Stop eating near me! [1]

Dear Alice,

I can't handle it when people chew or drink near me, unless they are completely silent. It makes me so angry, sometimes to the point of wanting to lash out, and I don't know why! Is there a reason or am I just weird?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Everyone is wired a little differently. That's just to say different things might annoy one person, but seem completely normal to another. You're certainly not alone—many people report similar annoyances with everyday occurrences around them. But it sounds like what you're describing may be veering beyond just a little annoyance. Feeling angry and wanting to lash out at your fellow diner would certainly hinder your dining enjoyment, not to mention theirs if you actually did. Whether what is bothering you is physical, like an ache or pain, or psychological, like a worry or stress, if you are finding something interferes with your ability to concentrate or function normally, it is usually worth talking about with a health care provider or mental health professional.

A little poking around in some academic journals revealed that there is some discussion and preliminary study of people who experience a condition known as misophonia, or the hatred of sound. This condition is described as an extreme intolerance and an involuntary fight-or-flight response to specific sounds—pens clicking, noisy breathing, gum chewing, etc. The noises that seem to trigger misophonics are often everyday sounds, which can explain why this experience can feel so isolating and frustrating. Anxiety, panic, and rage are just some of the emotions misophonics report experiencing when triggered. There's not much study in this area, so there's still much to learn. You may want to check out a few discussion groups from organizations like Misophonia [2] and the Misophonia Association [3] if the description above sounds familiar.
Rest assured, Reader, many people are unnerved or bothered by the habits or actions of others. Decide for yourself if your level of annoyance is interfering with your ability to interact with those around you or take care of yourself in your daily life. If you’re concerned or want someone to help you sort through your experience, consider talking with a therapist or a health care provider.

Hope this helps!

Alice!

Category:
Emotional Health [4]
Stress & Anxiety [5]

Related questions

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Resources

Medical Services (Morningside) [10]
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If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

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