

THE SECRET TO ENDING OVEREATING FOR GOOD

BY MORTY LEFKOE



You took the time to get this e-book and download it to your computer because you want to stop overeating for good.

Whether you call it overeating, emotional eating, a food addiction, compulsive eating, a food problem or some other name, I'm going to tell you right now exactly what's necessary to permanently end your struggles with food and why traditional approaches haven't worked for millions of people.

First, let's remember why it's important to end overeating,

1. You'll experience a freedom that comes from knowing that eating and thinking about food no longer rule your life. You'll know that even if you are upset or feeling sorry for yourself (or whatever your temptation is), you DON'T have to eat that extra piece of cake. You will be able to say no and do so easily, without needing a lot of will power.
2. Of course, when you stop eating when you aren't hungry you'll probably lose excess weight that has been caused by eating when you aren't hungry. You'll look the way you were meant to look. You'll pass the mirror and enjoy what you see. And this will happen every day for the rest of your life.
3. When you stop the pattern of emotional eating you'll minimize the illnesses that result from excess weight.

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Why Do Most People Fail At Ending Their Eating Problem?

For many years, therapists, coaches, doctors, drug companies, diet plans, and self-help authors have tried to help people with an eating problem stop overeating. And unfortunately all of them have failed you.

Why?

Because they didn't fully understand the true cause of most eating problems.

After 25 years and about 13,000 clients, I finally figured out what causes overeating. Although beliefs are, in fact, responsible for most of the problems that plague us—such as anxiety, the fear of rejection, worrying what others think of us, anger, lack of confidence, and most relationship issues—they are not the primary cause of overeating.

Over the years I tried to help some people with a food addiction by helping them eliminate the beliefs that seemed to cause the problem. Unfortunately, the results weren't great. We worked on belief after belief and many aspects of their lives improved significantly. But one thing didn't change—their eating habits.



But because I knew from years of experience that change can be easy and lasting, when presented with a behavior (like eating) that I couldn't change by eliminating beliefs, I didn't conclude it couldn't be done. Instead, I decided there must be a way to help people like you, and I just hadn't figured it out yet.

The Turning Point

I started figuring out a solution to eating problems in August 2009, when a close friend of mine asked me to help him with his eating problem.

Because I had realized that beliefs have little to do with eating problems in most cases, I looked elsewhere. Here's what I discovered in the process of working with my friend and other clients with an eating problem.

Just about every eating problem has one primary cause: a unique type of conditioning that appears to only apply to eating. In addition to this conditioning, some eating problems can also be traced to a few beliefs, as I'll explain shortly.

Conditioning of eating happens in one of two ways. The first and most common is when you have some negative feeling or experience and then just happen to eat and experience "comfort" or a "pleasurable distraction." In other words,

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when you eat you experience a pleasurable feeling instead of the negative feeling and you also have a distraction from the negative feeling.

After (unconsciously) noticing many times that eating provides **comfort** or a **pleasurable distraction** in that situation, you get conditioned to eat whenever that situation occurs in the future.

The second way conditioning happens is when you want a “reward,” such as wanting to feel good or comfortable, or to celebrate. You eat and then discover that you are experiencing the reward you want; after numerous connections between eating and the “reward,” eating gets conditioned to occur whenever you desire one of the rewards.

In a blog post I wrote about eating in October 2009, I pointed out:

... if your parents continually rewarded you for special things you did as a child by giving you a special meal with the food you really liked, you could get conditioned to eat whenever you wanted to feel acknowledged for something you did.

I call this “conditioned eating” because the behavior (eating) is experienced as compulsive, as driven. Eating happens automatically and requires considerable will power to stop.

This conditioning is the emotional equivalent of a belief: It’s as if you believe that the behavior in question is the best way to get what you want.

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In the case of emotional eating, it feels as if eating is the best way to give yourself pleasure, to reward yourself, to provide a pleasurable distraction from something negative, etc. It's like an emotional, rather than a cognitive, conclusion.

