DSU Half-Ton Weight Loss Challenge – Week 10
This Week’s Topic: Emotional Eating

Eating is a pleasurable experience - it makes us feel good. There are even certain elements in foods, like chocolate, that send out ‘feel good’ chemicals. Comfort foods – things like lasagna, meatloaf, and homemade chocolate chip cookies – often provoke memories of past happy times. We often develop cravings for these items because they are associated with pleasure.

Many individuals eat for reasons other than hunger. Emotional eating can sabotage your weight loss efforts, especially if you eat in response to stress. While it may make you feel better immediately, turning to food is not going to change your situation – if anything, you are adding a new stressor – now you’re worried about not meeting your healthy eating goals!

When you find yourself reaching for food, ask yourself, “Am I truly hungry?” If you’ve recently eaten a satisfying meal, it may be that you’re turning to food for some other reason – such as to reward yourself for a hard day. This week, pay attention to whether you are turning to food for emotional reasons, and find alternate ways to soothe your soul.

Calorie-free ideas to manage stress and avoid emotional eating:

- Take a brisk walk, or engage in some other form of physical activity.
- Call a friend and talk about what’s bothering you.
- Put a “Do Not Disturb” sign on the bathroom and take a bubble bath.
- Read a good book or browse through a magazine.
- Buy yourself some flowers. Listen to soothing music.
- Think about a favorite spot, like the beach. Focus on the sounds, smell, etc.
- Write down your feelings in a journal.
- Close your eyes and do some deep breathing – it will help you relax.
- Seek counseling, if you’re feeling overwhelmed.

Your Goal: Pay attention to how you’re feeling when you turn to food. If you recognize that it’s not always hunger, find alternate ways to manage your feelings. (Food is not the answer!)

Get Moving Tip – Short on time? Keep a record of everything you do in a day in 15 minute increments. Look for opportunities to fit in physical activity, even in short bouts. There are 1440 minutes in a day – the goal is to set aside at least 30 for movement. It’s do-able, even if you have to split up the minutes, e.g. taking two 15-minute walks.