



[Multi Genre Project]

EMOTIONAL EATING

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[Dr. Olson, ENGL 202]




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FOREWORD

Initially, I had euthanasia as my MGP topic but decided to change it to emotional eating. This theme relates more to my life and other college freshmen because of our similar stress level from transitioning into college. Emotional eating is overeating to cope with negative emotions such as stress, sadness, or boredom. People who got affected are usually ashamed of their condition; they don't want to seek out help. Moreover, food addiction in general is usually overlooked because it typically is very subtle and seen as "safe" condition.

I believe that writing MGP for ENGL 202 Literature Looks on Medicine about emotional eating would help educate me and others to find healthier-doable ways to cope with negative emotions and avoid emotional eating altogether.

Although the term emotional eating is commonly used in our society, most people don't really comprehend what emotional eating really is, what its effects are, and how to get help. Therefore, I begin this project with an informative essay about emotional eating which comprehensively summarizes what we need to know about emotional eating. I'm hoping this informative essay will provide a sufficient background for the readers to better understand other pieces of this project.

Afterwards, I'd like to present a first person narrative short story on how it feels to have emotional eating. I gathered the proper information to construct this story from my own and a few other people's experience dealing with emotional eating. I hope this piece will help the readers have an insight of what an emotional eater thinks regarding emotional eating.

The next piece is a poster about the danger of sugar. This piece is inspired by a documentary film I cited, *Fed Up*. This source talks about how sugar is behind the increasing rate of obesity and diabetes in the U.S. I focus on sugar because, as mentioned in the informative essay, sugar significantly contributes to the cause of emotional eating because sugar is addictive. The next piece is a poem about sugar. This poem portrays how wanting sugar can turn into being addicted to sugar.

The last piece of this project is an infographic about how to handle emotional eating. I think it is very helpful to have this piece at the end. After understanding what emotional eating is and its harmful effects, one will most likely want to understand how to treat it. Therefore, I present Emotional Eating Self-Help to conclude this project.

INFORMATIVE ESSAY

Eating is needed to provide our bodies with needed nutrients; we can't function normally without food. However, we do not only eat to fulfill our physiological needs. We sometimes also eat to soothe our emotions, known as emotional eating. In fact, we are very much affected by our emotions when having to decide when, what, and how much to eat (Canetti, Bachar, & Berry, 2002). Emotional eating is known as eating to cope with negative emotions such as stress, sadness, loneliness, or boredom. This behavior often leads to eating food that provides an excessive amount of calories. Although the common view of emotional eating is as a benign temporary condition, this condition may lead to other serious health conditions. Therefore, emotional eating needs to be appropriately treated as a legitimate disease.

Emotional eating is a disorder that involves excessive amount of food intakes that is motivated by an emotional state instead of biological need (Canetti, Bachar, & Berry, 2002). Emotional eaters can keep eating to numb a set of emotions even if they are not hungry or are already full, impulsively eating whatever is comforting and convenient. In fact, the quantity of food consumed is the primary difference between emotional eating and binge eating (Dryden-Edwards, 2017). How is food used as a comforter in the first place? Based on Psychology Today, we eat food because it feels good. Eating food with high fat, sugar, and salt activates the brain's reward system. This makes sense because as a child, and even now, we frequently use foods as a reward.

We also associate food with family members, social gatherings, and holidays. For example, we may associate turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, and cranberry sauce with Thanksgiving where family members usually come together to express gratitude. In other words, we associate food with the sense of belonging. When we feel lonely, we reach out for food to give us a sense of comfort

and security. Going to college is usually the first time an adolescent is away from home for a longer period of time. Comfort foods may serve as a reminder of family in times of stress or isolation. The “Freshman Fifteen” is the term used in the US, referring to an amount of body weight gained during a student’s first year in college. Although data shows that “Freshman Fifteen” rarely happens, this term is evidence that emotional eating is more common than we think it is.