At that point I realized that one way to understand eating problems is that, for the most part, they are “set off” both by “triggers” and “rewards.”

Eating to achieve a reward is eating when you want to get a positive feeling or to celebrate. Triggered eating is eating that provides a feeling of comfort or fulfillment, or a pleasurable distraction from negative feelings. So the eating is “triggered” by these negative experiences.

Here is a list of triggers and rewards I have heard from my clients who had eating problems. Look over it to see which ones you have before reading on.

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Which Of These Eating “Triggers” And “Rewards” Affect You?

Rewards

- To reward myself when I feel no one else or nothing else will.
- To feel good, comforted, happy, secure, centered, at home.

- To give myself pleasure.
- To experience being in control, to experience that no one can stop me.
- To celebrate.

Triggers

- When I'm nervous.
- When I'm bored.
- When I'm lonely.
- When I want to take a break from work, as a diversion.
- When I want to avoid doing something I don't want to do.
- When I think there won't be enough food. (This is a response to childhood deprivation. If there wasn't enough food to eat—if you didn't eat the food right away it would be gone and you wouldn't be able to eat at all—you can get conditioned to eat whenever you see food whether you are hungry or not.)
- When I'm in social situations where everyone else is eating.
- When tired (to get energy).
- When nauseas (to stop it).
- When not doing anything specific (not necessarily bored).
- When feeling sorry for myself.
- When feeling unloved.
- When emotionally charged.
- When depressed.
- When experiencing intense hurtful emotions.
- When stressed.
- When feeling guilty.



- When feeling unlovable.
- When anxious, angry, upset, sad, etc.
- When feeling needy.
- When feeling rejected.

Some of my clients have suggested to me that they are driven to eat just because food is in front of them, just before they “start” a diet, when they think they can eat without gaining weight, or that they just can’t stop eating once they start.

These are not examples of eating triggers. They are just symptoms of other triggers and rewards.

You eat in these four situations because at least one or more of the other triggers and rewards are almost always present, so if there is food in front of you or you’ve already started eating, the other triggers or rewards cause you continue to eat even if you aren’t hungry. But when all the real triggers and rewards have been de-conditioned, you will no longer eat in these four situations.

From my experience with my clients, I am convinced that most eating problems occur because people have been conditioned to eat whenever certain **triggers** and **rewards** show up in their lives. Also from my experience, **when you’ve de-conditioned eating for all the relevant triggers and rewards, you’ll stop overeating ... for good.** (See the role of beliefs below.)

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And the good news is, when I was working with the friend I mentioned earlier, I **created a process that de-conditions this type of conditioning**, which enabled him to **totally stop his eating problem**. I'll tell you more about it below.

Why Does Eating Get Conditioned So Often And Not Other Behaviors?

Why do so many people condition eating and not some other behavior? The answer is simple. There are no other “pleasurable distractions” or “comforts” that naturally occur three times a day.

Imagine that one of your triggers occurred frequently in your childhood, such as negative feelings, boredom, loneliness, or feeling unlovable. Imagine further that earlier in your life you had hung out with friends several times a day and had noticed over and over that being with friends almost always provided a pleasurable distraction from the negative experience. Can you see that hanging out with friends would have eventually become a conditioned response to your negative triggers?

In other words, **eating** is the most common response to our **triggers** only because **we normally eat more often than anything else** that provides a pleasurable distraction, a sense of comfort, immediate gratification, or a calming down.



I originally had thought that the Lefkoe De-conditioning Process (LDP) was effective with eating problems because it de-conditioned classical and operant conditioning. I still think the LDP can be effective with operant conditioning, but **the reason the LDP is so effective with eating problems is it also de-conditions the unique type of conditioning involved in overeating.** (The Lefkoe Stimulus Process is effective with classical conditioning, which is when stimuli get conditioned to produce emotions, such as criticism or rejection getting conditioned to produce fear.)

