating to achieve long-term weight loss success.
- The information offered will provide a footprint to understanding emotional eating and becoming a more mindful eater.

Biography

Jennifer Bourbonnais received her bachelors in dietetics from Michigan State University, United States and graduated in 2006. She then completed her Master of Health Education from Wayne State University, United States. She has certifications in both paediatric and adult obesity management. Jennifer has created numerous weight loss programs for large hospital organizations. Meeting people where they are at, she continues helping individuals, families, and groups improve their health and well-being through balanced nutrition, physical fitness, and personal behavioural change that comes from the inside.