

**STOP** Welcome to  
**BODY BLAME**  
Reclaim your Life  
from Obesity and  
Emotional Eating.  
**Session 6**  
Successfully  
defeat both with a  
restricted  
protocol from  
EMDR Therapy.

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EMDR Association of Australia

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Session 6

Trying it for yourself!

**This is not a weight loss programme**

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This is not a weight loss programme. It is about emotional eating. When you no longer eat for emotional reasons you can then eat solely for your physical needs.

## The Cuddle

Place left ankle over right. Arms outstretched, backs of hands touching, clasp right hand over leg, and fold to rest on chest. Breathe in placing tongue against palate behind top teeth. Breathe out placing tongue behind bottom teeth.

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YUMMY



Sometimes people know what the emotion is that they will gain from eating a certain food, but often it is vague and seeking out that emotion can be a little interesting. One participant exclaimed in the middle of her processing how she could see herself sitting in a highchair, being fed junket. Her comfort food was anything creamy, like yoghurt or custard. She realised that her mother was pleased with her when she opened her mouth and ate the junket. She gained a sense of approval.



Carolyn 1948

I could have honed in on the fact that I was bottle fed from the age of 3 months and my photos show a too chubby baby, though photos at the age of five show a normal sized looking little girl. I believe some time after the age of two I was still so attached to what I am told I called my "bobble" that my mother decided to smash all of them in front of me, as I obviously was too old to still need them. After all, my sister, 14 months younger was using a cup. I have no emotional reaction now to that, not even the little bit of sadness I had five years ago. So no wonder I did not identify this as the most emotionally laden memory at the time. It may however, be connected to the love of hot cocoa I once consumed before retiring to bed.

## Photos help identify when emotional eating occurred.

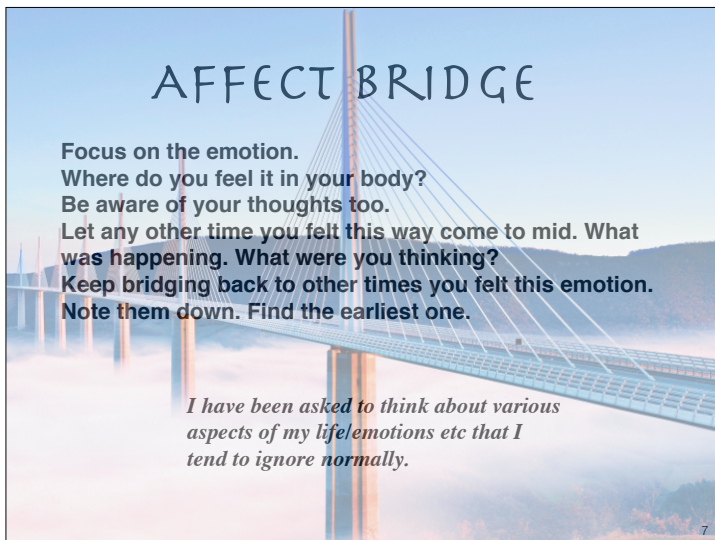
✓ What was happening each time emotional eating was a problem



*Yes, explanation is good. Individual comments leading to scenarios in life helps to think on one's life and where perhaps the rewards come from.*

Of course there may be more than one time during your life when this occurred. The first time also may not be the first one you remember. For me, photographs provided me with a representation of a time when I was overweight. Armed with the conviction now that the only way this could occur was because I was eating more for comfort than to satisfy hunger, I examined my life for the circumstances surrounding those photographs, so I could identify the triggers for my needing comfort. Nearly 43, slender as ever. However, by 1994, photographs were far less flattering. In five years I believe I gained 20kgs and began the real yoyo dieting about which we have such dread. Of course, the mantra was that being in my mid-forties, and thus becoming older, and possibly peri-menopausal, weight gain was normal. At this time I was a school counsellor. Even when working part-time, I found taking any break for lunch was difficult. Initially appointed to different schools, sometimes changing from one school to another over lunchtime, I found that if I left one school at twelve noon there was the expectation I should be at the next immediately and ready to work. The staff often gave apologies if a child wasn't available for testing because they had gone out onto the playground for lunch!

Even while attending the one campus for the whole day, or even the whole week, there would be such a load of work of assessment or interviews that the school had requested, that comments would be made by staff if I sat down and had anything to eat. "Lucky for some" if I sat down before the lunchtime bell, or "Don't you have someone to see now?" if during the lunch period, with many comments about how fortunate I was at not having playground duty. However, it was often very difficult to speak to teachers about students if I didn't seek them out during this time, so I always felt I was working, and paying attention to what I ate was not a priority.



