



Dealing with Food-Centred Gatherings

Feeling pressured to eat more or eat less is never a comfortable situation. How can you deal with the stress and anxiety of a similar situation? The following tips may benefit you:

1) **Plan ahead.** If you plan on visiting with friends and family, plan out the situation ahead of time in order to avoid extra stress and anxiety. You may also consider telling your family ahead of time not to make remarks about your eating disorder.

2) **Eat regularly.** Despite the fact that many people eat excessively or eat a large amount of snacks, try and stick to a normal routine.

3) **Make a list.** Write down each thing you need to get done. Getting things done ahead of time and having a list so you do not forget anything can save you a lot of unneeded stress.

4) **Talk with your therapist.** A therapist can work with you on coping methods and address specific worries or anxiety you may have.

5) **Find a support partner.** This person will be there for you to talk with if thoughts regarding your eating disorder begin to enter your mind or you feel overwhelmed.

6) **Determine your reactions ahead of time.** If someone makes an awkward remark about your eating habits or weight, know what you plan to say ahead of time. This may help relieve anxiety during group events.

7) **Offer to bring a dish.** If you are unsure of what may be offered on the menu, offer to bring something you know you will be willing to eat.

8) **Be flexible.** While this may be difficult, being flexible with plans and situations which may arise can relieve tension. This may also prevent emotional eating.

9) **Take part in fun activities.** By taking part in fun activities, you can distract yourself from any good worries you may be having.

10) **Confide in someone.** Tell someone who will be with you during meal times your specific concerns and allow them to give you advice on what is appropriate.

11) **Only attend what you can handle.** Politely decline invitations if you feel the situation would make you uncomfortable or overwhelmed. Situations which include non-food activities may be most enjoyable.

12) **Eat healthy foods.** If you stick to a regular meal plan and eat healthy food then you reduce the risk of feeling "guilty" over eating.

13) **Attend a support group.** Attend events and make friends with other members, this type of fellowship will provide you with support and encouragement.

14) **Don't focus on mistakes.** If you feel too full or have experienced a binge, move on and do not allow it to stress you out.¹⁵) Set goals. Instead of only focusing on food and weight, set other goals regarding what you might like to talk about and focus on.