

Homework

Tracking

<input type="checkbox"/> Food & activity records online (myfitnesspal)	<input type="checkbox"/> Meditation practice _____ days this week
<input type="checkbox"/> Food, activity & mood journal (paper)	<input type="checkbox"/> Journal 3 pages _____ mornings this week
<input type="checkbox"/> Specific food or eating behavior goal: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Specific action related to support system: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Specific activity /fun goal: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Relaxation practice _____ days this week
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

Notes

Is Your “Hunger” Physical or Emotional?

Identifying Emotional Eating

Many people with weight concerns eat because of stress, boredom, anger, loneliness, joy or reward. Often, they may not be aware that their eating is emotionally driven. Perhaps some of your “hunger” may actually be emotional and not physical. It can be hard to tell the difference between the two.

Answer the following questions to see if you may be eating for emotional reasons. When you answer, consider what happens most of the time.	YES	NO
1. Do you eat when you are not hungry?		
2. Do you tend to snack more when you are alone?		
3. Do you eat more when you are at home?		
4. Is it a habit to snack at a certain time of the day?		
5. Do you treat yourself routinely with food?		
6. Is eating a favorite food one of the most pleasant things you do for yourself?		
7. Do you routinely ‘clean your plate’, even if you are full?		
8. Do you have a hard time recognizing when you are physically hungry or full?		
9. Do you pay attention to whether you are hungry or full before eating?		
10. Do you eat when you are stressed, even if you are not hungry?		
11. Do you ‘feel’ hunger in your mouth, rather than your stomach?		

Do you often eat for emotional reasons?

If you answered ‘yes’ to three or more of the questions, you may be doing more than occasional emotional eating. The more ‘yes’ answers, the more likely you are an emotional eater. It is important to recognize when you eat for emotional reasons because this type of eating can lead to many unneeded calories. For many people, cutting out most of the emotional eating (occasional emotional eating is normal) can lead to a slow, natural weight loss.

Distinguishing between the two ‘hunger’ types

One quick way to tell the difference between emotionally driven ‘hunger’ and true physical hunger, is to see where in your body you feel hungry. True physical hunger should be felt in the stomach. If you “feel” hunger in the chest, throat or mouth, what you may be feeling is emotional hunger instead. A lack of physical hunger signals means you may want to eat for emotional reasons.

Difficulty stopping at ‘comfortable fullness’

If you are chronically unable to stop eating at comfortable fullness, even though you recognize when you are full, then you are most likely overeating for emotional reasons. Just because something tastes good doesn’t mean you have to finish it!

Common reasons for eating past comfortable fullness are:

- **A history of depriving yourself of food** (during times of dieting or “cutting back,” for example)
- **Your parents deprived you of food** (especially if they were concerned about your weight as a child)
- **Procrastinating something** that’s coming after the meal
- **Depression**, or other brain chemistry imbalance



What gets us in the mood to eat?



Which are triggers for you?

<input type="checkbox"/> Hunger	<input type="checkbox"/> Sensory Gratification
<input type="checkbox"/> Boredom/Restless	<input type="checkbox"/> Punishment
<input type="checkbox"/> Anger/Frustration	<input type="checkbox"/> Pressure from others
<input type="checkbox"/> Loneliness	<input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety
<input type="checkbox"/> Happiness	<input type="checkbox"/> It looks/tastes good
<input type="checkbox"/> Celebration	<input type="checkbox"/> Availability
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Events	<input type="checkbox"/> Others eating
<input type="checkbox"/> Comfort	<input type="checkbox"/> Habit
<input type="checkbox"/> Tiredness/Fatigue	<input type="checkbox"/> Reward/Bribery
<input type="checkbox"/> Stress	<input type="checkbox"/> Time of Day
<input type="checkbox"/> Distraction	<input type="checkbox"/> TV Ads
<input type="checkbox"/> PMS	<input type="checkbox"/> Depression
<input type="checkbox"/> Sedation/"food coma"	<input type="checkbox"/> Distraction
<input type="checkbox"/> Procrastination	<input type="checkbox"/> Pain
<input type="checkbox"/> Cravings	<input type="checkbox"/> Low blood sugar
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

My Triggers to Eat:

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

- 4) _____

- 5) _____

My Strategies/Alternatives to Emotional Eating

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

- 4) _____

- 5) _____

Where do I eat? Place an "x" in areas that apply:

	Bedroom(s)	Bathroom(s)	TV Room/ Living Room	Kitchen	Dining Room
Garage	Closet				
Car	Hallway	Computer Room/Study/Office			

Cravings

Have you ever craved something, but were unsure about what it was that you were craving? Did you try eating a few different things only to find that your craving was unsatisfied by those foods?

Have you ever craved a food that you perceived as unhealthy, and instead of allowing yourself a small portion of that food, you ate a few other options that were unsatisfying? Did you then end up eating the food that you were craving in the first place, in addition?

Have you ever had a craving for something, but became distracted by something and forgot about it for a period of time?

We often feel that because we crave something, we must have it right then and there. It can feel overpowering.

What do we know about food cravings?