**AFFECT BRIDGE**

**Focus on the emotion.**  
**Where do you feel it in your body?**  
**Be aware of your thoughts too.**  
**Let any other time you felt this way come to mid. What was happening. What were you thinking?**  
**Keep bridging back to other times you felt this emotion.**  
**Note them down. Find the earliest one.**

*I have been asked to think about various aspects of my life/emotions etc that I tend to ignore normally.*

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Sometimes it is difficult to identify what the positive emotions is in the present, so I needed to go back to the past. I then that I considered what role bread played in my life as a child.

So yes, there was an attachment to fresh bread, but what was the emotion? Searching for the importance simply required my looking at the circumstances of when I ate the fresh bread as a child and then as an adult. As a child I came home to an empty house and felt I had the responsibility of looking after my younger sister who often would go to play with her friend across the road. We had been told to stay at home. I ate because I was hungry, but I was also anxious. I was a good girl and I could not make my sister stay home and be good. I was also lonely, as I did not seek out playmates as we were not permitted to have any visitors and my sister did not play with me. It was not until I thought about what bread meant to me as a child that I discovered the emotional importance of bread and the basis for my emotional eating originating from that stage of my life. From the age of nine or ten, every afternoon, having walked home from school with my younger sister, we would unlock our house using a complicated set of instructions. We were never given a key but various keys like a treasure hunt allowed us to unlock first one door then another until we had the backdoor key. We then fetched the money to buy a sixpenny ice-cream cone and a Vienna loaf of bread from the corner shop, some six houses up the street. We cut off the ends of the loaf, scooping out the fresh bread, and generously coated the crust in butter and vegemite (though my sister preferred peanut butter) and refilling the crust with the soft bread, did the same to the top of the slice. I don't find this thought at all as pleasurable as I once did.

# Examples

Vienna Loaf age 9 to 12
Warmth in the belly
DTE = 6
PC: I am safe
12 sets of EM



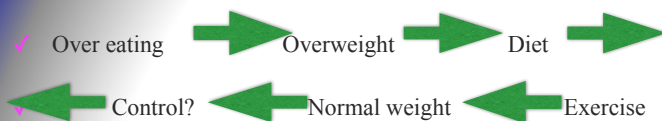
The main thing I took in was that 70% desire is a lot of desire to expect the will to conquer. I did know that will power is finite, but the percentage figure was useful.

Cakes for Afternoon Tea, Age 8 -12 12
Salivating, smiling, light in chest
DTE = 7
PC: I am good and happy
11 sets of EM



When I reached home, with five children from 5 to 17, I would be making afternoon teas for the younger ones and be “starving” myself, and finding I ate 8 slices of fresh bread and vegemite both before and while making dinner. My dietician several years ago suggested I needed to find my feminine appetite as I had obviously lost it amongst the ravenous appetites of four sons. However, I knew at the time that the amount of bread I was consuming was not doing me any good and tried unsuccessfully not to eat it. Simply identifying the connection between a food and pleasure is insufficient to disconnect the strong feelings of wanting to eat something I do not need. So I undertook a self-directed EMDR therapy session on the fresh Vienna bread. I have noted with clients that the DTE reduces quite rapidly, as it did this afternoon with a young woman who is eating to comfort herself after being a victim of crime. Her foods were cakes for afternoon tea during her primary school years, and the luscious indulgence of eating a Mars Bar deliciously slowly during a high school free period, and strawberries that related to her life long love of berries in summer, beginning from crawling into the strawberry patch as an infant. Her DTE for eating sugar-coated mangoes reduced from 7 to 0 after 11 sets of Eye Movements. We also targeted Mars Bars and strawberries. The former resolved to 0 but the healthy choice of strawberries didn’t budge. Her positive feeling was *I am good and happy*. During the week she noticed she felt differently about food.

## REMEMBER THE EMOTIONAL EATING THE CYCLE



Visiting the Lifeline Book-fair last March, I noted rows and rows of books devoted to weight loss. I didn’t have any of them amongst my wide selection at home but was not tempted to buy any of them. Like most people I have lost the “same” ten kilos many many times. I have to admit to weighing myself a dozen times a day but can now go for a week without bothering. This used to signal that I had gained a lot of weight and was in denial.

SO WAS HE RIGHT? DID I SPOIL  
MY SISTER'S WEDDING PHOTOS?



Photos remind you of the  
surrounding events. Spoiled my  
sister's wedding photos.