What Role Do Beliefs Play In Eating Problems?

Originally I had thought, because getting rid of beliefs never stopped emotional eating and because de-conditioning did with most clients, beliefs had nothing to do with eating problems. That was a logical fallacy on my part. Just because beliefs are not the **sole cause** of overeating doesn't necessarily mean they can't be a partial cause for some people.

I now think that **conditioning** is almost always involved in eating problems, but **beliefs** also can be involved for **some** people.

Here's the way it looks to me now. Most people with a food addiction have been

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conditioned to eat in response to various triggers and rewards. This is true regardless of the client's environment as a child.

However, if someone has grown up in an environment in which one's parents have an eating problem and they talk frequently about dieting, losing weight, being too heavy, being "good" on days they stay on their diet and "bad" on days when they do not, and "good" foods and "bad" foods, then such people are likely to form a bunch of beliefs that result in food and eating being a constant issue in their lives ... in addition to the conditioning.

Here is a list of a few of the beliefs one of my clients identified and eliminated:

- If I can't eat "bad" foods, I'm missing out.
- "Bad" foods make you fat.
- To lose weight you can't eat anything "bad."
- The way to keep food from running my life (like it did my mom's) is to eat whatever I want to eat.

Here are some of the beliefs another client identified:

- If I don't eat when there's food around there won't be any later.
- The way to be in control is to eat what I want, when I want.
- The way to keep from being hungry is to have a lot of food in the house.

Can you see how such beliefs probably would lead to an eating problem? Beliefs like these would have to be eliminated before one's emotional eating would stop completely. I've been able to help clients with this type of belief eliminate their relevant eating beliefs using the **Lefkoe Belief Process**.



Why Are These Beliefs So Different?

I want to distinguish between beliefs that **lead directly to overeating** (like those just discussed) and **those that lead to triggers that lead to overeating**. The beliefs listed above would directly lead to overeating.

Beliefs also can lead to negative feelings (such as anxiety, anger and upset), feeling sorry for oneself (a sense of victimization), feeling unlovable, etc. These feelings then can become triggers for emotional eating. But this type of belief does not have to be eliminated before emotional eating can be totally stopped. When the Lefkoe De-conditioning Process unhooks triggers from overeating, it becomes possible to deal with the triggers with behaviors other than overeating—such as talking to friends, listening to music, exercising, reading a book, or any other activity one truly enjoys.

Although these activities have always existed as possible ways to deal with the triggers that emotional eaters have, they are rarely chosen as alternatives because eating already has been conditioned to occur immediately (unless stopped by will power) following the presence of the trigger. Once eating has become de-conditioned and is no longer a compulsive behavior, you then have the time to calmly find another activity that will provide a “pleasurable distraction.”

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Why Has It Been So Difficult To Stop Eating Problems?

So many people with a food addiction have tried so many diets and pills and eating programs that they are now skeptical that anything can help them. That conclusion is understandable. They have been disappointed so many times.

It would make sense to now disbelieve anyone's claim that he can stop your eating problem.

But if you now understand the role of conditioning, you understand that diets, pills and twelve step programs ultimately don't work for most people because they don't eliminate the true cause of emotional eating.

Diets fail because you have to force yourself to eat something different and eat less than you normally would, which requires a lot of will power. And the will, like any muscle, tires with overuse. Eventually, the "need" to eat wins out and you're back to square one again.

And even though pills can affect your appetite or change how you process food internally, they cannot stop the compulsion to eat more than you are hungry for in response to triggers and rewards. Only de-conditioning can do that permanently.



Twelve steps programs offer you support to eat in a way you would not normally eat. But you are still fighting your impulses day after day, something most people can't do for long no matter how much support they get.

None of the “solutions” to overeating deal with the *source* of the problem— eating that has been conditioned to occur whenever any of the triggers or a desire for a reward are present. (Beliefs can also contribute to the problem for some people.)