To make matters worse, emotional eaters usually keep eating as long as the negative emotions still persist. This is dangerous since overconsumption of foods and drinks that are high in fat, salt, and sugar are linked with obesity, cardiovascular disease, and some types of cancer (World Cancer Research Fund, 2007). In particular, James DiNicolantonio, a cardiovascular research scientist at St. Luke’s Mid-America Heart Institute, said that “sugar is more dangerous than salt when it comes to risk of heart disease” (WBUR, 2015). He says that refined sugar is similar to cocaine and can be more addictive than recreational drugs. However, emotional eating doesn’t always soothe the persistent emotions. Comfort foods with high calories, saturated fat, and sodium can put us in a bad mood (Hendy, 2012), perhaps due to guilt of eating too much. Consequently, emotional eating is like a cycle where an emotional eater eats to soothe an emotion but cannot stop because comfort foods are addictive. The emotional eater then feels guilty for his/her behavior and uses food to suppress the guilt. Based on the World Health Organization, a persistent surplus of calories is the cause of obesity. Because emotional eaters use food to cope with their negative emotions, emotional eaters rarely end up properly addressing the suppressed emotions. Suppressing an emotion is bad for our physical health since the suppressed emotions still persist (Hendel, 2018).

Addressing emotional eating properly is crucial. First, we need to look out for the symptoms: having trouble controlling food craving due to emotional reasons instead of

physiological needs, feeling hunger suddenly rather than gradually, and craving junk foods instead of balanced meals when feeling hungry. If we have the symptoms, we also need to pay attention to how much food we eat to satisfy the craving. This is important because the quantity of food consumed is the primary difference between emotional eating and binge eating (Dryden-Edwards, 2017). *Harvard Medical School Commentaries on Health* suggests “Stop, Breathe, Reflect, and Choose” to personally manage emotional eating. “Stop” is the most important step before the eating starts, breaking the cycle of automatically eating when a certain feeling arises. “Breathe” helps to relax the individual. “Reflect,” or think before you eat, is taking the time to think about the reasons of eating. “Choose” has numerous applications such as choosing healthier food, choosing to eat slowly and in moderation, and choosing alternative activity to distract the mind from the urge of eating and help enhance the mood. If self-help doesn’t help, considering professional help from specialists in eating disorder is necessary.

Escaping bad moods, instead of addressing them, is the most common form of emotional regulation (Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000). Since emotional eaters believe that eating will improve their mood, emotional eating becomes more common as escaping bad moods become more necessary. Unfortunately, emotional eating is not good for our health and can be dangerous. Therefore, emotional eating should be properly addressed either by having self-help mechanism or getting professional help.

SHORT STORY

The False Comforter

Consuming sugar makes me “high” and even want more sugar. Do I eat to suppress my emotion? I don’t really know. I know that I reach out for food when I’m bored, though! I reach out for popcorn and candies when I watch movies. I have a very special popcorn concoction, ladies and gentlemen! I add some sugar, salt, and extra butter to my popcorn. Oh, I also throw in some peanut m&m’s or other types of candies. Eating this popcorn concoction really helps me stay occupied while watching boring scenes. I sometimes feel uncomfortable watching intense scenes in the movies; I just want to turn it off or leave the movie theater early. Unfortunately, leaving the movie theater early is not always the wisest move because it is disrespectful to other watchers. Thankfully, my popcorns and candies help me stay seated. As the scenes get more suspenseful, like when the main character almost gets killed or when the girl was about to tell her crush her feeling, the amount and speed of popcorn I eat also increases. For your information, food also helps me go through stressful, out of control situations like finals week, LOL.

