

## Ep #10: Physical Vs Emotional Hunger



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Diana Murphy**

[Empowered Wellness for Leaders](#) with Diana Murphy

## Ep #10: Physical Vs Emotional Hunger

Welcome to *Empowered Wellness for Leaders*, a podcast that teaches CEOs, entrepreneurs and sales leaders how to deal with the unique challenges of balancing a high-stress career, family, AND their own health. Here's your host, Certified Executive Wellness Coach, Diana Murphy.

Hello, everyone out there. I am so glad you're here and I hope that today's episode can give you a lot of clarity around emotional eating, per se, and help you to kind of split and understand the difference between the two. So that's what we're going to talk about today.

But I want to tell you that although things are going really well, my mom broke her hip March 9<sup>th</sup> and I flew down here to Florida and I've really been having a mix of a great time and taking care of her. She's in a rehab facility and I had a planned trip down here, so I'm taking advantage of some of the good restaurants and eating out, but I'll tell you, I was not giving myself enough grace around all that I am taking on.

And I was really just trying to hold it all together and that is really interesting. When you're a coach, so many times, you really get hard on yourself about how you're handling things, and I think that's literally what I did. So if you've ever had that situation where you're trying to hold it all together and realize that was not possible, I hear you.

And it's actually some of the things that I'm speaking about in physical and emotional eating, you know, when you eat just for fuel needs versus eating for emotional needs, how being aware of that in my life has really helped me. So I'm going to kind of flip this. I think a lot of people think that when I talk about emotional eating versus physical eating, it's all about only eating for physical needs.

And of course, that is absolutely the best way. We really should be eating food for energy, but there's so many other purposes. There really are. And it doesn't need to be perfect. And when I find that I'm emotional eating

## Ep #10: Physical Vs Emotional Hunger

because I have this kind of awareness trigger with it, it gives me so much information.

And that is what I want to share with you today, that when you notice you're emotionally eating, and I'm going to help you understand the difference, that you actually will turn around – like I am learning to do, it's never perfect – to be more kind and kind of look at the why. You know, look at what's going on for you in those situations.

So I'll dig into the episode and I'm going to be giving you a full month of amazing food tools. And this is just the first one – why am I teaching you the difference between emotional and physical hunger? There really is a new confidence that can be found when we start eating more to our true physical needs. Also, it is an area where we have so many messages in our lives about what to eat, when to eat, how to eat, that almost every food choice has its own drama to it.

If you've been a yo-yo dieter or have a struggle with this area in your life, there's a lot of chatter that goes on when we make decisions around food. But when we turn that to some tools where we tune back in to intuitive eating, really listen to our physical hunger signals, it can create a new confidence around food choices.

You can begin to also trust yourself around food and around what really works for you. You can take all that great nutritional information and decipher it through your own lens.

When, also, we are eating more intuitively, it's a deal-breaker because I found when I broke that whole emotional eating cycle, that actually created a lot of weight-gain and judgment and, oh, just the whole nine yards, it was distracting. And by getting more intuitive with food, it was a deal-breaker. I started a new business as I got rid of that distraction. Isn't that fascinating?

So if you're finding yourself in a lot of head drama when you're about to eat or planning your week's meals for your family, I want you to listen just really closely to this very easy tool to start with. And in fact, I'm going to go deep

## Ep #10: Physical Vs Emotional Hunger

dive and teach you the hunger scale today. That's going to be your extra treat.

So separating the way you eat and take care of yourself and separate that from how we are emotionally, you know, they're so tied together, is just a really empowering thing. At least, it has been for me. To get started, I want to give you the aerial view of what I'm going to cover over these four episodes and wrap it up with a bonus week, which I cannot wait to bring you.

So today is physical versus emotional hunger, and I'm going to teach you the hunger scale. Next week, slow and savor. This is for all the foodies out there that love food and find sometimes it hard to stop when you're full and you know you just want to eat because food tastes so good. I've got something for you there and it's just never wrong to eat food because it's delicious, literally, we've got to provide some space to do that.