1) Cravings are generally in your head

Areas of the brain responsible for memory and sensing pleasure are partially to blame for keeping those food cravings coming. Food cravings are not usually due to a physiological need or deficit and are separate from hunger. When we crave, we don't tend to crave healthy food, but foods that are more calorically dense.

Three regions of the brain -- the hippocampus, insula, and caudate - appear to be activated during food-craving episodes, according to new research from the Monell Chemical Senses Center. Their brain scans suggest that memory areas of the brain (which are responsible for associating a specific food with a reward) are actually more important to food cravings than the brain's reward center.

Further, blocking the opiate receptors in the brain, which sense pleasure, can blunt a person's desire to eat foods rich in fat and sugar, according to new research by Adam Drewnowski, PhD, of the University of Washington.

2) Stress is associated with increased cravings

In addition to physiological reasons for food cravings, emotion and desire are also influencing factors.

"Food cravings arise to satisfy emotional needs, such as calming stress and reducing anxiety," according to Drewnowski, a renowned researcher on taste and food preferences.

For many of us, cravings kick into high gear when we're stressed or anxious.

Carbohydrates boost our levels of the hormone serotonin, which has a calming effect.

Recent research suggests that the combination of fat and sugar may also have a calming effect. David Kessler's book "Overcoming Overeating" is a great resource for learning more about the relationship between physiological, environmental, and psychological factors, and our cravings and eating behaviors.

Researchers from University of California at San Francisco put rats in a high-stress environment and discovered two key points: the stressed-out rats preferred to eat sugar and fat, and when the rats ate fat and sugar, their brains produced less of the stress-related hormones (the ones that trigger the fight-or-flight response).

3) Rewarding foods rewire the brain

Frequent pairings between stress and eating rewarding foods can change our brain chemistry and make it more likely that we will react the same way in the future (Kessler, 2009). We become conditioned to crave rewarding foods if we have eaten them in response to emotionally charged stimuli in the past.

3) We don't tend to crave the healthy stuff

Types of foods typically craved:

Research suggests that cravings spurred by emotions are typically for foods containing fat, sugar, salt, or all three. Often people report craving carbohydrates, but often those carb-rich foods also have a high percentage of fat.

Mindfulness of Current Emotion

Observe your emotion

- Note it's presence
- Step back
- Get unstuck from the emotion

Experience your emotion

- As a wave, coming and going
- Try not to block or suppress the emotion
- Don't try to get rid of the emotion or push it away
- Don't try to keep the emotion around, hold on to it, or amplify it

You are not your emotion

- Try not to immediately act on your emotion
- Remind yourself of times when you have felt differently
- Don't judge your emotion as good or bad
- Accept your emotion

****When we use strategies to avoid or escape emotions, we never experience the emotion's natural decline and also don't experience our ability to tolerate and cope with negative emotions. ****

Exposing yourself to emotions will help to break the escape/avoidance cycle. By experiencing and processing emotions, we can reduce our need for escape behaviors. Exposure to emotions short circuits the cycle in a few ways:

- 1) Exposure allows us to experience the natural reduction in emotion that comes with staying in the situation long enough on several occasions (i.e., habituation)
- 2) Exposure allows us to practice and improve our skills for coping with emotions
- 3) Exposure gives us the opportunity to test the reality of such beliefs as,
 - a. "I can't handle these feelings"
 - b. "My feelings will become tolerable or out of control"
 - c. "I need to do something to get rid of these feelings"

In addition, experiencing and processing emotions allows us to uncover connected thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and perceptions that may be problematic (e.g., prevent us from doing things, lead to negative feelings, lead us to interpret things negatively in neutral situations). By uncovering and working to change these underlying thoughts/beliefs, we can improve the way that we feel.

List of Coping Thoughts

Place a check mark beside the coping thoughts that might be helpful for you and then create your own.

- "I can ride this out and not let it get to me."
- "My anxiety/fear/sadness won't kill me; it just doesn't feel good right now."
- "My feelings are like a wave that comes and goes."
- "Mistakes happen; nobody's perfect."
- "This situation stinks right now, but it's only temporary."
- "These are just feelings and eventually they'll go away."
- "My feelings make me uncomfortable right now, but I can accept them."
- "This is an opportunity for me to learn how to cope in a healthy way."
- "I can feel anxious and still deal with the situation without eating."
- "I'm strong and I can deal with this."
- "I've survived other situations like this before, and I'll survive this one too."
- "It's ok to feel sad/anxious/angry/afraid sometimes."
- "This too shall pass."
- "I'm strong enough to handle what's happening to me right now."
- "I can cope; I have the resources and the support."
- Other Ideas:

What am I feeling and what do I need?

