

CONQUERING CRAVINGS

EATING BEHAVIORS

- **Binge Eating** - eating a large volume of food within a short period of time (to the point of discomfort and pain); a loss of control; extreme guilt and shame afterwards
- **Compulsive Eating** - eating a large volume of food (beyond the point of satiety) over a more extended period of time (e.g., throughout the day); guilt and shame is present
- **Emotional Eating** - most likely eating *not* due to physical hunger while eating in response to stress or to soothe negative emotions.
- **Mindful Eating** - eating in a state of awareness; most likely sitting down and savoring food over a short yet extended period of time. See below.

THE STRUGGLE IS REAL

WE LIVE TOO FAST

- We are stressed, busy and tired
- Stress influences our GI, appetite, cravings, hunger and more
- Individuals multi-task when eating
- We can gain more awareness.

WE CAN'T STOP

- Impulsive trait
- Family history of addiction
- History of trauma
- History of dieting, restricting, deprivation
- Greater food cue bias
- Epigenetics.

IT IS TIME TO SLOW DOWN

During the stress response, immune cells are released and adrenal glands release cortisol. This causes an increase of cardiac output, elevated blood glucose, increase in heart rate, increased blood pressure and a decreased blood flow to the GI tract. Our bodies better digest and absorb food when one is in a rested and calm state. In addition, the brain needs at least 20 minutes to recognize what nutrients are being consumed. **REST and DIGEST.**

MINDFUL EATING

When mindful eating, one would most likely be sitting down as well as spending at least 20-30 minutes eating. There are five different components of the MINDFUL EATING PLATE (Susan Albers PsyD 2012) that are worth considering:

- **IN THE MOMENT** - be fully present; turn off the TV; sit down; when you eat, just eat
- **OBSERVATION** - notice your body; check in with your hunger cues; notice energy levels; notice mood and/or emotions; recognize stress level
- **AWARENESS** - are you tasting your food or are you mindlessly munching?
- **SAVOR** - smell your food; notice your food; notice the textures; pay attention to the flavors

- **NON-JUDGEMENT** - speak compassionately and mindfully toward yourself; practice gratitude; notice when “shoulds” or rigid rules pop into your mind
- See www.eatingmindfully.com for more

THE HUNGER & FULLNESS SCALE

Using the hunger and fullness scale allows you to stay connected to your body while honoring when it is hungry and full. Use this scale before, during and throughout meals:

1. Starving. Ravenous. I feel weak, low energy and grouchy.
2. Uncomfortably hungry and famished. I am thinking a lot about food.
3. Pretty hungry / hungry. I want to eat now.
4. Starting to feel hungry.
5. Neutral. Neither hungry nor full.
6. Okay, slightly full. I feel as if I just ate a snack. I could still eat a few more bites.
7. Satisfied. I am not hungry or too full. Satiated.
8. Comfortably full. I feel as if I just ate a solid meal.
9. Very full. I may have eaten more than I should have.
10. Overstuffed. I am very uncomfortable - so full I feel sick.

HALT

- **Am I Hungry? Anxious? Lonely? Tired?**

FOOD STRATEGIES

- A. Recognize Triggers and Cues** - what is going on before we eat?
- B. Food Pairing** - pair something hyper-palatable with something nutrient dense (e.g., peanut butter with banana)
- C. Food Substitutions** - can you swap out something for something new? (e.g., replace diet soda with sparkling water)
- D. Avoid Certain Foods in 100% Isolation** - some foods are better off with a meal (e.g., cookies at 3 pm or 1-2 cookies right after dinner)
- E. Identify Safe and Unsafe Foods** - create boundaries around foods that are “unsafe” for you right now

SUPPORTIVE COPING SKILLS

- **BREATHING and/or MEDITATION.** Breathing exercises can lower the stress response in the body and calm down the vagus nerve.
- **SEEK SUPPORT.** Some may need to work with a therapist and/or treatment team to work through various things such as trauma, PTSD, etc.
- **GRATITUDE.** When practicing gratitude (giving thanks and appreciation), one can't feel a negative emotion at the same time. Use a gratitude journal on a daily basis.
- **20-25 MINUTE ACTIVITY.** Do something different for 20-25 minutes when an urge is happening - get outside, journal, knit, color, etc.

RECOMMENDED READING

“Intuitive Eating” by Elyse Resch and Evelyn Tribole

“The Slow Down Diet” by Marc David

“Eating in the Light of the Moon” by Anita Johnson

“Health at Every Size” by Linda Bacon