So How Do You Get Rid Of The Conditioning That Makes You Eat?

Here's an example of how the Lefkoe De-conditioning Process works to de-condition eating so that it is no longer an automatic response to triggers and rewards, based on my notes from a recent client.

This woman compulsively ate whenever she experienced negative feelings, such as general upset or anxiety—a very common emotional eating pattern.

How was this conditioning formed?

“None of the “solutions” to overeating deal with the source of the problem— eating that has been conditioned to occur whenever any of the triggers or a desire for a reward are present.”

As a child anytime she got upset, her mom gave her a cookie or some other “sweet.” The food provided her a pleasurable distraction from the anxiety or upset, which conditioned the eating, so that whenever she felt anxious or upset from then on, she would compulsively eat in order to attain the pleasurable distraction.

By repeatedly rewarding a behavior in a certain situation, that behavior gets conditioned to occur in that situation.

Here’s how I helped her de-condition eating whenever she felt anxious or upset.

When the session began I asked her why it was important to her to stop her emotional eating. She told me it made her gain weight, which wasn’t healthy and made her very dissatisfied with the way she looked. Eating when she didn’t really want to also made her feel out of control and then guilty after she finished eating.

I had her imagine a situation in which she felt anxious or upset and then asked her if in this type of situation she could imagine easily not eating without using a lot of will power. She said she couldn’t imagine not eating. I ask this question to make sure that this is a real trigger and also to provide a benchmark experience, because I would ask her the same question at the end of the LDP, so she could experience no desire to eat in a similar situation after the de-conditioning process is complete.



Next I asked her: What value do you get from eating when you are anxious or upset? She answered: I experience pleasure and I am distracted from my negative emotional state.

I got her to make a crucial distinction: **She realized she never really wanted to eat; she wanted a pleasurable distraction from her negative feelings. Eating was only a means to the end, not an end in itself.**

I then helped her reach two other important realizations: (1) The only reason eating had been desirable was that **it produced a pleasurable distraction that nothing else had provided at the time.** And (2) if she had found other ways to get a pleasurable distraction before the conditioning first started, she wouldn't have needed to eat.

I then helped her realize that, while eating might have been one way to get what she wanted, it wasn't necessarily the best way.

Next I showed her that **eating when she was experiencing negative feelings never really gave her what she wanted.** In other words, she had a momentary pleasurable distraction from her upset or anxiety, but **the unpleasant feelings didn't go away for good.** As soon as she finished eating, they were still there.

I then asked her to imagine a situation when she had eaten in response to an experience of negative feelings. She took a moment to do this.

Then I asked: Didn't it seem as if you could **see** that eating is the best way to

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She told me she could really see that.

When I asked her to look closer, to describe what "it" looked like, she realized she couldn't really "see" that eating was the best way to get a pleasurable distraction. It was only a conclusion she had reached in her mind and wasn't necessarily true. All she could "see" was herself eating when she was upset and then feeling a little better for the moment.

Finally she realized that the connection between eating and experiencing negative feelings had been an **accidental connection made in her childhood**, and that there **was no inherent connection between the two**.

If her mom had taken her to a movie or played a game with her whenever she had been upset or anxious, then **that behavior would have gotten conditioned** and now she would go to a movie or play a game whenever she experienced negative feelings.

At this point the "trigger"—namely, negative feelings—had been de-conditioned and would no longer result in her eating compulsively. (I know that might be hard to believe, but it has happened hundreds of times and the compulsive eating still had not returned many months later.)

In order to deal with negative feelings in the future, she identified several things she could do to deal with her negative feelings in the future, such as exercising,

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calling a friend, and reading a book. As long as she was not compelled to eat, these activities would do the job.

To test whether or not the de-conditioning really had taken place, I asked her the same question I had asked earlier in the process: Imagine a situation in which you are experiencing negative feelings. Can you imagine yourself easily not eating without having to use a lot of will power?

