
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Food and mood



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Sam

Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Sam.

Rob

And I'm Rob.

Sam

When someone feels sad or in a bad mood, they often try to feel better by eating their favourite food... I usually go for a peanut butter sandwich myself. Do you have a favourite comfort food, Rob?

Rob

Hmm, maybe a cream chocolate éclair... Comfort food is a type of **emotional eating** – eating lots of food because we feel sad, not because we're hungry. But unfortunately, most comfort food is high in carbohydrates and sugar and, after a few minutes, it leaves us feeling even worse than before.

Sam

Today, scientific research into the relationship between what we eat and how we feel is growing. In this programme we'll be investigating the connection between our food and our mood. We'll hear how healthy eating makes us feel better, and of course, we'll be learning some new vocabulary as well.

Rob

Great! But first I have a question for you, Sam. People who link what we eat with how we feel make a simple argument: the food you eat supplies nutrients and energy to the brain, and the brain controls our emotions. That might sound simplistic, but the brain is a vital link in the connection between food and our mood. So, Sam, my question is: how much of the body's total energy is used up by the brain? Is it: a) 10 percent, b) 20 percent, or c) 30 percent?

Sam

Hmmm, that's a good question. I'll say it's a) 10 percent.

Rob

Right. Well, I'll reveal the answer later in the programme. Emotional eating is often caused by feelings of depression, anxiety or stress. Chef Danny Edwards, who has suffered with depression, works in one of the most stressful places imaginable - a busy restaurant kitchen. BBC World Service programme, The Food Chain, asked Danny about his eating habits at work:

Danny Edwards

Actually, when you're working in a kitchen environment for long periods, your **appetite** can become suppressed because you sometimes don't want to eat, or you don't feel like you can stop and eat, and all of that. So, it very often is **grabbing something on the go** which obviously, as we know, is not great for us... So you go for something that's quick, so hence why a lot of chefs have quite a bad diet.

Sam

Even though he's surrounded by food, Danny says that working under stress actually decreases his **appetite** – the feeling that you want to eat food. In a busy kitchen there's no time for a sit-down meal, so Danny has to **grab and go** – take something quickly because he doesn't have much time, although he knows this isn't very healthy.

Rob

So when even chefs have a difficult relationship with food, what about the rest of us? Professor Felice Jacka, is an expert in nutritional psychiatry. She studied the effect of eating a healthy diet – food such as fresh fruit and vegetables, wholegrain cereals, and olive oil – on people suffering depression. Professor Jacka found that the patients whose mental health improved were the same patients who had also improved their diet.

Sam

But Professor Jacka's ideas were not accepted by everyone. Here, she explains to Jordan Dunbar, presenter of BBC World Service's, The Food Chain, about the opposition her study faced from other doctors:

Prof Felice Jacka

So I proposed to do this for my PhD study, and everyone thought I was a bit **bananas**, you know, and there was quite a bit of, I guess, **eye rolling** maybe. I'm not surprised by that because the discipline of psychiatry was very medication- and brain-focused.

Jordan Dunbar

What did people say in the field? Were they sceptical?

Prof Felice Jacka

Oh, hugely sceptical and sometimes very **patronising**. But this again comes from the fact that general practitioners, psychiatrists, medical specialists get almost no nutrition training through all those years of study.

Rob

When Professor Jacka investigated the link between food and mood, her colleagues thought she was **bananas** – a slang word meaning silly or crazy. They **rolled their eyes** – a phrase which describes the gesture of turning your eyes upwards to express annoyance, boredom or disbelief.

Sam

Other colleagues were **patronising** – they behaved towards her as if she were stupid or unimportant. Professor Jacka thinks this is because most doctors have little or no training about nutrition and the effect of food on mental health. But her ground-breaking research, named ‘The Smile Trial’, has been successfully repeated elsewhere, clearly showing the link between eating well and feeling good.

Rob

So, the next time you’re feeling down and your brain is calling out for a donut, you might be better eating an apple instead! And speaking of brains, Sam, it’s time to reveal the answer to my question.

Sam

Yes, you asked me how much of the body’s energy is used up by the brain. And I guessed it was ten percent...

Rob

Well, I’m afraid you are wrong. In fact, around 20 percent of the body’s energy goes to feeding the brain, even though it only makes up two percent of our total body weight. OK, let’s recap the vocabulary we’ve learned from our discussion about **emotional eating** – that’s eating too much food because of how you feel, not because you’re hungry.

Sam

Appetite is the desire to eat food.

Rob

If you **grab and go**, you take something quickly because you don’t have much time.

Sam

Calling someone **bananas** is slang for silly or crazy.

Rob

If you **roll your eyes**, you move your eyes upwards to show you feel annoyed, bored or don't believe what someone is telling you.

Sam

And finally, if someone is **patronising** you, they speak or behave towards you as if you were stupid or unimportant. That's the end of our programme. Don't forget to join us again soon for more topical discussion and useful vocabulary here at 6 Minute English. Bye, everyone!

Rob

Bye!

VOCABULARY

emotional eating

eating lots of food in response to emotional feelings instead of to hunger

appetite

the feeling that you want to eat food; the desire for food

grab and go

the activity of taking something quickly when you do not have much time

bananas

(slang) silly; crazy

roll your eyes

move your eyes upwards as a way of showing annoyance, boredom or disbelief

patronising

speaking or behaving towards someone as if they were stupid or unimportant