So we're going to talk about that next week. The third phase of this is fuel testing. This is what I was speaking about is taking that great nutritional advice in your life, and whatever you're starting to learn that this is a new journey for you, you're starting to eat healthier, it's using a new lens. It's your own lens; your body's feedback.

So I'm going to teach you, in three weeks on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, I'm going to teach you more about filtering this through your own lens and become a good fuel tester. Understand what is for you.

I'm going to seal it up by talking about moving more and also being more centered, how that really can help your appetite awareness, that they really go hand in hand. And that's really how I started the episode today.

When I focus on my true physical appetite or notice when I'm emotionally eating, it gives me a lot of really good information. And I'm going to teach you, in that episode, how to get more grounded by some meditation possibly, by moving your body gently a little more often so that you are – you're going to pull together all the tools I'm teaching you.

## Ep #10: Physical Vs Emotional Hunger

And I'm going to seal up this great month of April with gratitude and how the practice of gratitude has helped me to take radically amazing good care of myself. So I hope you're ready because this month is really near and dear to my heart because these were the tools that really opened up for me a more grounded way of living.

As Brooke Castillo, my teacher, would say, that you take the drama out of food and then your life can be more exciting. I don't think I'm quoting her perfectly, but really, it's like, make your food boring and make your life exciting. And that's what I want to offer you today through these tools. Take them slow and I think you'll really appreciate layering this learning for you.

Now, this is going to create an entire packet, and whether you opt in now or at the end, you will get the entire packet of food tools by opting in any week in April.

Alright, now I know that many of you might be tempted to tune out if you don't struggle with your weight, and I want to stop you right there because I'm learning with the people that I work with, and even through some of my own experiences, that this emotional eating can also be emotional non-eating.

This episode and the work I'm going to teach you all month is all about empowering your life in a way that your energy is just amazing, that you have better mental clarity and that you're really living in a way that, again, you do not have to think too much about how you're taking care of yourself, that it becomes much more intuitive.

Alright, the biggest surprise for me is that the hunger scale and learning about emotional and physical eating, physical hunger, really separating those out in my life was, when I did use it for weight loss, it transitioned once it became a part of my life. It is now an awareness tool. It helps me to stay more present, more vibrant and alert. It is just amazing how this has worked.

## Ep #10: Physical Vs Emotional Hunger

I really call it, as I teach my clients, living like awake. When we're using food for anything other than fuel needs, we buffer. That's buffering. We're trying to soften the feeling.

Well, some emotional feedback is really good for us. It's good for us to inquire and pay a little bit of attention to, and that's what I'm going to seal the episode today, what I'm talking about.

Okay, so what's the difference between physical and emotional hunger? Emotional hunger is when our head tells our stomach, and it truly can create a physical response, it teaches our body to be hungry. And I bet most of us have experienced this at some level.

When you're bored and want to nosh on popcorn or chips or you're sitting at your desk and you really want something while you fuss through your email, that's emotional eating and it's created. It can become a habit, but what I want to really help you see here, it's the note in your brain that you're bored, you don't want to do that or you don't want to get into your email or oh isn't it quiet in your room, you know, like waiting for someone a long time.

I start looking for a bottle of water I start moving around. That is your brain telling your body that you're hungry. So that's one example of emotional hunger. Many of us think of emotional hunger only in eating out of stress or eating when we're really upset, and certainly, that is emotional hunger. And it truly makes our body feel like it's hungry. It wants relief and it creates like a buzz in our stomach and in our body and truly filling our body with extra food or too much food softens that emotional feeling.

An emotion is a vibration in our body, so eating softens that emotion. So when we eat for emotional needs, it makes us feel better. Now, this can affect our health, right. We gain weight when we really don't want to or we experience muscle loss because that brain trigger of stress shuts down our appetite. I have this more often now that when I get really, really stressed or in a very tough situation – in fact, I noticed this when my mom was first in the hospital – I did not eat very well.

## Ep #10: Physical Vs Emotional Hunger

I ate good foods, I really was very much paying attention to what I was putting in my body, but I was really putting off my meals. So that can create muscle loss, especially for the guys out there that have much higher metabolisms. And when you are on high stress, you may have some muscle loss or be losing weight when you don't intend to.