Her answer this time was, “absolutely.”

Before she left I told her I was convinced that the de-conditioning had been effective, but that the only way to know for sure would be to test her behavior in life. I asked her to watch her eating and let me know if she was eating whenever she felt negative feelings.

Two weeks later she told me that despite having had negative feelings on several occasions, she hadn't even been tempted to eat in those situations.

After going through a similar process with all of her triggers and rewards, she stopped overeating and began to lose weight.

And she's not alone. Other clients have told me about similar results after several sessions with me.



What Clients Have Told Me About Their Results

One client reports that he hasn't eaten except when he was actually hungry for over eight months. And he doesn't need to use will power; he just doesn't feel like eating most of the time.

Another client, Donna Bauer, wrote me:

This is a terrific victory to not feeling compelled to eat all of the time. I actually have half bags of chips and cookies that I have had opened for several weeks--I have no desire for them now. It is wonderful.

I think about some really good homemade food in the fridge that I would normally pig out on and I just blow it off and think "Great. I'll have that WHEN I AM HUNGRY." It is awesome to not be controlled by food.

Mike Brown said:

I started working with a Lefkoe Method Facilitator about a year and a half ago. ... I had more than 75 pounds to lose. ... The Lefkoe Process I found to be very simple and easy to follow and I've now lost 52 of those 75 pounds.

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And I'm confident I'll be able to get through the other 23 pounds quickly. ... It's really been a great help to me and I would recommend it to anybody.

And another client told me during a session:

I felt hungry for the first time in 20 years. Usually I am eating all the time and never get the point where I feel hungry. But now that I'm not eating all the time, I actually went so long after a meal without eating that I actually felt hungry! That was amazing.

And Dr. Joe Vitale, the person with whom I finally developed the Lefkoe De-conditioning Process with, said:

I've been wrestling with emotional eating for 50-some years. ... I'm able to override emotional eating with will power for a short time. ... It was always a struggle, but I started working with Morty ... If you are at all concerned about eating, overeating, emotional eating, or dieting and you feel it's a struggle or you're using will power to achieve your results, you need to find the easier way. And what I have found is Morty Lefkoe is a genius. I owe more to him than I can find words to express. ...

And believe me I've already tested this. I went to Ohio where I was born and raised. My father had a birthday and turned 85. My mother had a birthday and turned 77. A nephew graduated from high school. Parties all around. Two other nephews had birthday parties. All within the three-four days I was there. So temptation was everywhere. I'm going back to my

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family; they know my favorite recipes; they know my favorite desserts. I'm going to buffets. I'm going to graduation parties. There's birthday cake all around me. There's ice cream all around me. I didn't once get tempted. I ate naturally; I ate wholesomely; I ate healthily. And I felt fantastic.

It wasn't as if I sat there and put myself in a straightjacket and said, "No, you can't have this." I just enjoyed the experience of the moment. ... This was something that was easy and natural.

At this point I eat when I'm hungry and I eat very naturally and I feel good about it.

But How Could It Be That Easy?

It is extremely difficult to stop a conditioned, compulsive behavior using will power. In fact, I'd almost say it's impossible to do in the long run.

To stop a compulsive behavior for good you must de-condition the compulsion to exhibit the behavior.

The Lefkoe De-conditioning Process helps you to de-condition eating, so that the old triggers and desire for rewards no longer make you eat. By the end

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of the Process you effortlessly use other ways to get the rewards or deal with negative triggers.

If you used to eat when anxious, for example, you'll now effortlessly choose healthier ways of dealing with your anxiety.

If you used to eat to celebrate, you'll now find other ways to experience a celebration.

When you use the LDP to make the necessary distinctions, your eating problem is gone forever. And if beliefs are involved, they can easily be eliminated using the Lefkoe Belief Process after all the de-conditioning has taken place, at which point the emotional eating will end for good.