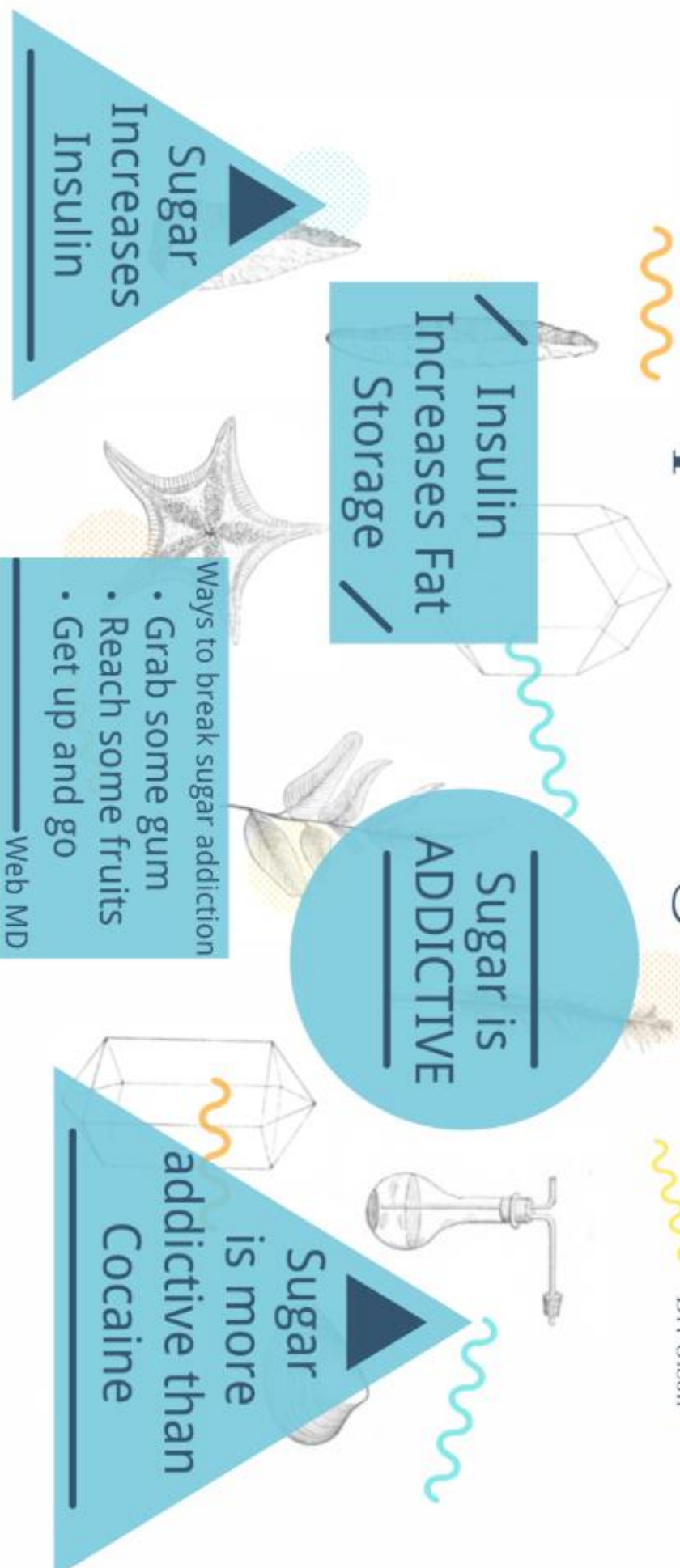
Don’t judge me! Everyone else behaves just like me. I’m pretty sure you do too. Actually, do they really? I mean most of my friends are skinny while I’m gaining weight. I am pretty sure a lot of people actually eat when they’re bored and/or emotional. I know some friends and family members do! I mean I have the control over what food I want to buy and eat, right? I am still thriving at school and making friends. I am involved in my community too.

Sometimes, I don't want to see people at all, just because I don't want to. Is it really the reason? Probably not... I don't want to see people because I am ashamed of my binge eating episodes at night. The amount of food that I put into my body within a couple hours is unbelievable! I can't even recall what kinds of food I ate because why would I? I'm already stressed out with my life. I have to deprive myself the day after overeating to compensate the surplus calories, but it never works: the cycle continues. I don't want my friends and other people to notice that I've gained weight because I've been binge eating. I don't want them to know that I am stressed out and lack any self-control. I am so much better than that. My parents raised me better than that.

I think I have a food addiction. Oh, you have no idea how hard it is to have these food urges! My parents are not worried about my condition because they think I am not obese and am still thriving in life. Deep down though, I hope they intervene and help me gain the control back over myself. I know my condition is not like having a drug addiction, but that is exactly the problem! My parents won't lock me in the house to prevent me from over-eating like they most likely would've done if I had a drug addiction. They don't want to deprive me of food because they think I am still growing. They don't want me to be concerned about my body image. They want me to be happy. What they don't know is, I am not happy with my emotional eating. Eating might soothe my emotions at first, but I have to face them sooner or later. Therefore, I over eat again to cope with my emotions. Then, I am ashamed and try starving myself to compensate the surplus calories, but it never works. Consequently, I feel horrible about myself and eat again. The cycle continues, and I really need some help to break it.