So emotional eating can really affect our health. It puts our body in a stress mode when we deny fuel when it is really hungry. When we deprive it also of great nutrition, you know – if you're needing energy and many of us actually need more energy when we're working hard or working longer days, right, and here we are starving it because we're super-stressed.

So do you see how it can really be affected on both sides that our emotions can either create an emotional hunger response but it also can actually just zap our appetite for some of us. You know, which is it for you?

So I'm going to include a worksheet here which will really help you note the times that you're emotionally eating and get to some of those questions. So don't worry, I want you just to listen and kind of see how this topic affects you and what comes up for you.

Alright, so if you want to be eating just for physical hunger needs, this is when the body tells the brain it's time to eat. This is – when I describe this to clients in learning the hunger scale – and don't worry, I'm going to teach it to you here – in a mild way and in a beginner's way and a deeper version. So you can always come back to this episode and reengage with this topic. I want you to take one or two little pieces here and start practicing to get more engaged with your own physical appetite.

Alright, when you use the hunger scale, when you create more awareness around your own physical hunger needs, it helps you to get much more in sync with your body's rhythms. And this is by really honoring, again, the feeling of hunger that your stomach starts growling a little bit. Maybe it's light and feathery at first. And then you know you're really hungry and then you either tell it, you know, go ahead and get something to eat, but your brain starts engaging and almost is distracted.

## Ep #10: Physical Vs Emotional Hunger

And again, it comes from the body telling the brain it's hungry, and then the brain – you might be working on something and then go, “Oh my god, what is for lunch today?” That is a physical hunger. Again, I'm going to repeat this – emotional hunger is really when the brain and even the body, in a way, with the sensation of an emotion, says, “Oh don't you want to eat?” And it creates a hunger. For some of us, it really does display in our stomach, and for some of us, we really just do want to feel better in the moment; that's emotional hunger.

Physical hunger is when your body distracts your brain and tells you, “Hey, you better stop and get something to eat.” Some of us ignore those signals and wait until we get really hungry. And that would be a deeper part of the hunger scale where you are getting headaches and really don't feel good because you haven't eaten for a period of time. That's ignoring physical hunger.

Alright, why would you want to get in a better rhythm of your physical hunger? It will give you better energy. It will give you absolutely better mental performance. I had no idea that this was affecting me and I was – I think I've shared this story before in some of my trainings, but I was teaching three Weight Watchers classes in a day. It was my big day when I was a leader.

I was a corporate leader and running all over Atlanta. I'm serious, downtown Atlanta, back home into a very long and intensive night meeting. And I wondered why I was so tired that evening, and because I was living in points land, I was really dishonoring my physical hunger needs and I was finding that I really was having trouble focusing. I really didn't want to – I started to feel like I didn't want to run the meeting. And I loved this meeting; this was an award-winning meeting for me. And I realized that I needed more physical energy; isn't that fascinating? Somebody that has yoyo dieted her whole life just never knew how to eat to my physical appetite.

So mental performance is affected, and most of all, when we start honoring our own intuitive appetite through practicing the hunger scale, there will no

## Ep #10: Physical Vs Emotional Hunger

longer be any yoyo dieting. You will be able to maintain your weight in a way that is really powerful for you.

Now, one added benefit, and I'm experiencing this today, is when I don't buffer with food, when I'm uncomfortable, when I'm a little nervous, I always get a little nervous, actually, before I record a podcast and I always find I want to eat. It's really interesting. And sometimes I really am hungry and so I will calm down and have a good lunch, but seriously, I'm watching this in my life and when I get to the bottom of it, it's like, oh go do what you need to do. It makes me more creative, more in the moment and actually more vibrant.

It is allowing that emotion to kind of – that jazzy emotion, instead of buffering it with food, I actually can pay more attention when I do my work. So I just find these benefits to be really important, no matter what the deal is for food in your life.

Alright, so how do you start eating more to your physical needs? I'm going to teach you here. I do this in every workshop and you could really start with just two questions – every time you're deciding to eat, there's no other decision to be made except this; am I hungry? Am I full?