Once you do that, you are free from the prison overeating has put you in.



The Six Critical Distinctions You Must Make To De-Condition Compulsive Eating

The Lefkoe De-conditioning Process I shared you with above helps you make all the necessary distinctions. Specifically the LDP assists you to do the following:

1. You realize that you **wanted** the “**reward**” (for example, to celebrate), **not the behavior that led to the reward** (namely, eating). Eating is only a means to the end, not an end in itself. That enables you to find healthier ways to get the reward than overeating.
2. You recognize that you wanted what eating provided, namely, a pleasurable distraction from a trigger, not the eating itself. In other words, you wanted to stop the “trigger” (for example, having negative feelings), you didn’t want eating, which was just one arbitrary behavior that provided you with a pleasurable distraction.
3. You get that if you had been able to get comfort, a pleasurable distraction, or the reward you wanted in other ways, there would have been no need to eat.
4. You realize that something you thought was “the truth” because you thought you “saw” it in the world—namely, that eating is the best way to get what you wanted (either a reward or a pleasurable distraction from a negative trigger)— never really was in the world. You never saw it. The idea that eating is the best way was merely a thought that existed only in your mind, as one possible meaning to give to a series of events earlier in your life.
5. You realize that eating never **really** gave you what you wanted. It provided a momentary reward or relief from a negative feeling, but as soon as you finished eating, you were right back where you started.

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You recognize that you wanted what eating provided, namely, a pleasurable distraction from a trigger, not the eating itself.

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6. You realize that, had you done something other than eating earlier in life that had given you the comfort, pleasurable distraction or reward that you had wanted—such as going to a movie—you would have associated going to a movie with the trigger or reward instead of eating.

When you are conditioned to eat, knowing that there are alternatives to eating doesn't stop the eating because it is a driven behavior. But once eating has been de-conditioned and you stop eating compulsively, you are able to identify and use healthier ways to get rewards or a pleasurable distraction than overeating.

When you use the LDP to make these and other distinctions, your eating conditioning is de-conditioned. And the eating problem that had been due to the conditioning stops easily and for good. If beliefs also happen to be involved, once they have been easily eliminated all emotional eating stops for good.

Once you do that, you are free from the prison overeating has locked you in— free to experience a slimmer body, greater energy and the peace of mind that comes from an end to your struggle with food.

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than overeating.

The Next Step To Ending Your Eating Problem

This eBook was written to answer some important questions many people have about eating problems, such as:

- What is emotional eating?
- What causes overeating?
- Why are most people unable to stop their food addiction on their own?
- Why don't diets work?
- Can a long-standing eating problem be stopped permanently?
- What is the role of conditioning and what is the role of beliefs?

I've even shown you the exact steps of the LDP I use with my clients.

However, I'm sure you have many more questions and I can't do all of them justice in this eBook. And, of course, nothing can replace the years of training my Certified Lefkoe Method Facilitators (CLMFs) have gone through that makes them so effective at using the LDP to transform your life.

That's why in addition to providing you with this information, I'm also offering a

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I'm offering a unique service that will help you banish overeating from your life for good.

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unique service that will help you banish overeating from your life for good.

I call it The Lefkoe Eating Solution.

It's a series of one-on-one sessions that you have with me or one of my CLMFs, during which we help you identify and de-condition every reward or trigger that causes you to overeat.

In most cases there are 15 to 20 of these and, in some cases, some beliefs need to be eliminated as well. It usually takes from four to six sessions for the de-conditioning (and an extra session or two, when necessary, to eliminate all the beliefs). That completely stops your overeating, so you can permanently lose weight and stop having food run your life.

To find out more you can visit our Lefkoe Eating Solution web page at <http://www.eatingsolution.com> or you can call us at 415-506-4472 to set up an appointment.

To freeing yourself from your limitations,

Morty
Creator of The Lefkoe Method and the Lefkoe De-conditioning Process

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