## AFFECT BRIDGE

Focus on the emotion.  
Where do you feel it in your body?  
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was happening. What were you thinking?  
Keep bridging back to other times you felt this emotion.  
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*I have been asked to think about various  
aspects of my life/emotions etc that I  
tend to ignore normally.*

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## Other Comfort Foods

- ✓ How many foods do you indulge in for comfort and pleasure?
- ✓ For which foods do you reach?
- ✓ When did you first feel that attraction?
- ✓ Note what you eat, when, if you are hungry or not, and what has been happening, what are you saying to yourself and are there any emotions or body sensations connected with the experience?
- ✓ Then sit quietly, recreate the scene - note the sensations in your body

*I have lost taste  
for liquorice all-  
sorts. - let's  
broaden this.*



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However, other occasions where I overeat are at parties or situations where food is unlimited, at a banquet setting in a restaurant, at home with family gatherings that include nibbles and bowls of food I have placed around the house. I find it harder to refuse food as a hostess or if a family member who has cooked the food offers it. Formerly I would rationalize that my brain is hardwired to respond this way because of the feast/famine experience of our hunter/gatherer ancestors. I followed the advice to take a plate and just put on it that which I wanted to eat. However, I do have choice and if I am not eating for physical needs, because I have not been starved, then I am eating for emotional needs. So certainly in a restaurant, I do not go with the prevailing vote to have a banquet, as I know I will eat more than I physically need. However, as sharing food involves satisfying other social and emotional needs I have found that if I satisfy these needs with conversation and emotional connection, I am not subjecting myself to emotional eating and find the banquet option viable. So certainly in a restaurant now, I do not go with the prevailing vote to have a banquet. Investigating these situations for any pleasure connected to earlier memories of food brought up

occasions of being a five-year-old flower girl at a wedding and my tenth birthday party. Sitting with these memories, I find there is a sparkle in my eyes, a smile, a sort of preening, and a belief I am special. I feel happy and am smiling. There is no scene for the wedding but there is for the same feelings connected to my tenth birthday party. There seem to be plates of food on the table and I am allowed to eat whatever I want, lollies, chips, and go back for more. An ice-cream cake is brought out too, with candles and Happy Birthday. Possibly because of previous work, but self directed EMDR therapy with a horizontal eye movement very quickly resolved from a DTE of 7 down to 0. So a third pleasure of feeling special is connected with the plates of nibbles found at large gatherings and indeed any social occasion.

### *Robert Miller's Feeling-State Theory of Impulse-Control disorders*

- ✓ ICDs require an underlying negative belief to exist at the same time the link is made in order for an ICD to be created
  - the more a person needs the positive feeling, the more at risk of developing an ICD

But just because you have pleasant memories of treats as a child, doesn't mean you will develop an ICD.

Mother called me a "Belsen Horror"!



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Thus three food types: pastries, fresh bread and nibbles

Three respective positive beliefs and feelings: I am loveable, I am safe, I am special

So what was my underlying negative belief that I had as a child? I knew which feelings you are gaining access to by eating those foods. Now I needed to examine why I needed those feelings. There has to be a reason and that reason was rooted in my childhood.

So my task was to find the negative childhood feelings and beliefs that were necessary for the development of the Positive Feeling States. Without a desperate need to feel better as a child, there would have been no need to have these special positive feelings.

The obvious choices for those negative feelings were the negatives of what I gained from the comfort foods, of being unlovable, unsafe and not important. For me those beliefs distilled into one core belief, that I was not good enough. At the age of six I had been hospitalised in isolation without visits from my parents for ten days with scarlet fever. Other illness, and traumatic visits to hospital occurred following haemorrhaging after a tonsillectomy, bronchial pneumonia. My mother, I think in shock, saw me one evening, perhaps after a bath, and called me a Belsen Horror. Maybe the photos of the survivors from the Bergen-Belsen Nazi concentration camps had been released recently? In any case, she was horrified at how skeletal I was and I believe sought to fatten me up. The favourite treat was a cream-filled pastry horn. They did not fatten me up, but were probably not a good option for my healthy weighted sister who gradually became chubbier throughout childhood. They did increase my liking for fats and sweets and I remembered them with pleasure.