While you're eating that meal, decide, ask yourself a few times, am I full? Before you make a decision, you're at the pantry – am I really hungry? No judgment here. I'm going to talk about that in a minute, but am I really hungry?

Get in a rhythm, am I hungry? Am I full? Now, we may find ourselves eating in a different pattern; allow it. Have extra snacks with you. If you really want to play around with this, it will take some practice, but it is one of the most powerful things we can do, getting back in a rhythm of our body.

When you practice this, it may take, if you've been eating to points, eating when you should, eating to the clock, it might take a little while to figure out what your rhythm is. And most times, I am kind of hungry around normal meal times, but I do still honor my own true physical hunger at those times because truly, I can't figure out what to eat when I'm not hungry. I'll eat the

## Ep #10: Physical Vs Emotional Hunger

craziest foods because I am not truly physically hungry; I'm eating because everybody else is or I'm eating to feel socially comfortable or I'm eating because I'm bored and I just can't figure out what to eat, so I nosh on something.

But it's interesting, when I allow myself to truly be hungry, when it's a yes, when I am I hungry, I will really choose some great foods. So this really can help us get in sync with our fuel eating, which we'll talk about in a couple of weeks. But it really helps you to slow down and honor your physical appetite.

Alright, I'm going to teach you, now, the hunger scale. And this is more in depth. I'm going to have a sheet for you in the show notes for this episode, [dianamurphycoaching.com/10](http://dianamurphycoaching.com/10), you will find the worksheet on learning the hunger scale for yourself if you'd like to.

Alright, the hunger scale is a ten-point scale in both directions. Plus ten is very full. In fact, I call it eating to Thanksgiving dinners because you have two families in town. So that's super, super full; like body-busting full. Minus ten is starving; you really haven't eaten for a couple of days. And most of us, thank goodness, have not experienced this.

Where gentle eating and eating to your appetite is the most beneficial is what I call between the twos. And this is minus two to plus two eating. Sometimes I offhand talk about this all the time and thinking people understand it. So I'm glad I'm taking some time to explain it here.

When you eat between the twos, you are listening to that minus one flutter in your stomach that says, "Ooh, you better prepare something soon or plan on getting lunch out." You know, I love describing your work-day where you've had a good breakfast, you're kind of coasting through your morning and before you know it, you get distracted and you're like, "Wow, what's everybody having for lunch?" That is your body telling you, when it distracts you, that you're at minus one.

And I just take note whenever I first feel that hunger signal, am I thirsty? I question it sometimes a little bit. And that minus one is just a light flutter in

## Ep #10: Physical Vs Emotional Hunger

your stomach and minus two is, you know, you've felt that for a little while. You know that you're hungry.

Now, most of us feel a light flutter in our stomachs, but in this worksheet, I want you to kind of note or think to right now where do you feel hunger. And some might say I get a headache, I get lightheaded. And for you, my friends, that's a deeper hunger scale. So that wouldn't really be the minus one or minus two.

Minus three to minus four usually are those where our stomach might actually get nauseous. Minus four is, we are truly getting a headache or just not feeling – we're really uncomfortable. And waiting to eat to that point, we can sometimes be out of control, but that's just our bodies saying you've waited too long.

Eating at minus two and starting at that point – and now I'll teach you how we eat to the plus point of the scale. So again, light flutter at minus one, minus two, you know you're hungry. So as you're eating a meal, you're going to note, especially if you're eating on the fly and you don't have enough time to eat, you might eat to zero where you're just totally neutral, but you might find you're hungry again very soon.

But as you eat, you know that you're done eating, but you still are not sated, and that sated feeling is plus one to plus two. That is where you can push back and go, "Ah." Your body literally – mine does this – it's like, "Oh thank goodness, you finally fed me." It's like a letdown. It's a calm reaction where you've been kind of agitated because you're hungry and now you're noticing that you're calming down. That, my friends, is plus two.