"Fed Up" with Sugar?

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English 202
Dr. Olson



Source: Fed Up



SUGAR

by Pam Savira

I want Sugar
It is such a snooker
Its sweetness is familiar
Taste better than cheddar

I need Sugar
Naturally I ain't a beggar
But looking at its granular
Brings happiness that is
peculiar

All I need is sugar
Where is my body angular?
Does that even matter?
I can't live without sugar

EMOTIONAL EATING SELF-HELP

Courtesy:

-Managing Emotional Eating from Harvard Medical School Commentaries on Health
Weight loss: Gain control of emotional eating from Mayo Clinic

1 STOP!

Breaking the cycle is very important. This step breaks the cycle of automatically eating when a certain feeling arises. It has to happen before the eating starts.

2 BREATHE

Taking deep breaths to relax yourself is very helpful. It will help slow down the pace of activity and clear your head

3 REFLECT (THINK BEFORE YOU EAT)

Ask yourself "Why do I want to eat right now?; The answer should be because of physical hunger. If the answer is something else such as because of negative or positive emotions, ask yourself "Is it really worth it if I eat this food now?" This step doesn't guarantee the eating to not happen. However, it gives the person the chance to make a better decision.

4 CHOOSE MODERATION

Do not deprive yourself. It is okay to eat the food anyway but always remember that moderation is the best move.

5 CHOOSE HEALTHIER

Instead of going for junk foods, choose a healthy snack such as fresh fruits, vegetables with low-fat dip, nuts, or buttered popcorn. You could also try lower calorie versions of your favorite food to satisfy your craving.

6 CHOOSE AN ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITY

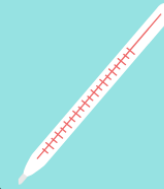
Choose an activity that distracts the mind from the food urges and enhances the mood. Some of the options would be exercising, practicing relaxation technique, listening to music, taking a bath or shower, engaging in social support, playing with the computer, doing some cleaning, and shopping

7 KEEP A FOOD DIARY

Write down what you eat, either on a diary or an app. It's also helpful to write down how you're feeling and how hungry you are. Over time, you may see patterns between your eating behavior and your mood.

8 LEARN FROM SETBACKS

If you have an episode of emotional eating, forgive yourself and start fresh right away. Try to learn from experience and make a plan. Focus on positive changes you can make to help yourself.



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A LETTER TO DR. OLSON

Dear Dr. Olson,

My experience researching and producing multi genre sources has been ambivalent. At first, I was nervous because I had never done this type of research before. To diversify my sources, I decided to listen to a podcast episode, which I ended up using as one of my sources. Knowing this possibility got me excited to look for another genre as my source. I've seen *Fed Up*, a movie about food industries in the U.S. that may be responsible for various health problems such as obesity. Because *Fed Up* was very related to emotional eating, I chose *Fed Up* as one of my primary sources. However, I was frustrated by how much work I have to put into this project. Unlike Binge Eating Disorder and Anorexia Nervosa, emotional eating has been seen as a benign condition by most people; it was hard finding medical literatures about emotional eating. It's also gratifying knowing that I have finished this assignment; I have learned so much from working on this project.

I was most pleased with my informative essay; it comprehensively summarizes what we need to know about emotional eating. I have gathered information from research papers, various websites, a movie, and a podcast episode. The informative essay about emotional eating is the root for my other documents.

I wish I could've improved on the poem "Sugar." I wanted to change the word angular, but I couldn't find another better word that would rhyme with the rest of the lines in the stanza. I used angular to depict edges as in losing body's edges as someone is getting more body fat.

The advice I have for next students who are working on MGP is research on the topic you are most interested in. Embrace the challenge of discovering and producing new genres! It will be very rewarding at the end because you will learn so many new things about the topic of your choice!

For the future MGP assignment, I suggest that you go over what is expected from an MGP assignment in class. I think going over several examples of past MGP assignment will clarify some miscommunications such as how many documents we need to produce. Another idea to improve MGP assignment is to have a brainstorming session about MGP topic each of us want to research on in a pair or a small group.

Sincerely,

Pam Savira