## The Genesis of Emotional Eating

- ✓ Find negative underlying beliefs associated with the development of the positive feelings
- ✓ Pre-existing negative belief laid *the foundation for the creation of the Feeling State*
- ✓ Take note of present behaviour, emotions, physical sensations ... the past is present
  - use float back/affect bridge

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In order to discover that belief I became more mindful of what I was actually doing in the present. So first clue was noticing the emotional eating that was happening. I have been eating some rice biscuits. My dietician told me I could eat six as a snack. Twelve is double that, and twenty? They are fairly innocuous aren't they? Yet I have eaten a meal recently and I am not hungry. Thus I notice the chatter going on in my head about the emotional eating. Earlier I was aware I was feeling anxious. This is the emotion. I had decided I would not contact a friend. I was not sure I would receive the reassurance that I knew I wanted. This was the precipitating event. There was a sensation in my throat of discomfort, fuzziness in my head, a tension down the spine, a hunching of the shoulders. These were the sensations in my body that were the precursors to my emotional eating. Examining another scenario I noted the emotion of feeling anxious. The precipitating event was revealing a less than perfect episode of my parenting my eldest child when he was four. I became anxious because I had made myself very vulnerable and was fearful that my friend might condemn my behaviour, rather than continue to hold me in good regard. I felt the bodily sensations of the catch in my breath, the tightness in my chest, the constriction in my throat, tension across the back of my shoulders and fuzziness in my head. I then so wanted to eat!

Having noted the above two occasions where I experienced an impulse to eat for comfort, the physical symptoms are very similar. So, closing my eyes, I imagined those symptoms and allowed myself to go back through the years. I floated back concentrating on those bodily sensations to times when I had experienced them before.

The first memory when I felt those same bodily sensations was when my sister had been reported to our father as having been on the side of the road with her friend, with an elastic band stretched across the road between them, pinging cars. Of course, she was supposed to be home with me. My father had olive skin, very blue eyes, dark thick curly hair, was 6'1" and very handsome. He looked like the 1950s actor Rory Calhoun. He was physically fit from his work as a deliveryman for David Jones departmental stores. He was always of a neat appearance, and well mannered.

Arriving home late from working overtime, after we were asleep, our father came into our shared bedroom, took down the blankets, raised his hand to the ceiling and brought it down hard onto her bare bottom. I was terrified. I felt responsible. It was my fault. I should have done something. It was quite frightening being woken to that scene. I did not feel safe.

Spanking was not an everyday occurrence, though I remember being chased into the wardrobe with my father angry and threatening. It was an ordinary wardrobe and I cowered amongst the clothes trying to avoid being hit.

My mother was the usual disciplinarian, wielding the cane handle of the feather duster on more than one occasion. My sister and I laugh now about the fact that for a number of years we actually saved up our measly pocket money to buy a feather duster as a Mothers' Day present. Age eleven, for the first and only time in my life, I received a smack across my face from the back of mother's hand, for the impudence of closing my eyes when she spoke to me.

Using EMDR therapy, when I processed this memory of waking to see my father hitting my sister, I felt the constriction in my throat and discomfort in my stomach. My Negative Cognition was "I am not safe" and my preferred Positive Cognition was "I am OK," with a Validity score of 5 out of 7, meaning I nearly believed it.

It still startles me that I could feel this distressed when this memory is sixty years old and my father has been dead for more than twenty years. There is no way I am unsafe from him or about to be spanked by him. I know it is important to notice that the feeling is as if it is now, and in the present. I notice my language changes as the memory is processed. The tense in which I think and speak begins to change from the present to the past.

My SUDS was 7 out of 10. This is a high level of distress. The immediate thoughts that surfaced were around not being able to protect my sister, being powerless, and how it was best not to go outside, to be good in order to remain safe. I felt highly responsible for my sister and was very anxious. Continuing to focus on the bodily sensations, a second memory came to mind.

Her laced up shoes were the first things I saw. I was sitting at my desk, very thin, very anxious, my head bent forward as I read the words on my lap. I had the list of spelling words on my lap. I didn't know how to spell anything, or so it seemed. I don't remember having spelling tests at my former school. I was six and a half years old.

I was sitting alone in one of those desks for two children, with the seat attached to the desk. I had just moved schools. I had not been to school for a couple of months, having been hospitalised, as I was very sick with scarlet fever. My family had moved to our new house while I was convalescing. Miss Day yelled at me for cheating and told to stay in the corner of the classroom and not look at any of the other little girls. When it came time for 'little lunch' I walked out last and didn't know where the toilet block was so wet my pants.

I never articulated that I wasn't good enough when I was a child. Children don't. Children blame themselves in black and white terms: I am good; I am bad. I tried very hard to be a good child. I didn't know I would never be good enough. Sometimes I felt I was quite bad. I couldn't speak up and say it wasn't just or fair, I wasn't here last week when you gave out the spelling homework.

