CourseMints

GUIDE

Emotional Hunger Protocol

Understand Cravings and End Binge Cycles

SELF-PACED PDF COURSE

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Emotional Hunger Protocol

Understand Cravings and End Binge Cycles

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This guide is for educational purposes only and is not medical advice. It does not diagnose, treat or replace care from a qualified health professional. Talk to your doctor before you change any treatment, medication or care plan, and get help promptly for any symptom that worries you.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

Contents

	How to Use This Protocol	4
CHAPTER 1	What a Binge Really Is	7
CHAPTER 2	The Restrict-Binge Cycle	11
CHAPTER 3	Triggers: Emotional and Situational	15
CHAPTER 4	Step 1: Watch the Pattern in Real Time	19
CHAPTER 5	Step 2: Eat Regularly	23
CHAPTER 6	Step 3: Surf the Urge	27
CHAPTER 7	Step 4: Delay and Change the Setting	31
CHAPTER 8	Step 5: Solve What Is Underneath	35
CHAPTER 9	Step 6: Make Peace with Forbidden Foods	39
CHAPTER 10	Lapses, Self-Compassion and the Next Meal	43
CHAPTER 11	Body Image and the Pull to Diet	47
CHAPTER 12	Binge Eating Disorder and Getting Help	50
CHAPTER 13	Your 12-Week Protocol	54
	Appendix: Quick Reference	57

How to Use This Protocol

If you are reading this, you probably know the pattern well. A day of “being good,” a stressful week or a quiet evening alone, and then the food takes over: fast, past full, sometimes barely tasted. Afterward come the shame, the promise to be stricter tomorrow and, very often, a plan to make up for it. Then, days or hours later, it happens again.

This guide is built on one idea that changes how you fight that pattern: **binge eating is not a willpower problem. It is a cycle, and cycles have parts you can change.** The cycle is kept going by three things: restriction (not eating enough, or banning foods), triggers you have not yet learned to handle, and the way you respond after a binge. Willpower targets none of them. The protocol in this guide targets all three, one step at a time.

The methods come from the most studied psychological treatments for binge eating, especially cognitive behavioral therapy adapted for eating problems (often called CBT-E, developed by Christopher Fairburn and colleagues at the University of Oxford) and relapse-prevention skills first developed in addiction treatment. This guide is self-help, not therapy, and it does not replace care from a professional. For many people, though, a structured self-help program is a genuinely useful first step, and it also works well alongside treatment.

What is in this bundle

Part	What it is	When you use it
The Guide (this book)	13 chapters: how binge cycles work and the six-step protocol for breaking them	Read through once, then return to each step as you reach it
The Workbook	Exercises for every chapter, numbered to match (Chapter 5 here, Exercises 5.1 and 5.2 there)	Right after each chapter
The Planner	Printable daily records, craving and urge logs, weekly reviews and a lapse plan	Every day while you work through the protocol

The simplest way to remember it: **the Guide explains, the Workbook maps your pattern and designs your plan, the Planner runs it day to day.**

The six steps at a glance

Chapters 1 to 3 explain the cycle. Chapters 4 to 9 are the protocol itself:

1. **Watch the pattern** in real time with a simple daily record (Chapter 4).
2. **Eat regularly:** planned meals and snacks, no long gaps (Chapter 5). This is the foundation.
3. **Surf the urge:** let cravings rise and fall without obeying or fighting them (Chapter 6).
4. **Delay and change the setting:** buy time and make a binge harder to start (Chapter 7).
5. **Solve what is underneath:** handle the feelings and problems that keep producing urges (Chapter 8).
6. **Make peace with forbidden foods:** bring feared foods back in a planned way (Chapter 9).

Chapter 10 shows you how to handle lapses, which will happen, so that they stay small. Chapter 11 deals with body image and the constant pull to diet. Chapter 12 explains binge eating disorder and how to get professional help. Chapter 13 puts everything into a 12-week schedule.

How to get the most from it

- **Go in order, and do not skip Step 2.** Regular eating sounds too simple to matter. For most people caught in a restrict-binge cycle it is the single most important change.
- **Add one step at a time.** Stay with a step until it feels fairly steady, usually one to three weeks, before you add the next. Keep every earlier step going.
- **Read Chapter 10 early.** You will want your lapse plan ready from the first week, not after the first hard evening.
- **Judge progress by the month, not the day.** Binges rarely stop in a straight line. Fewer, smaller and less frightening episodes are real progress.

CHAPTER 1

What a Binge Really Is

01

"Binge" gets used for everything from a second slice of cake to a weekend of takeout. That looseness causes problems in both directions: people who occasionally overeat call themselves bingers, and people with serious, distressing episodes tell themselves it is just a sweet tooth. Before you can change the pattern, you need to name it accurately.

Overeating versus binge eating

Everyone overeats sometimes. A holiday dinner, a buffet, a great meal on vacation: you eat more than you need, feel uncomfortably full and move on. Overeating becomes binge eating when **loss of control** enters the picture.