- Become more aware of your relationship with food. Pay attention and start to self-monitor: Look for patterns (triggers, situations, responses). **Notice what, how, and why you are eating.** Use the information gathered to increase awareness. Bring the setting and your habitual response into conscious thought (there's a choice to be made).
- Insert a pause before eating: check in with yourself: Is my hunger physiological or psychological/head hunger?
- Distinguish emotions, feelings, and cravings from hunger. Manage emotions and situations (boredom, stress, reward, feeling down, etc.) using non-food coping techniques and limit eating to planned meals and snacks (and when physiologically hungry).
- Identify your feelings and needs
 - For example, you're upset because you had an argument with your spouse; you're anxious because your bills are due and money is tight this month; you're bored, lonely, or at loose ends because you're home alone with nothing planned
- Develop and learn incompatible responses (e.g., drive different route to work, ask family member to do grocery shopping, change evening routine). Substitute competing behavior for habitual response.
- Seek comfort in other ways (use list of pleasant activities)
 - Recognize that food may comfort you, but the effect is only temporary. Afterwards, you may feel worse. If you successfully manage your urge to eat you will feel better and more in control.
- Deal with your feelings directly or learn to tolerate your distress
 - Having negative emotions is uncomfortable, but nothing bad will happen if you let yourself experience or feel your emotions. View your emotions like a wave...they come and go and lose intensity over time.
- Use Coping Thoughts (formulate thoughts that compete with and serve to quiet the old ones) and turn negative self-talk into positive self-talk. Develop your own mantra (see list)!
- Find a different distraction (use list of pleasant activities). Engage in a pleasurable activity (other than eating and TV) for at least 15-20 minutes. The likelihood is that your cravings will become more tolerable or you will forget about them.

- Emotional eating can be a sign that you have surpassed your current coping strategies
 - Take note, but don't beat yourself up about it: Respectful self-talk vs. negative self-talk (observe without judging yourself)
 - Use the experience as an opportunity to learn and then move on
- Eat regular meals and snacks (planned eating) and limit eating in between (unplanned eating). Also, don't let yourself get too hungry. Pay attention to hunger signals and eat before you get to the starving stage.
- Make appropriate lower calorie substitutions or plan in small portions of the foods you crave (feel more in control). Incorporating these foods into a healthy diet can prevent feelings of deprivation.
- Learn to tolerate cravings. This will get easier over time. "Surf the crave wave."
- Learn to manage stress without the use of food. Practice healthy stress management techniques routinely, such as meditation, massage, regular physical activity, and relaxation techniques.
- Find a support system that reinforces your goals.
- For women: Accept your pre-menstrual cravings as normal. Your body naturally craves carbohydrates right before your period. Brain serotonin levels are low during this time. Plan in reasonable portions and don't feel guilty.

Self-Care: Pleasant Activities and Rewards

Doing fun and relaxing things is actually good for your health. It can help decrease anxious and depressed feelings, improve your ability to manage stress more effectively, and can help you to sleep better. Many people believe that they are too busy to take the time to enjoy themselves. However, failing to take time for yourself can lead to increased stress and tension which can negatively impact your relationships, your health, your progress with weight management, and your overall well-being. In addition, all of the activities listed below can be ways to treat yourself without using food. There is a wide variety of pleasant activities that people enjoy doing. You will probably think of other ideas to add to this list. As you work on changing your relationship with food, it is important to continue to treat yourself in other ways.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to music Plant a garden Take a walk in your neighborhood Take a pottery class Scrap booking Go fishing Write poetry Sing Sit by a fire Take a bath or shower for as long as you want Arrange flowers Go somewhere beautiful and enjoy being in nature Read a novel Watch a sunrise/sunset Doodle Play a board game Sew Swim Sign up for a yoga class Play a musical instrument Photography Painting Play with your dog or cat Refinish a piece of furniture Write a letter Go to a museum Go to a ball game Go to a concert Call a friend Plan an evening with friends Take a quiet evening at home Throw a Frisbee Take a walk in the grass with your shoes off Take in a funny movie Repair something around the house Redecorate Keep a journal Go window-shopping Play golf 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do a crossword puzzle or Sudoku Go on a date Draw Dance Sit in a hot tub* Fly a kite Play a board game Read a magazine Candle light Deep breaths Professional massage Yoga class Reading without interruption A hot cup of coffee A spicy cup of tea Stretch Go ice skating Dancing Take a ten minute walk X-Country skiing Buy a pedometer Work in my garden Fresh cut flowers Music while I exercise Go swimming Walk on the beach alone See a kid's soccer game Singing Doing anything spontaneously, instead of planning ahead A new writing pen A neck rub Build or repair something Pretty stamps and stationary Sitting with my feet up Playing a kids' game Riding a bicycle Looking at photo albums Cleaning out a drawer Word games Go to a movie Buy and read a new novel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to a movie Buy and read a new novel Buy a new plant Needle point Go to a garage sale Set table with linen, napkins, and Candles when you eat alone. Visit a friend Fire in the fire place Sheets dried in the sunshine Send flowers to a friend A fuzzy robe on a cold night Sitting in the sunshine Feed the ducks A favorite magazine New hair style or color Take a sauna* Soak your feet* Rubbing your feet* Heating pad on my back* Give myself a facial Woodwork Going to a car show Going to a sporting event Meditate Listen to a book on CD <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-top: 10px;"/> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-top: 5px;"/> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-top: 5px;"/> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-top: 5px;"/> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-top: 5px;"/>
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(*) People with Diabetes may need to be careful using heat or sharp points.