I couldn't say, but I am the new kid here, I don't know the rules. I didn't know about the Broca's area in the brain that controls speech being down lit as the amygdala is activated so it makes it literally harder to speak. I did not realize that this was not the last time I would be struck dumb when I was under attack. In fact my inability to speak up permeated my life.

I was humiliated and shamed. People showed me disgust, firstly as I had cheated, secondly I was stood all day in the corner of the classroom and thirdly I had wet my pants. I don't remember ever having any friends at my new school, but remember being very lonely on the playground all through my primary years. I was anxious, lacked confidence, felt isolated and unwanted.

Another incident came to mind as I focussed on the bodily sensations. Fourteen years later, I found myself lying to my closest friend on her wedding day. It was a devastating moment. She was so happy, her face framed in her white veil, her eyes sparkling with excitement and telling me that it would be my turn soon. I couldn't tell her that the relationship had finished two days earlier.

I still felt guilty even though to have told the truth would have made her feel so sad and I couldn't do that. I was very anxious she would see through me, but now realise I was already adept at hiding my feelings from other people. The problem was I became as skilled at hiding my feelings from myself.

Float Back group or volunteer

Identify the problem in the present.

Be mindful of how your body is feeling.

Notice where the sensations are in your body.

Identify the emotions if you are able.

Float back through the years down your timeline to any other times you were aware of those sensations in your body.

Go back as far as you can.

## Float Back

- ✓ Close your eyes.
- ✓ Bring to mind the disturbing event or occasion
- ✓ Focus on the physical sensations.
- ✓ Allow your body to carry your mind back to other occasions where your body experienced these same sensations.
- ✓ Allow your mind to float back through the years to the earliest time you remember the same physical sensations.

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A motley of beliefs surfaced around it being my fault and then I recognised the weight of responsibility that was assuaged by fresh bread, butter and vegemite. It is my responsibility that things work well for my children, my husband, my clients, my friends, just as it was my responsibility to keep my sister safe. If anything goes wrong, I immediately believe I should have done something. I never thought that I had done the best I could. It is a wonder I stopped at a Dress Size 20 with all that to carry.

## Underlying Negative Belief

- ✓ With Miller's Feeling State Theory of Impulse Control Disorders, this would be the pre-existing negative belief that he states laid *the foundation for the creation of the Feeling State*, or the first level of the set of beliefs.
- ✓ ICDs require an underlying negative belief
- the more a person needs the positive feeling, the the greater the risk of developing an ICD

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I have identified the beliefs that I am responsible, I should have done something and I believe it is my fault if things go wrong. Feelings of anxiety occur and are triggers for my comfort eating. What does it say about me as a person that it is my fault if things go wrong? All of this distils into one core belief: I am not good enough. So when I have felt I was not good enough, fresh bread filled the bill. When I was lonely, fresh bread would bring me the feelings of being loveable, of being good enough. When I felt unsafe, anxious, a slice of white bread fresh from the oven, a dinner roll, and other varieties from a specialty baker's shop or even toasted raisin bread, all connected with feelings of safety, of being okay, of being good enough. Just as a fear can generalise, so that anything furry becomes a trigger for anxiety, if as a child you were terrified of Santa Claus, pleasurable events can generalise too. Raisin toast brings me the memory and the feelings of being with my closest friend during university, sitting in Manning House, drinking coffee and chatting. Dinner rolls are especially associated with times with friends in restaurants or at each other's homes. Buying bread from a specialty shop obviously resonates with a feeling of a special occasion, but for me the memory is one of buying a grandchild a cheese and bacon roll when I minded her when she was a pre-schooler. Fresh home baked bread permeates my soul with



good feelings. So notice if there are any connections from childhood foods to ones you over consume now. I have reached for foods that were connected with the emotions I needed: feelings of being loveable, of feeling safe. of being special. All of this to deal with the one core negative belief that distilled into “I am not good enough”.

## COIN DROP

Coin-drop: Find a 50-cent coin. Choose a helpful phrase you want to believe. ....

With your elbow bent, extend your arm out holding the coin in your palm. Taking slow gentle breaths, focus on the coin, saying when the coin drops I will say ..... ten times. Do not try to make your hand turn over. Just focus on the coin, repeating when the coin drops I will say .....

Slowly you will notice your hand beginning to turn over. Do not hurry this. Let it happen. Your hand will continue turning until the coin drops. Close your eyes and repeat the positive helpful thought ten times.

Count to three. Open your eyes feeling calm and in control.

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