Eating in this way, you may find you'll eat more often. And some of my clients even begin eating minus three to plus three. It really works for them. I love minus two to plus two. Unless I'm going out to eat, I will allow myself to get a little deeper hunger so that I have a little more room to enjoy a fun meal or where I know that I am, you know, dining out with someone and I can really enjoy that meal with them.

## Ep #10: Physical Vs Emotional Hunger

So that, my friends, is the hunger scale. I know you might have some questions, so do download the worksheet and let me know either on my website, you can make some comments there – I see those all the time. Or just email me, [diana@dianamurphycoaching.com](mailto:diana@dianamurphycoaching.com). And I hope I've made it clear, using this scale takes some practice and you may even notice, if you're used to eating by the clock or you've been on a lot of diets or you do have a lot of head drama about what to eat – I want you just to focus – you're going to notice that head drama, by the way if you only eat to plus two and as you're practicing this.

It brings up, kind of, what's going on for us in our minds. But give yourself the gift of working with this slowly and eating in a way that you really are honoring the hunger scale.

Alright, my friends. Now, what do you do with the emotional part? I have some great questions. I'm going to end this episode in a way that you can understand what to do with the emotions that come up if you've found that you are an emotional eater. And they really work for me and they're absolutely the most miraculous parts of my coaching conversations.

If you're craving something, I want you to ask, what are you really craving in your life? If you're bored, what are you bored with? What do you really want? Why are you bored in your life? And take some time to just think about that. when you're stressed – and I have a lot of tools around stress and checking out episodes that are – I think it was number seven – sorry, I don't know my own episode numbers.

If you look back, I do unpack that stress eat and stress drink habit. But if it's milder, these questions really can work. What is stressing you out? When you really don't want to eat about stress, you don't want to be buffering your emotions, what is stressing you out? Taking some time to really look at your day – did someone yell at you? Did you have a fight with someone? These will naturally cause fight or flight and make us feel stressed. And I think taking some time – like I needed to give myself some space, as I shared in the beginning of the episode.

## Ep #10: Physical Vs Emotional Hunger

I needed to give some space to myself in really allowing some of the emotions that were going on. There were so many. I was worried about my mom. I had a vacation planned in the middle of this and wanted it to be a good vacation for my brother and I. It became hospital visits or much different than we had planned, but I had to get the bottom of what was stressing me out or what those emotions were.

Take some time. Really lean into the information that this emotional eating might be giving you. I know that maybe you shouldn't be eating your stress, you know, but remember to give yourself a lot of kindness and curiosity around this because if you judge yourself for emotional eating, that will cause more emotional stress and agitation which- will make your body want to eat more, literally.

This is one of the cycles that I think I was in. I ate for, actually, company. Like I was lonely and I ate out of loneliness. And then I would overeat an entire pizza, seriously. And after I put the kids to bed, and I thought that was really good company, and then I would shame myself about how much I'd overeaten.

So if I could have taken more time in that moment – it's a beautiful example – and taken more time to be more curious about why I was lonely and taking care of my life in that way instead of with food because food leaves us wanting. Food is meant to be good energy for our bodies. It won't solve our stress, for sure, right.

So using the thought model here is a fabulous way and I'm going to leave you a worksheet on it. We really have run out of time today to dig deep into it, but it's what I'm all about. Our emotions really are created, not by the boss yelling at us, but by the thoughts that are created, right. And that's a perfect example.

So using some of these questions when you're emotionally eating can really help you get to the bottom of it. There's going to be a beautiful worksheet for you to get to the bottom of some of your emotional eating, but also, if you just take some time to really get in a rhythm of eating when

## Ep #10: Physical Vs Emotional Hunger

you're hungry and stopping when you're full, I know that it can make a huge difference on your awareness in your life and the way that you take care of yourself.

So, I hope you've enjoyed today's episode and I look forward to giving you more insight on this when I discuss slow down and savor. Have a great day and remember, I'm in your camp here. I am challenged by so many of the same things that you are, even though I'm the wellness coach, right.

I do have a lot of these tools that are so intuitive now, and now they're giving me a new level of knowing about myself and I wish that for you every single time. So I'm closing today and look forward to seeing you next time. Have a great day.

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