Clinicians describe a binge as eating an amount of food that is clearly larger than most people would eat in a similar time and situation, together with a sense that you cannot stop or control what or how much you are eating. People describe the experience in strikingly similar ways:

- Eating fast, sometimes standing up or straight from the packet.
- Feeling driven, "on autopilot" or detached, as if watching yourself.
- Continuing past full, sometimes until it hurts.
- Starting when you were not physically hungry.
- Eating alone or hiding the evidence because of embarrassment.
- Feeling disgusted, guilty, low or numb afterward.

Objective and subjective binges

Researchers who work with binge eating distinguish two kinds of episode. In an **objective binge**, the amount is genuinely large. In a **subjective binge**, the amount is ordinary (two cookies, a normal lunch) but it feels out of control and is followed by the same distress. Both matter. Subjective binges are common in people who follow strict diets, because any "illegal" food feels like a disaster. They are usually a sign that rules about food have become very rigid, which Chapter 2 deals with.

	Ordinary overeating	Subjective binge	Objective binge
Amount	More than needed	Ordinary or small	Clearly large
Sense of control	Mostly in control	Feels out of control	Out of control
Afterward	Full, maybe some regret	Guilt, alarm, "I've blown it"	Shame, distress, often a plan to compensate
What it usually points to	Normal variation in eating	Rigid food rules	A binge cycle

The typical shape of an episode

Binges seldom come from nowhere, even when they feel sudden. Most follow a recognizable shape:

1. **A setup.** Long gaps without food, a day of strict dieting, poor sleep, a stressful day, being alone with time to fill.
2. **A trigger.** A feeling (boredom, loneliness, anger, anxiety), a situation (walking past the kitchen, arriving home) or a thought ("I already ruined today").
3. **An urge** that builds and narrows your attention to food.
4. **Permission thoughts:** "I deserve this," "Just this once," "I'll start fresh tomorrow."
5. **The binge,** often fast and joyless after the first few bites.
6. **The aftermath:** physical discomfort, shame and a resolution to restrict.

Notice what step 6 contains: the seed of the next setup. That is why it is a cycle, and Chapter 2 maps it fully.

What a binge is not

It is not a character flaw. Binge eating is driven by biology (hunger after restriction), learning (food has become a dependable way to change how you feel) and circumstances. People who binge are often highly disciplined in other areas of life.

It is not determined by body size. People in larger, average and smaller bodies all binge. Body size tells you very little about what someone is going through.

It is not always binge eating disorder. Many people have binge episodes without meeting the criteria for a diagnosis. Others do meet them. Chapter 12 describes the signs. This protocol is useful in both cases, but if your episodes are frequent and distressing, please read Chapter 12 early.

> EXAMPLE
>
> ### Two very different "binges"
>
> Jonah, 31, eats a large bowl of pasta and two pieces of garlic bread at a friend's birthday dinner, feels very full and enjoys the evening. That is overeating, and it needs no protocol.
>
> Renée, 42, has eaten almost nothing all day "to be good." At 9 pm, alone, she eats half a loaf of toast with butter, peanut butter by the spoonful and most of a box of cereal, quickly and without tasting much. She feels numb while eating and sick with shame afterward, and decides to skip breakfast tomorrow. That is a binge, and the decision at the end is the start of the next one.

Why willpower keeps failing

Most people try to stop bingeing by trying harder: stricter rules, more control, more self-criticism. That aims willpower at the hardest moment in the whole cycle, when hunger, emotion and habit all push the same way. The protocol moves your effort earlier, by removing the setup (long gaps, rigid rules, unhandled triggers), and later, by changing what you do after a lapse so it does not set up the next round.

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WORKBOOK

Emotional Hunger Protocol Workbook

Maps, Worksheets and Plans for Every Step

COMPANION TO EMOTIONAL HUNGER PROTOCOL

INSIDE THIS WORKBOOK

Contents

	How to Use This Workbook	4
PART 1	Understanding Your Cycle	6
PART 2	The Foundation	14
PART 3	Handling Urges	18
PART 4	Food Freedom and Lapses	25
PART 5	Body Image, Help and Your 12 Weeks	30

PART 1

1 Understanding Your Cycle

These exercises go with Chapters 1 to 3 of the Guide. Do them in your first week: they give you an honest picture of your starting point, your rules and your triggers.

Chapter 1: What a Binge Really Is

EXERCISE

1.1 Your Binge Pattern Snapshot

Think about the last four weeks. Best estimates are fine.

Question	My answer
About how many binges a week?	
Mostly large amounts (objective) or normal amounts that felt out of control (subjective)?	
Most common times of day	
Most common places	
Alone or with others?	
Foods I usually eat	
How long a typical episode lasts	
What I usually do the next day	

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PLANNER

Emotional Hunger Protocol Planner

Daily Records, Urge Logs and Weekly Reviews

COMPANION TO EMOTIONAL HUNGER PROTOCOL

INSIDE THIS PLANNER

Contents

	How to Use This Planner	4
PART 1	**Daily Pages**	6
PART 2	**Weekly and As-Needed Pages**	10

PART 1

Daily Pages

1

The pages you will use most. Print a week's worth at a time.

- **Daily Food and Feelings Record:** one page per day, from Week 1.
- **Craving Log:** one line per strong urge, from Week 3.
- **Urge Surfing Record:** six surfs per page, from Week 3.